

An Assessment of Joint Military Operations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999–2022

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of joint military operations (JMO) in internal security in Nigeria from 1960 to 2022. It explores how different types of domestic conflicts, such as insurgency, terrorism, rioting, militancy, crime, and banditry, have shaped the nature and duration of JMO in the 4th Republic. It also analyses the main challenges and successes of the security agencies involved in JMO. The paper uses primary and secondary data to describe and analyse the dynamics of violence and their impact on the deployment, operation, and efficiency of JMO in Nigeria. The paper is divided into five sections. The first section provides a historical overview of the evolution of JMO in Nigeria. The second section discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework of JMO and internal security. The third section presents the security challenges and array of joint military operations in Nigeria. The fourth section highlights the major issues and challenges facing JMO in Nigeria. The fifth section concludes the paper with some policy implications and recommendations for enhancing JMO in Nigeria. The paper argues that the over-militarization of the civic polity, leadership styles, corruption, and area of operations affect the synergy and capacity of the multi-agency security framework. The paper contributes to the literature on internal security management and civil-military relations in Nigeria. It also provides insights for policymakers and practitioners on how to improve JMO in Nigeria.

Keywords: Insurgency, Oil Bunkering, Banditry, Kidnapping, Insecurity, Joint Military Operations.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As the 21st century unfolds, it unfolds with a tapestry of complexities, woven by factors such as the rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT). Amidst this intricate landscape, both human-made and natural disasters further intensify the challenges we face. In the process, the

distinctions between domestic and external security became blurred, leaving limitations on the military's capacity to curb the escalating threats. In this terrifying and volatile environment, where insecurity thrives, it is no secret that Nigeria as state and Nigerian security agencies face unprecedented security challenges (Sahara Reporters, 2020).

Countless lives have been lost in places like Plateau, Gombe, Zamfara, Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, and the Niger Delta; these places have become epicentres of violence and insecurity in the fourth republic of Nigeria. These took a great toll on national security and progress due to extensive lives lost and property damage that is undeniable.

In response to these shifting dynamics of security challenges and the failure of traditional strategy, joint military operations (JMO) in internal security operations (ISOPs) have become an inevitable necessity, demanding greater assertiveness (Pion-Berlin, 2017; Higazi, 2011; Segun & Jegede, 2013). Due to this, the Federal Government (FG) established military operations under a multiagency task force (Joint Military Operations) to combat this menace. However, the typologies and peculiarities of conflicts shaped by geopolitical regions, the parties involved, and interests influenced the strategies employed by the state apparatus. For instance, in the northeast, against Boko Haram, there have been joint efforts for counter terrorism; in the northwest, where banditry has claimed many lives, JMO operations have been majorly anti-banditry; in areas where ethno-religious conflict and the herdsmen scourge persist, like in the north-central, JMO has taken the form of peacekeeping operations; in the southeast, separatist movements and south-south militancy have been undertaken to protect critical national infrastructure and to maintain normalcy; and finally, JMO in the southwest has been to curtail the menace of kidnapping, cultism, and ritual killings.

In all of these cases, the effectiveness of these Joint military operations has been a persistent challenge. And as highlighted by Azinge (2013) and Johnson (2014), the dynamic nature of insecurity that persists in the country justifies the imperative for new security efforts and strategies for internal security operations. It is against this backdrop of concerns and imperatives that this paper seeks to identify and explore the distinctive characteristics of major joint military operations in Nigeria, especially to examine their effectiveness and areas for improvement.

The paper is divided into sections: the first section discusses the Joint Military Operations (JMO) in

Nigeria, and the second section provides an overview of security challenges facing Nigeria in the Fourth Republic and an array of joint military efforts to eradicate them. The third section talks about its effectiveness and challenges in achieving security objectives, while the last part gives a way forward to maintain internal disquiet and external aggression, especially for a variety of national security and united nations. In achieving this, the paper uses primary and secondary data to describe and analyse the dynamics of violence and their impact on the deployment, operation, and efficiency of JMO in Nigeria. The results are presented using both analytical and descriptive approaches to assess the impact of mission mandates on internal security in Nigeria. The paper argues that the over-militarization of the civic polity and leadership styles affect the synergy and capacity of the multi-agency security framework. It recommends leadership development, adequate funding, modern equipment, attitudinal change, and constant interactions and training as ways to improve the effectiveness of JMO in Nigeria.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Issues in Joint Military Operations (JMO)

Joint Military Operations (JMO) is a strategy that involves the collaboration of different branches of a country's armed forces, such as the Army, Navy, and Air Force, to achieve common security goals within the nation's territory. JMO is essential for dealing with internal security issues, such as terrorism, insurgency, civil unrest, and other domestic dangers, that threaten the nation's sovereignty and the well-being of its people. JMO leverages the combined strengths and expertise of each service to provide a more holistic and coordinated response to dynamic and complex security situations. JMO can be defined as the coordinated action of forces of two or more services to accomplish a common mission (Newland, 1993) or as the planning, execution, and assessment of a military campaign by two or more military services acting in concert according to a common strategic or operational plan (Grey, 1999). Both definitions stress the importance of cooperation, integration, and alignment among different military branches,

where each contributes its unique abilities, equipment, and knowledge to support and enhance the others. The integration of intelligence from various sources is vital to gaining a complete picture of the enemy's strategies and movements.

The success of JMO in dealing with internal security issues depends on effective coordination, communication, and interoperability among the participating military branches. However, JMO also poses unique challenges, such as ensuring effective communication and information sharing among the different services, overcoming inter-service differences or conflicts in operational doctrines, and maintaining a unified command structure to avoid clashes of authority. Additionally, coordination with civilian authorities and law enforcement agencies is essential to creating a coherent approach to maintaining law and order. Joint Military Operations (JMO) is a crucial strategy for dealing with internal security issues by leveraging the collective capabilities of multiple military branches. It allows for a more holistic and coordinated response to dynamic security threats, enabling the nation to safeguard its sovereignty and protect its people effectively. Through effective collaboration and coordination, JMO serves as a powerful tool for ensuring peace and stability within a country's borders (Newland, 1993; Grey, 1999).

In Nigeria, internal security operations (ISOPs) are defined as collaborative efforts by various security services to restore law and order (TRADOC, 2014). These operations involve the participation of the police force, immigration service, customs service, department of state security service, and other domestic security entities, collectively working to maintain peace within the state (Maikomo & Ngomba, 2018). The scope of joint operations in Nigeria encompasses a range of pressing security concerns. From combating terrorism, which has evolved into a new form of warfare, to addressing communal and religious conflicts that overwhelm the capabilities of the police, the need for joint efforts becomes evident. Cross-border raids and banditry, non-combatant evacuation operations, internal armed insurgencies like the joint task force in the Niger Delta region, armed robbery invasions, and clashes between rival organizations, such as the incidents witnessed in Onitsha, are all potential areas where joint operations play a crucial role.

In response to the intricate security landscape, the adoption of joint military operations presents a comprehensive framework that leverages the strengths and expertise of multiple security agencies. By working together, these agencies can effectively address the diverse challenges posed by contemporary security threats, ensuring the safety and well-being of the nation and its people.

2.2 The History of Joint Military Operations in Nigeria

Tracing back to Nigeria's early days and extending into the present, the history of joint military operations in the country unveils a continuous response to the ever-growing internal and external security challenges. Established under the British administration, the Nigerian Army, Navy, and Police stand as the oldest security outfits (Okolie-Osemene, 2019), while the Air Force and other paramilitary organizations were rather products of political and historical developments that shaped Nigeria's security sector. These agencies have been constitutionally mandated and strategically deployed to crisis zones and hotspots as perceived threats to national security warranted their intervention. Notably, historical instances such as the Egba insurrection during the First World War and the Aba women's riot in 1929–30 saw the joint utilization of police and army forces for internal security operations (Omoigui, 2013).

The Tiv riots in 1960 and 1964 were another case after independence. Stemming from grievances related to the perceived dominance of the Hausa-Fulani group and governmental control. The Tiv, a tribe in then-northern Nigeria, engaged in violent protests (Haa-Orpin, 2015). The Nigerian security apparatus was deployed to quell the unrest in the region on four occasions. In each instance, contingents of the military collaborated with the Nigeria Police to restore internal security. Additionally, the Nigerian Air Force, Army, and Police Department participated in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) against Maitatsine groups in Kano and Maiduguri, as well as against the Taliban in the Mandara Mountains and Panshekara (Osakwe & Udeagbala, 2015). These operations extended to other regions, including the Ife-Modakeke conflict and even what

later became known as the Nigerian Civil War, which initially took the form of a police action involving the police, army, navy, and air force.

Over the years, the spillover from these security challenges has proven more formidable in the 20th and 21st centuries for the Nigerian military to

tackle, with internal unrest as well as security operations extending across all six geopolitical zones of the country. These complexities and intricacies of these security concerns have necessitated ongoing joint operations and interventions by the military and security agencies to maintain stability and restore peace throughout the nation.



Figure 1: Researcher's Personal Graphical Representation of Various Insecurity Issues in Nigeria

2.3 An Overview of Nigeria's Security Challenges

Navigating the landscape of Nigeria's security challenges reveals a multitude of threats that test the government's commitment to safeguarding its citizens and ensuring their overall well-being. From sporadic acts of domestic violence to grave concerns like ethno-religious conflicts, the Boko Haram insurgency, and the resurgence of the Biafran actualization movement, Nigeria is facing an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping

security crises. Additionally, clashes between herders and farmers, Niger Delta militancy, kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, and oil theft add to the intricate tapestry of security concerns (Benebo, Schumann, & Vaezghasemi, 2018; Olojo, 2014; Yahaya & Akhaine, 2021).

Each of these security crises possesses its own distinct characteristics, shaped by geography, the parties involved, interests, and the strategies employed by the state apparatus. While some attribute the surge in insecurity to Nigeria's share of

global insecurity challenges, others argue that it stems from self-inflicted wounds related to resource control. The ramifications of these difficulties extend far beyond the realm of security, inflicting significant damage to the Nigerian economy, displacing a large number of individuals internally, and compromising sources of income as terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activities permeate the nation. The erosion of trust in law enforcement agencies further exacerbates the situation as groups and organizations lose faith in their ability to provide protection.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian government has not remained idle in the face of these threats. The country found refuge in being Africa's giant and in her role in international peacekeeping. At various times, they repressed insecurities at the outset using both conventional and non-conventional techniques of insurrections and insurgencies. At times, a single military unit has been tasked with combating particular insecurity, and when the situation overwhelms a single security agency, two or more have been utilized on combined operations for efficacy and peace in such areas where insecurity exists. At some point, such activities were effective, and such security bridges were repressed; at other times, the ruminants gave birth to another, ushering in a new breed of security problems for Nigerian internal security (Akinwale, 2016).

To address the recent surge in security challenges, the Federal Government, through the Defence Headquarters (DHQ), established military operations under a Multi-Agency Task Force arrangement. This alliance incorporates various security agencies engaged in numerous ongoing military operations across the country's six geopolitical regions. These operations, including Operation Hadin Kai (former Lafia Dole); Operation Gama Aiki; Operation Shirin Harbi; Operation Safe Corridor; Operation Safe Haven; Operation Sara Daji; Operation Harbin Kunama; Operation Delta Safe, which was formerly Operation Pulo Shield; Operation Crocodile Smile; Operation Tsera Teku; Operation Eagle Eye; Operation Awase; Operation Mesa; Operation Iron Fence; and Operation Python Dance, among others, are designed to combat violent extremism, criminal activities, farmer-herder crises, and other anti-state activities. They also address ethno-religious

confrontations in specific areas such as Bogoro and Tafawa Balewa LGAs of Bauchi State and Southern Kaduna, which encompass Kaura, Kauru, Zangon Kataf, Jema'a, and Sanga LGAs, as well as the 17 LGAs of Plateau State afflicted by communal crises.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 ARRAY OF JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA

3.1.1 Counter-Insurgency: A Joint Military Operation in the Northeast

One example is Operation Hadin Kai (Tunoh, 2021), which is the current name of the military operation against Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists in the northeast region of Nigeria. The operation was formerly known as Operation Lafiya Dole, which means "peace by all means" in Hausa. Operation Lafiya Dole was launched in July 2015, following the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari, who vowed to defeat the terrorists within his first year in office. The operation involves the deployment of troops from the Nigerian Army, Air Force, Navy, Police, DSS, NSCDC, and NIS (Izeze, 2016), as well as regional and international partners such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which comprises troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin. The operation also involves the use of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, such as drones, satellites, and aircraft, to locate and target the terrorists' hideouts and camps. The operation also relies on the cooperation and support of local communities and vigilante groups, such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), who provide information and assistance to the security forces (Onuoha and Ugwueze, 2018). The COIN operation has been utilized to control the situation through the imposition of curfews and the declaration of a state of emergency.

Some of the operational successes of COIN Joint Military Operations in northeast Nigeria include the recapturing of most of the territory that was under Boko Haram and ISWAP control in 2015 and 2016, especially in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. The Nigerian military, with the support of the

MNJTF and the CJTF, was able to push back the insurgents from major towns and cities, such as Maiduguri, Damaturu, Gwoza, Bama, and Mubi, and restore government authority and services in those areas (Onuoha et al., 2020; Voice of America, 2016). Also, this was accompanied by the degradation of the leadership and command structure of Boko Haram and ISWAP through targeted operations that killed or captured several top commanders and fighters. Some notable examples are the killing of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, the killing of Abubakar Shekau in 2021, and the capture of Khalid al-Barnawi in 2016 (Onuoha et al., 2020; BBC News, 2021; Reuters, 2016).

Disruption of the financing and logistics networks of Boko Haram and ISWAP through raids, arrests, seizures, and sanctions that targeted their sources of funding, weapons, vehicles, fuel, and food. Some of these sources include kidnapping for ransom, bank robberies, taxation and extortion of local populations, donations from sympathisers and sponsors, smuggling and trafficking of goods and people, and looting of humanitarian aid (Onuoha et al., 2020; Deutsche Welle, 2015; Voice of America, 2016). Likewise, the prevention of large-scale attacks on strategic targets and population centres through enhanced intelligence gathering, surveillance, early warning systems, checkpoints, patrols, and rapid response units. The Nigerian military and its allies have been able to thwart or mitigate several attempted attacks by Boko Haram and ISWAP on military bases, government buildings, schools, markets, places of worship, and public events (Onuoha et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the Nigerian military has also participated in some civil-military cooperation projects, such as medical outreach programmes, road construction and repairs, water supply and sanitation facilities, and school rehabilitation and supplies (Onuoha et al., 2020; Oyewole & Onuoha, 2018). The facilitation of humanitarian assistance and development interventions through the provision of security escorts for aid workers and displaced persons returning to their communities. Based on these sources, it can be estimated that between 100 and 164 Chibok girls have been rescued or returned as of August 2021 (Rompter 2018; BBC, 2021; Channels Television, 2021). However, this number may not be accurate or up-to-

date, as there may be other sources that have different information. The fate of the remaining Chibok girls is still unknown, and there have been renewed calls for their rescue and reunification with their families.

Without doubt, one could adjudge that these successes have not been sufficient or sustainable enough to end the insurgency or address its root causes. COIN operations still face many challenges that limit their effectiveness and impact. Some of these challenges are the persistence of attacks by Boko Haram and ISWAP on soft targets and remote areas, especially in rural communities along the borders with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The insurgents have also exploited the gaps in coordination and cooperation among the MNJTF countries to launch cross-border raids and ambushes (Onuoha et al., 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020). The resurgence of ISWAP as a more formidable force than Boko Haram since 2018 has also become a source of concern. ISWAP has been able to recruit more fighters, expand its territory, improve its governance, increase its attacks, and challenge the Nigerian military's dominance not only in the Lake Chad region but also in other places like beyond the Northeast into Jos, Kaduna, Niger State, and even the Federal Capital Territory (Felbab-Brown, 2020; Zenn & Pieri, 2018).

As Onuoha et al. (2020) pointed out, COIN operations have also been hampered by insufficient funding, corruption, mismanagement, poor maintenance, shortages, and delays in the procurement and delivery of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, aircraft, and communication devices. The military personnel have also suffered from low morale, low pay, poor welfare, casualties, injuries, trauma, and fatigue (Onuoha et al., 2020; Reuters, 2018). With that comes the violation of human rights and international humanitarian law by some elements of the Nigerian military and its allies.

The COIN operations have been marred by allegations and evidence of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests and detention, sexual violence, forced disappearances, and displacement of civilians. These abuses have eroded the trust and confidence of the local populations in the security forces and fuelled resentment and radicalization

(Onuoha et al., 2020; CNN, 2018). Finally, the neglect or inadequacy of political, economic, and social solutions to complement or follow up the military solutions means that the COIN operations have not been accompanied by meaningful dialogue, reconciliation reform, or development initiatives that address the underlying causes and drivers of the insurgency. These include poverty, unemployment, inequality, and marginalisation. Poor governance, corruption, and religious extremism contribute to ethnic tensions, environmental degradation, and climate change (Onuoha et al., 2020; International Crisis Group, 2018). Therefore, it is important to improve and adapt COIN operations to overcome these challenges and achieve lasting peace and stability in Nigeria's North-East.

3.1.2 Joint Military Operations to Safeguard Critical Economic Infrastructure

In the intricate web of causal factors contributing to inter-communal and inter-ethnic armed conflicts in the Niger Delta, the illicit trade of crude oil through "bunkering" stands out as a lucrative enterprise. It's instrumental in the struggle among the 46 different insurgent groups dotted across the Niger Delta (Akpan, 2011). The many VNSAs that emerged after 1999 appeared to have had far more conflicts among themselves than with the Nigerian military assigned to restore order. Control of oil bunkering routes and the battle for patronage have been cited to explain the FG's motivations behind these operations in the Niger Delta. Over the years, four major operations have been documented as part of joint military operations in the Niger Delta: *Operation Restore Hope* (2003–2010), *Operation Pulo Shield* (2010–2016), *Operation Delta Safe* (since 2016), and *Exercise Crocodile Smile* (September 2016). These large-scale operations are aimed at safeguarding critical economic infrastructure in the Niger Delta.

Operation Restore Hope initially focused on three states divided into sectors—Sector I (Delta State), Sector II (Bayelsa State), and Sector III (Rivers State)—due to the high incidence of violent ethnopolitical clashes and bunkering activities in these regions at the time of deployment (Essien, 2013). The operation's mandate was to defend

sensitive locations and oil facilities, including rigs, flow stations, and tank farms, in Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers states, as well as the lives of individuals working for oil companies. The assault on the insurgent stronghold at Camp 5 in Delta State and the subsequent collapse of the insurgent base in *Gbaramatu* were the most significant military actions carried out under the Operation Restore Hope mandate. These strikes severely damaged the infrastructure of the insurgents and were followed by the Presidential Amnesty Declaration in June 2009, offering pardon to militants who surrendered their weapons and integrated into society (Osakwe & Udeagbala, 2015).

However, as the insurgency persisted despite the amnesty programme, Operation Restore Hope was disbanded and succeeded by Operation Pulo Shield. Some VNSAs, including the Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF), led by John Togo, reneged on the Amnesty Agreement and continued their assaults on Nigeria's oil infrastructure in the region. The primary mission of Operation Pulo Shield was to protect oil infrastructure and installations across the entire Niger Delta, encompassing nine states. Its objective was to eradicate pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, illegal oil refining, "illegal" oil bunkering, piracy, and sea robbery within its Area of Responsibility (AOR). The aim was to create a conducive environment for the oil and gas industry in the Niger Delta (Essien, 2013). Notably, Operation Pulo Shield apprehended around 2,000 suspects involved in crude oil bunkering and artisanal refining, along with the confiscation of numerous vessels, boats, tanker trucks, and fuel dumps associated with stolen crude oil (Umoh, 2013).

In June 2016, Operation Pulo Shield was phased out and replaced by Operation Delta Safe, with a core modification in the operational mandate to enhance service delivery, efficiency, and effectiveness in addressing security concerns in the Niger Delta, particularly the protection of vital national assets. Since its inception, the force has made some notable progress in fulfilling its mandate. For instance, between 2017 and 2019, the Force seized and impounded 24 vessels, 191 barges, 234 outboard engines, and 476 different forms of passenger boats, among other things; destroyed 1,437 illegal refineries; 795 wooden cargo boats; 3,872 metal

surface tanks; and 1,019 plastic tanks. The apprehension of about 1,846 criminal culprits and the targeting of high-profile elements have significantly constrained their ability to operate freely (Essien, 2013).

However, despite the joint military operations conducted by Nigerian security forces under different mandates, underlying issues such as crude oil crime and pipeline sabotage persist, albeit to a lesser extent. Between 2016 and 2017, a renewed agitation for resource control emerged, necessitating the Nigerian military's Exercise Crocodile Smile. This exercise aimed to enhance the proficiency of military personnel in handling internal security responsibilities within the Niger Delta's maritime regions. Therefore, it is important to improve and adapt joint military operations to overcome these challenges and achieve lasting peace and stability in the region.

3.1.3 Joint Military Operations Against Minority Agitation, Ethnic Crisis, Electioneering, and Other Anti-State Activities

Conflicts stemming from disputes over land and resources between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers have given rise to banditry, kidnapping, and communal crises. These clashes have escalated into larger-scale crimes, triggering intercommunal confrontations, particularly between nomadic and settled tribes. Such conflicts have been prevalent in the central Middle Belt region, including Plateau, Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna, and Nasarawa states, as well as in some southern states, where casualties are alarmingly frequent (Global Security, 2018). The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has highlighted that ethnic violence in Nigeria results in more fatalities than terrorism, further exacerbating the country's security challenges. To address these issues, various operations such as Operation 'Safe Haven,' Operation 'Sharan Daji,' Operation 'Harbin Kunama,' Operation 'Awase,' Operation 'Iron Fence,' Operation 'Mesa,' Operation 'Safe Conducts,' Operation 'Quick Response Squad,' and other operations spanning Nigeria's six geopolitical regions have been implemented to combat violent

criminal activities, electoral violence, and other threats.

In the north-western region, due to a surge in mass abductions and violent crimes since 2020, security authorities launched an intensive operation that involved airstrikes and a telecommunications blackout in specific areas of the northwest, aiming to dislodge criminal gangs from their forest hideouts. In August 2015, a joint effort involving the Army, Air Force, Police, DSS, NIA, DIA, and NSCDC was initiated as Operation Sharan Daji to confront armed banditry, livestock theft, and abductions. The primary objective of Operation Sharan Daji is to conduct raids on bandit hideouts in Zamfara and Katsina states. With the synchronised efforts of all security services and local vigilantes, they were able to eliminate some bandit camps and enclaves in those areas. Apart from Operation Sharan Daji, Operation Diran Mikiya involved extensive aerial operations to identify and neutralise armed bandits and other criminal groups in the North-West, with the ultimate goal of restoring normalcy in the affected areas. Operation Diran Mikiya achieved notable successes, including the successful neutralisation of several bandits and their camps through targeted air strikes in villages such as Mashema, Daji Bawar, Sunke, and a location southeast of Yanwari in Zamfara State. Additionally, in January 2022, an air operation was carried out against insurgents in Gusami forest and west Tsamre village in Zamfara, resulting in the elimination of over 100 bandits, including two prominent leaders. However, these actions prompted swift retaliation from the bandits. Around 300 gunmen attacked eight villages in Zamfara's Anka local region, resulting in the tragic loss of at least 200 lives.

However, despite employing advanced tools and strategies to track down and dismantle these criminal organisations, the wave of murders and abductions continues unabated. A notable incident that exemplifies the persistent threat is the mass kidnapping of hundreds of boys from the Government Science School in Kankara town in December 2020, for which Boko Haram claimed responsibility. As a result, Operation 'Diran Mikiya' has expanded its scope to include the Birnin Gwari (Kaduna), Sokoto, and Katsina axes. Nevertheless, kidnapping and banditry persist, as evidenced by the

unfortunate reality that, in 2018 alone, Zamfara recorded 371 deaths, with at least 238 of those killings occurring even after the deployment of security agencies in the area. Recently, over 200 people were killed and over 900 individuals kidnapped between January and May 2023 (Channels Television, 2023; Daily Post, 2023; Nigerian Tribune, 2023).

Apart from operations against banditry in the Northwest, Operation Safe Haven (OPSH) was established as a Multi-Agency Task Force arrangement with the primary objective of maintaining peace in Plateau State. The need for such an operation arose from the widespread destruction of lives and property resulting from a crisis that originated in Jos on January 17, 2010 (Adam, 2020). Initially, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) sought assistance from the military, leading to the deployment of Operation MESA from the Nigerian Army's 3 Division in 2010 (Vunom J., 2020). As the scale of violence expanded beyond Jos to adjacent regions like Bukuru, Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Jos North and South, and Riyom LGAs, additional security agencies, Nigerian Army formations, and units from outside Jos were dispatched to the area. This assembled force eventually became known as the Special Task Force (STF) under the Defence Headquarters (DHQ). The operation involved personnel from various agencies, including the Nigerian Navy (NN), Nigerian Air Force (NAF), Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), and Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), with the police component consisting of the Mobile Police and the Special Investigation Bureau (SIB) (Global Security, 2019).

On August 18, 2016, the operation was rebranded as Operation Safe Haven (OPSH). Its mission is to restore law and order in Plateau State and parts of Bauchi and Southern Kaduna States, providing support to civil authorities while respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens and commuters within its jurisdiction. The operation employs a combination of reprisal attacks, clearance operations, robust patrols, and non-violent approaches such as peace meetings, rehabilitation of repentant criminals, and consistent engagement

with stakeholders. Through these joint efforts, the general security situation within the OPSH jurisdiction has been effectively managed, creating a relatively calm and conducive environment for socio-economic activities to thrive. The North-West region is not devoid of significant undertakings, as evidenced by the existence of Operation Sara Daji and Operation Harbin Kunama. These operations have been strategically devised to tackle the criminal activities perpetrated by armed bandits, livestock rustlers, and robbers. Their targeted focus lies primarily in Zamfara, Kaduna, and the peripheries of Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, and Kano states. By addressing these pervasive threats, the operations aim to restore peace and security in the region.

In the South West, 'Operation Awase' assumes a crucial role in combating criminal operations that encroach upon the Ogun-Lagos vicinity, with particular emphasis on the troublesome Arepo area. This locale has become notorious for illicit oil bunkering and the systematic destruction of pipelines. Notably, this operation has achieved resounding success, not only in curbing criminal activities but also in rebuilding the trust that had been eroded within the affected communities. Adding to the formidable line-up is 'Operation Quick Response Squad,' serving as a specialised force primarily dedicated to countering armed robbery. This operation is skillfully organised in diverse formations, optimising its ability to swiftly respond to security threats and ensure the safety of the populace. Supplementing these endeavours is Operation Mesa, a Joint Task Force (JTF) operation that casts its net wide, targeting a wide array of criminal activities across all federation states. By pooling the resources and expertise of various security agencies and armed forces, this operation aims to curtail criminal elements and maintain law and order throughout the nation (Iroegbu, 2016).

Furthermore, the implementation of 'Operation Safe Conducts' underscores the military's commitment to ensuring the integrity of electoral processes. By providing comprehensive guidelines and facilitating an election-friendly environment, this programme strives to uphold the principles of democracy and foster a climate conducive to free and fair elections. Lastly, 'Operation Iron Fence' takes up the mantle of confronting armed robbers, hooligans, and

kidnappers. This collaborative endeavour brings together diverse security agencies and armed forces from across the country, primarily focusing its efforts in the Southeast. By effectively fortifying the region against these threats, the operation aims to safeguard the well-being and security of its inhabitants.

3.2 EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS ON NATIONAL SECURITY

When assessing the wide-ranging operations that span the entirety of Nigeria, the overarching objective has been to establish a sense of relative tranquillity within the country, employing diverse operational frameworks at various stages of implementation. In assessing these comprehensive combat operations and paradigms, it becomes evident that individuals' perceptions about the efficacy of the JMO are informed by encounters with security agencies, personnel's roles, the Task Force leadership, and the geo-political area of the operation. (Global Security, 2019). Research reveals that religion influences people's assessments of security agencies' performance in certain instances. Some respondents demonstrated heightened sensitivity to the Task Force commander's ethno-religious affiliation and the composition of ethno-religious groups within the Task Force Platoons, resulting in a lack of absolute certainty among the populace. Nonetheless, a prevailing argument highlights the existence of relative peace in numerous Joint Military Operations Areas (JMOAs), excluding specific pockets of instability in the Northwest. These tangible and intangible accomplishments have been made possible by their joint passion and the command's inward-looking approach, emphasising factors such as mobility and medical care.

Considering the case of Boko Haram, which has experienced significant degradation and containment due to ongoing inter-agency operations, There are several situations where Nigerian security bodies, though separated, unitedly engaged the insurgents. One event is the coordinated air strikes executed by the Air Component of Operation Hadin Kai on September 26, 2021, which neutralised dozens of ISWAP/BHT

terrorists and their collaborators at Daban Masara, north of Lake Chad, in Kukawa LGA of Borno State. This event showed the joint effort of the Nigerian Air Force and the Nigerian Army in combating the terrorists who launch attacks on troops' locations and innocent civilians in the area. According to the Nigerian Army, this event was the result of credible intelligence and confirmatory ISR missions that identified the terrorists' location and activities (Nigerian Army, 2021).

Another event was the joint operation conducted by troops of Operation Safe Haven and Operation Whirl Stroke on September 21, 2021, which rescued 18 kidnapped victims and arrested 11 kidnappers along Gboko-Katsina Ala Road in Benue State. This event showed the collaboration of the Nigerian Army and other security agencies in responding to the distress call from the victims, who were travelling in a commercial bus when they were ambushed by the kidnappers. According to the Nigerian Army, this event was a result of timely information and swift action by the troops, who pursued and engaged the kidnappers in a gun battle (Nigerian Army, 2021).

Likewise, the joint operation conducted by troops of Operation Delta Safe and Operation Crocodile Smile on September 17, 2021, destroyed illegal refining sites and recovered weapons and ammunition from suspected militants and cultists in Delta State. This event showed the synergy of the Nigerian Navy, the Nigerian Army, and the Civil Defence Corps in tackling oil theft, pipeline vandalism, illegal bunkering, and militancy in the Niger Delta region. According to the Nigerian Navy, this event was a result of intensive patrols and raids by the troops, who located and destroyed several illegal refining sites with large quantities of crude oil and refined products, as well as recovered one AK-47 rifle, one pump-action gun, one locally made pistol, 15 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, two live cartridges, two speed boats, and three outboard engines (Nigerian Navy, 2021). While combat victory remains the ultimate aim, inter-agency cooperation yields additional benefits such as diminishing inter-service rivalry, ensuring efficient resource management, fostering confidence among observers and participants, repairing the tarnished image of perceived ineffective services by enhancing responsiveness,

and ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and coordination towards shared goals.

Regardless of how good and well-intended the stated missions were, the regularity with which these operations are occurring worries everyone, especially because none of these military actions have ever been decisive. This in itself exposed Nigeria's military, once one of Africa's strongest and a mainstay of regional peacekeeping, as a force in dire straits. They have devolved into a flawed force (International Crisis Group, 2016). The initial slow and heavy-handed response to the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency raised serious concerns, and the organisation's human rights record demonstrates a serious disconnect with civilians. With these challenges, they set in motion problems that are impeding their operational strategy; some of these challenges are general, while others are unique depending on the reason and character of the conflict.

The complication and uncertainty of the operational environments of JMO in the context of internal security tasks frequently entail an accusation of human rights violations, which these Nigerian security agencies were not immune from. The Nigerian military's reactions to the domestic crises have been hampered by allegations of human rights violations. The Nigerian Army's official rulebook demands commanders engage in MOOTW to demonstrate the greatest degree of professionalism and competency, as well as to motivate subordinates (Adegbija, 2022). Unfortunately, the military has had interpersonal interactions with citizens (Nairaland, 2022). In multiple incidents, the military has been accused of abusing civilians and violating human rights (Ajakaye, 2018). This is shown by the mistreatment of civilian populations in the Odi community and Zaki Biam in 1999 and 2001, respectively (Oluyemi, 2020). Also, abuse of women and girls (Boko Haram victims) who were forced to surrender to rape in order to avoid starvation or hunger are cases in question. On many occasions, the defence headquarters dismissed those accusations as falsehoods, but one could link these dismal human rights records to the blurry line between military targets and civilian populations. As a result, violence has become elastic, pervasive, unselective, and brutal, making it far more difficult

to defend non-combatants. The cost of collateral damages has frequently skyrocketed.

The public discourse about the Boko Haram armed group deploying human shields has frequently inflated collateral casualties. As a result, the Nigerian military's CT-COIN progress has been modest, and its success has been restricted. The illusion is compounded by the fact that a precise battlefield is difficult to determine. Allegations of human rights violations against civilians committed by the NM during their deadly struggle with Islamist extremist organisations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP point to a lack of command-and-control capacity. Without doubt, this act jeopardises the larger goal of stabilising Nigeria's northern region.

While synergy among security agencies had brought remarkable successes, there is still evidence that inadequate personnel training, inadequate information collection equipment, communication gaps, and an uncooperative attitude among the natives hindered the absolute victory that would have been recorded. Abdullah (2022) expressed his opinion in an interview about the causes and why JMO lingered longer than expected, saying that "a substantial portion of the security personnel are responsible for what is happening". This was also buttressed by Musa (2022), who said that many of our military men colluded and always had contact with the criminals. It's a profitable business for them". Some also felt that our military has all the necessary resources to stop insecurity in Nigeria, but it has become a business, which is why some elements do not want the insecurity to end regardless of the lives of Nigerians and young troops lost. Corruption is worsening the conflict and is a major source of insecurity in Nigeria. The irony of DCP Abba Kyari's anti-crime measures is a great example.

Diversion of funds designated for the procurement of military equipment for personal use by top military personnel (Ejekwonyilo & Sanni, 2022) and the continued collection of bribes by soldiers stationed at security checkpoints (Emmanuel, 2018) contribute to this infection of JMO. Senators and Members of Parliament are not indifferent to the military's corruption practises. They frequently use the appropriation procedure in the National

Assembly to shift military cash to private economic interests rather than benefiting the military. As a result, subpar weapons and ammunition were acquired, causing troops to suffer and fear to thrive.

This type of corruption mostly affects frontline personnel. While the officers in charge of anti-crime agencies are more in the act than suspects, with this, the country's national security continues to go down. There have been multiple accounts on social media and in newspapers of under-equipped soldiers being slain in ambushes or fleeing the battlefield when confronted with the terror group's superior weapons and equipment. In an Igbo adage, it is said that "a dog does not eat the bone attached to it." An elephant, according to the Yoruba, does not consume the grass under it. Both demonstrate the significance of roles and the obligations that come with them. Simply defined, "much is required of those to whom much is given." However, this does not appear to be the case with Nigerian officials. With this, it is critical that the Nigerian military adopt an anti-corruption policy, make security information available to the public, control security votes, and protect whistle-blowers. The reason for this is because the country has what is adjudged an ill-disciplined security sector that abuses its own power, whether it's because its soldiers aren't paid or because there's just a culture of impunity (Solomon, 2017).

The role of NGOs in Nigeria is also a topic of debate and scrutiny, with some questioning their activities and their impact on national security. NGO activities hinder the effectiveness of security agencies, and this has been reported several times daily. This perspective suggests that NGOs may inadvertently interfere with security operations or compromise the element of surprise. Over 300 NGOs were operating illegally in the North East region (Tribune, 2023), and the Nigerian Army has severely accused some NGOs of providing food and drugs to Boko Haram terrorists and sabotaging counter-terrorism operations in the North East (Premium Times, 2019). Some of them were accused of booking hotel accommodations for 10 years, thereby not wanting the insurgency to end. While NGOs have been instrumental in humanitarian assistance and crisis response, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, good governance and accountability, as well as the

development and empowerment of women and the disabled in Nigeria, it is pertinent to also state that they are in conflict with the government over their autonomy, legitimacy, and contribution to society, and because they have relations with foreign interests or agendas, they are tense to affect national security through interfering in operations and other activities of these security agencies. These actions have often undermined the trust and cooperation between the government, security agencies, and civil society, which mostly violate the rights and freedoms of the people, thereby weakening JMO and national security.

Furthermore, there are administrative and logistical problems that are not unrelated to a lack of political will on the part of governments at all levels (Daily Trust, 2021). The major reason for the increase in insecurity in Nigeria is the lack of political will on the part of the government and policymakers; even the security agencies are politicised, which is greatly hindering interagency synergy. Security will be extremely difficult to deal with politically since it is politicised, there is a reaction, poor effects, and so on. However, with the right political will, it will be simple to reduce insecurity. President Mohammadu Buhari has always been 'surprised' when an assault that should not have happened occurs; on the other hand, security officials have always depended on Mr. President to decide who or when to strike the insurgent. As a result, Nigeria's political determination to combat insurgency appears more reactive than aggressive.

3.2.1 The Way Forward

The plethora of policies being reviewed and produced in quick succession, such as those in defence, cyber, and national security; the mounting of security roadblocks and their cancellation; the setting up of SARS; and the JMO and its review, all suggest reliance on adhoc measures. The 21st century is fast becoming increasingly complex as a result of several factors, especially the meteoric growth of ICT. It has been suggested that to address the complex nature of internal security challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for a holistic and multidimensional approach. It is believed that there is a limit to what the military can do regarding curbing the growing threats without

exploring other socio-economic development, good governance, the rule of law, and conflict resolution mechanisms (Ademola & Kolawole, 2020). Though the current administration under Bola Ahmed Tinubu has identified its importance, one thing that is important for the success of inter-agency cooperation and collaboration is leadership. Hereinafter, leadership at all levels is required in order to manage the plethora of security challenges dotting the landscape. Nigerians are in need of proactive leadership, not reactive leadership. However, first should be the introduction of leadership capacity in both introductory and advanced-level training in all schools and agencies and for elected politicians.

Another one is that the centralization of the security apparatus appears to be the key reason for the increase in the rate of violent insecurity and the weak delivery of Nigeria's security architecture. The non-localization of conflict and violence brings all violence to the national space. Furthermore, national security strategy development and implementation are key to addressing regional and national security challenges in Nigeria. It is also a central component of security sector governance, supporting effective oversight of the country's security sector. Also, at the level of operations, giving information to security services is not the issue; we can always do the right thing by reporting any suspicious movement, but the concern is the informant's safety. It is also considered that security agencies must increase the number of individuals they recruit each year due to a scarcity of manpower, as well as recruit the proper people who are eager and able to serve rather than the typical racketeers in the recruitment process that we are all familiar with.

Finally, to address this issue of NGOs, it is important to consider the diverse contributions and challenges posed by NGOs and arrive at an informed decision. Likewise, the federal government should assist security agencies by raising their salaries (Beauchamps et al., 2017). Because security agents are assisting and abating, insecurity is growing. It is booming because retired employees are not properly handled; it is thriving because retired personnel are not treated properly; and it is thriving because money meant to be paid to

the families of men that fall in battle is being embezzled by the Ogas at the top. We have security agents because of unemployment, and these operatives cannot risk their lives for a country that will not remember them.

Also, Individuals should be made aware that security is everyone's concern and should be treated as a personal effort. All of these crimes and horrors do not occur in isolation, nor are the perpetrators ghosts; the community has a lot to do with them, which brings us back to community policing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This paper examined the state of insecurity and joint military operations in Nigeria, as well as their influence on internal security in the country. It was discovered that the multi-agency task force structure has evolved over time in Nigeria, particularly in the management of internal conflict in the country in accordance with their mission mandate. It has also been revealed that there may be flaws here and there as the architecture of national security falls short of national security objectives. But overall, the role of these operations is consistent with universal principles and practice of intervention in complex internal security operations, and this has brought relative peace and security to some affected areas, though it has reduced people's trust in the military and government. These concrete and intangible gains were made possible by the commands' efforts and inward-lookingness, particularly in terms of mobility and medical support. To this end, it is thought that the interagency approach to security operations still has the potential to accomplish a new, intense, and more comprehensive strategy by utilizing and coordinating resources from many sources within a collaborative framework. Given the dynamic nature of the twenty-first-century security operational environment, which is defined by complexity, ambiguity, and a fast-developing character of conflict, it is critical to maintain unity of effort in order to actualize a stable and safe environment. As it is, securitization and security monitoring are important and need to be decentralized. All these and others would bring a paradigm shift to the history of violence and conflict in Nigeria.

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