

RESTRUCTURING NIGERIA'S MILITARY ARCHITECTURE: THE ROLE OF C4ISR IN COVERT AND ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

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Abstract

Nigeria has been entangled in complex, multi-front and symmetric conflicts that defy conventional military resolution. From Boko Haram and ISWAP in the North-East to banditry and Lakurawa in the North-West and separatist violence in the South-East, the character of warfare has fundamentally shifted away from state-on-state engagements toward diffuse, non-linear threats. Despite significant defense expenditures and foreign military assistance, Nigeria's conventional force structure has consistently struggled to achieve decisive victory against these adaptive adversaries. This paper argues that meaningful restructuring of Nigeria's military architecture cannot occur without embedding a robust Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) framework as its central nervous system. Drawing on analysis of recent operational experiences, including the landmark of MoU between Nigeria and UK worth of \$190 million NiDAR C4I programme announced in March 2026, and intelligence synergy initiatives under the Armed Forces Joint Doctrine Centre, the paper demonstrates that the absence of real-time situational awareness, secure communications interoperability, and integrated intelligence fusion has consistently disadvantaged Nigerian forces. The paper employs a qualitative analytical methodology, synthesizing doctrinal reviews, case evidence, and comparative frameworks. It proposes a decentralized, technology-enabled command model that prioritizes information superiority over firepower dominance. The paper concludes that without doctrinal transformation and placing of C4ISR at the core of covert and asymmetric warfare doctrine, Nigeria risks perpetuating a cycle of tactical success without strategic consolidation.

Keywords: Asymmetric warfare, surveillance, reconnaissance (C4ISR); covert warfare,

Restructuring Nigeria military

Introduction

Nigeria's security environment has undergone a profound and troubling mutation since the return of the democracy in 1999 (Adebayo, 2020). What began as peacekeeping deployments and routine border patrols has evolved into a protracted, multi-front war against asymmetrical foes who reject conventional engagement (Onuoha, 2014). The North-East remains contested by Boko Haram remnants and the more structured Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), operating across the Lake Chad basin with transnational reach (ICG, 2021). The North-West has witnessed the emergence of hybrid jihadist-criminal networks and recently Lakurawa, where ideological actors fuse with smuggling, extortion, and arms trafficking (Okoli & Ogbonnaya, 2022). The North-Central region suffers from bandit-insurgent convergence driven by profit, territorial access, and coercive control (Aghedo, 2023), while the South-East contends with separatist militancy and criminalized violence (Nwosu, 2024). These wars overlap geographically but operate by fundamentally different logics.

The Nigerian military, structured primarily for territorial defence against conventional invaders, has struggled to adapt to this new reality (Obi, 2019). Its hierarchical command system, slow intelligence dissemination, and persistent interoperability gaps between the Army, Navy, and Air Force have created vulnerabilities that asymmetric actors routinely exploit (Umar, 2021). One of the most persistent hurdles has been fragmented intelligence sharing, with agencies often operating in silos and overlapping mandates leading to duplication of effort and inter-service rivalry (Daily Trust, 2025). This disjointedness undermines operational efficiency and allows threats to grow unchecked. In response to these challenges, Nigeria has begun taking decisive steps toward recalibrating its security architecture. In March 2026, the Ministry of Defence signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding with MARSS, a British defence technology company, for a national Commands, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I) programme valued at over \$190 million – one of the largest defence initiatives of its kind on the African continent (MARSS, 2026). The programme will deploy NiDAR, an AI-powered Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence system, alongside a new national command centre and regional hubs designed to create Nigeria's first fully integrated national defence architecture (MARSS, 2026).

Simultaneously, the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) Joint Doctrine and Welfare Centre has been commissioned to foster operational harmony, doctrine alignment, and joint training across the armed services, with National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu describing it as a commitment to ending siloed operations and institutional rivalries (Premium Times, 2026). These developments signal a growing recognition that brute-force alone is insufficient and that the new battlefield demands synergy, innovation, and intelligence as key tools of national defence (Ribadu, 2026).

Restructuring Nigeria's military architecture must pivot decisively from a platform-centric to an information-centric model, with C4ISR as its central nervous. Without integrated Commands, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), covert and asymmetric warfare will continue to favour non-state actors who exploit information asymmetry, porous borders, and slow decision cycles.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. How can the integration of C4ISR capabilities transform Nigeria's military effectiveness in covert and asymmetric warfare?
- ii. What specific C4ISR capabilities are most essential for enabling successful covert operations against insurgent leadership networks and logistics infrastructure?

The above questions frame an inquiry that is both diagnostic and prescriptive, seeking not merely to identify problems but to articulate actionable pathways for military restructuring (Yin, 2018).

Literature Review

Conceptualizing C4ISR in Modern Warfare

Commands, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), refers to the integrated systems and processes that enable military commanders to visualize the battlespace, communicate instantaneously, control distributed forces, and process intelligence into actionable knowledge (Cebrowski& Garstka, 1998). In conventional warfare, C4ISR enhances coordination and reduces fratricide risk. In asymmetric warfare, however, its role becomes qualitatively different and arguably more decisive.

The MARSS NiDAR system, now being deployed for Nigeria, exemplifies the cutting edge of C4ISR capability. Its NiDAR Nation Shield and Edge to Mission Command capabilities enable personnel operating in expeditionary vehicles, piloting UAVs, or stationed in regional and national hubs to work from the same single operational picture, allowing for faster and more accurate decision-making at tactical, operational, and strategic levels (MARSS, 2026). The Autonomous Mission Management (AMM) feature allows operators to autonomously task and deploy uncrewed assets across air, land, and sea domains, transforming UAVs, UGVs, and USVs into intelligent autonomous sensor and effector platforms (MARSS, 2026). One operator can oversee ten unmanned aerial systems operating automatically, dramatically expanding surveillance coverage without proportional personnel increases.

Conceptual Framework: C4ISR and Asymmetric Warfare

C4ISR refers to the integrated systems that allow commanders to see the battlefield, communicate instantaneously, control forces, and process intelligence (Alberts et al., 2000). In asymmetric warfare, where the enemy lacks conventional signatures (no tanks, airfields, or uniforms), C4ISR becomes decisive for:

- i. Targeting Covert Networks: SIGINT (Signal Intelligence) and HUMINT (Human Intelligence) fused via a common operating picture (Clark, 2007).
- ii. Reducing Decision Cycles: Shortening the "sensor-to-shooter" timeline from days to minutes (Boyd, 1996).
- iii. Enabling Covert Operations: Secure, low-probability-of-intercept communications for special forces (Treverton, 2017).

C4ISR Chart



115 Fig: 1

In contrast, Nigeria’s current architecture relies heavily on reactive intelligence, often delayed by bureaucratic silos between the Department of State Services (DSS), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and military intelligence (Daily Trust, 2025).

Table 1. Diagnosis: Deficits in the Current Architecture

An audit of operations between 2014 and 2024 reveals three chronic structural gaps (Obi, 2019; Umar, 2021):

Deficit Area	Manifestation in Asymmetric Conflict
Communications	Enemy interception of unencrypted radio; lack of cross-branch comms during joint operations.
Surveillance & Reconnaissance	Over-reliance on expensive leased aircraft; insufficient loitering drones for persistent coverage.
Command & Control	Rigid top-down clearance required for battalion-level engagement, enabling enemy escape.
Intelligence Fusion	No single integrated database; DSS holds intelligence that does not reach tactical units for weeks.

Source: (Field -work, 2021)

Case Example: In 2021, an ambush on a Nigerian Army convoy in Borno State occurred because Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) from a captured Boko Haram phone was processed at Abuja headquarters, but never relayed to the forward operating base (HumAngle, 2022). The enemy exploited the 48-hour intelligence lag.

The Role of C4ISR in Covert Warfare

Covert warfare – defined as deniable, small-unit operations aimed at decapitating enemy leadership or disrupting logistics – demands three C4ISR-enabled capabilities that Nigeria currently lacks (Treverton, 2017):

- i. Secure, Real-Time Blue Force Tracking: Commanders must know the exact position of covert teams without revealing them to enemy signals intelligence (Clark, 2007).
- ii. Low-Observable Drones: Hand-launched, acoustic-stealth UAVs for overwatch of raid objectives (MARSS, 2026).

- iii. Biometric Intelligence Integration: Linking captured insurgent fingerprints or iris scans to a central database to unmask covert operatives hiding in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Odion, 2023).

Establishing a Covert Operations Support Cell within the Defence Headquarters, equipped with dedicated C4ISR assets – including nanosatellites for persistent monitoring of identified covert routes (e.g., Lake Chad islands) (US DoD, 2025).

Restructuring Proposal: An Information-Centric Force

Restructuring Nigeria's military architecture along C4ISR lines requires three simultaneous interventions (Alberts & Hayes, 2003):

Command Restructuring

- i. Create Joint Theatre Commands (already started, but incomplete) with statutory authority over all services in a geographic zone (AFN, 2025).
- ii. Mandate a Lieutenant-Colonel's authority to request immediate air or drone surveillance without going through Abuja (Obi, 2019).

Technical Integration

- i. Deploy a Nigerian Tactical Data Link (NTDL) – encrypted, jam-resistant, compatible with allied systems (MARSS, 2026).
- ii. Build three Regional Intelligence Fusion Centres (Maiduguri, Sokoto, Enugu) directly feeding battalion-level tablets (US DoD, 2025).

Doctrinal Change

- i. Amend the Nigerian Army's Counterinsurgency Operations Manual to enshrine "C4ISR-first" as a principle: no operation without a confirmed common operating picture (Nigerian Army, 2019).
- ii. Train all infantry officers in basic SIGINT and drone cell management – no longer specialized (Umar, 2021).

Asymmetric Warfare and the Information Advantage

Asymmetric warfare is characterized by significant disparities in power, resources, and organizational capacity between contending parties, weaker actors, unable to defeat stronger

opponents conventionally, adopt unconventional methods ambushes, improvised explosive devices, terrorism, propaganda, and covert cell structures (Kiras, 2015). Critically, asymmetric actors often achieve victory not by destroying enemy forces but by eroding political will, imposing unsustainable costs, and demonstrating that the state cannot guarantee security (Arreguín-Toft, 2005).

Asymmetry becomes a force multiplier that could be utilized by insurgents who understand the patterns of state security forces can anticipate responses and exploitation (Kilcullen, 2009). Conversely, state forces operating with delayed intelligence, fragmented communications, and limited real-time visibility are systematically disadvantaged. As the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Hasan Bala Abubakar, recently stated, modern warfare cannot be won solely through firepower; intelligence is the currency of victory, especially in the ongoing battle against terrorism and insurgency (Abubakar, 2025).

Nigeria's Asymmetric Threat Landscape

Nigeria's security challenges are not monolithic but comprise distinct theatres requiring differentiated responses (Onuoha, 2014). In the North-East, where ideological insurgency predominates, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) should priorities leadership networks, Lake Chad logistics, and cross-border movement (ICG, 2021). Precision strikes only matter if followed by occupation and civilian protection; otherwise, they generate displacement without consolidation (Adebayo, 2020).

In the North-West, where the centre of gravity is economic rather than ideological, ISR is most valuable when directed at arms trafficking routes, gold and cattle economies, ransom intermediaries, and political protection networks (Okoli & Ogbonnaya, 2022). Kinetic operations without financial disruption risk endless regeneration (Aghedo, 2023). In the North-Central zone, early-warning systems and rapid response matter more than strike capacity – preventing escalation saves more lives than retaliatory operations after massacres occur (Nwosu, 2024).

Covert Warfare and C4ISR Requirements

Covert warfare – defined as deniable, small-unit operations aimed at decapitating enemy leadership or disrupting logistics without attribution demands specialized C4ISR capabilities that Nigeria has historically lacked (Treverton, 2017). These include secure, real-time Blue Force Tracking to know the exact position of covert teams without revealing them to enemy

signals intelligence; low-observable drones for overwatch of raid objectives; and biometric intelligence integration to link captured insurgent fingerprints or iris scans to central databases (Clark, 2007; Odion, 2023).

The US military support framework has contributed in this domain through persistent ISR via satellite systems, long-endurance drones, and signal interception platforms that allow pattern-of-life analysis over weeks and months, enabling mapping of leadership movement, logistics corridors, seasonal migration routes, and cross-border linkages (US DoD, 2025). However, the critical question is whether Nigeria is using this moment to build Nigerian-owned fusion capacity where local analysts learn to integrate multiple intelligence streams and develop independent assessments (Daily Trust, 2025). Without this, foreign support risks creating tactical dependency rather than strategic learning (Obi, 2019).

Intelligence Synergy and Joint Doctrinal Development

Recent scholarship and policy discourse have emphasized the importance of intelligence synergy—the seamless integration of collection, analysis, and dissemination across agencies (Rathmell, 2002). Historically, one of the biggest hurdles in Nigeria's security architecture has been fragmented intelligence sharing, with agencies often operating in isolation (Daily Trust, 2025). The commissioning of the AFN Joint Doctrine and Welfare Centre represents an attempt to address this, tasked with closing long-standing gaps in inter-agency coordination by harmonizing doctrines, standardizing training, and encouraging seamless communication (Premium Times, 2026). Intelligence-led operations offer additional benefits beyond operational effectiveness. When operations are informed by accurate intelligence and community-sensitive, they reduce the risk of civilian casualties and arbitrary raids, helping to rebuild public trust and improve the legitimacy of security forces (Kilcullen, 2009). Civilian cooperation, essential for winning hearts and minds, tends to rise when communities perceive security forces as precise and accountable (Umar, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interconnected theoretical perspectives that together explain why C4ISR integration is needed for asymmetric warfare success.

Network-Centric Warfare Theory

Network-Centric Warfare (NCW) theory, developed by Vice Admiral Arthur Cebrowski and John Garstka in the 1990s, posits that military power shifts from platform-centric to network-centric when forces are linked by robust information networks (Cebrowski & Garstka, 1998). NCW rests on three premises: first, that a robustly networked force improves information sharing; second, that information sharing enhances quality of information and shared situational awareness; third, that shared awareness enables self-synchronisation and dramatically increased mission effectiveness (Alberts et al., 2000).

Nigeria's current force structure remains largely platform-centric, with information flowing slowly through hierarchical channels (Obi, 2019). NCW theory suggests that restructuring must prioritise network density and information velocity over additional platforms (Alberts & Hayes, 2003).

Boyd's OODA Loop (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act)

Colonel John Boyd's OODA Loop framework explains competitive advantage in terms of decision cycle speed (Boyd, 1996). Any military force, to be effective, must cycle through observation, orientation, decision, and action faster than its adversary. The force with the faster OODA loop can penetrate the adversary's decision cycle, creating confusion and inability to respond coherently (Osinga, 2007).

Asymmetric actors often achieve OODA loop advantage through simplicity and decentralisation (Mack, 1975). Nigerian forces, by contrast, suffer from slow OODA loops due to hierarchical clearance requirements, fragmented intelligence dissemination, and communications interoperability gaps (Umar, 2021). C4ISR integration directly accelerates OODA loops by collapsing sensor-to-shooter timelines (Clark, 2007).

Intelligence-Led Operations Doctrine

Intelligence-led operations doctrine, emerging from British and American counterinsurgency experiences, holds that effective operations must be predicated on accurate, timely intelligence rather than reactive force deployment (Rathmell, 2002). This requires fusion of multiple intelligence disciplines (SIGINT, HUMINT, GEOINT, MASINT) into a common operating picture, and delegation of intelligence-driven decision authority to tactical commanders (Kilcullen, 2009).

As the Nigerian Air Force Chief has emphasized, intelligence must be not only gathered but shared, analyzed, and acted upon swiftly (Abubakar, 2025). Intelligence-led doctrine further implies that success metrics should prioritize disruption of enemy networks over body counts or territorial gains—indicators such as reduced coordination between insurgent cells, longer gaps between major attacks, fragmentation of command structures, higher defection rates, disrupted supply flows, and improved civilian cooperation (Kilcullen, 2009; Umar, 2021).

Integration of Theoretical Synthesis

These three frameworks converge on a central proposition: in asymmetric warfare, information superiority is the ultimate force multiplier (Arreguín-Toft, 2005). NCW provides the structural logic (networks over platforms). OODA Loop provides the temporal logic (speed over mass). Intelligence-led doctrine provides the operational logic (precision over volume). Together, they constitute the theoretical justification for restructuring Nigeria's military architecture around C4ISR (Alberts & Hayes, 2003).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, analytical research design appropriate for examining complex security sector restructuring processes (Yin, 2018). The approach is primarily descriptive and evaluative, synthesizing documentary evidence, doctrinal reviews, and case analysis to assess the role of C4ISR in Nigeria's military transformation.

Data Sources

- i. Data for this study are drawn from four categories of sources: Official Documents and Doctrinal Statements: Including Nigerian military after-action reviews, speeches by defence leadership, and policy documents from the Ministry of Defence (Nigerian Army, 2019; AFN, 2025).
- ii. Contemporary Reporting: News and analysis from reputable sources covering the MARSS NiDAR programme, US military support, and intelligence synergy initiatives (Hum Angle, 2022; Premium Times, 2026; MARSS, 2026).
- iii. Secondary Literature: Academic and policy literature on C4ISR, asymmetric warfare, and Nigerian security sector reform (Alberts et al., 2000; Onuoha, 2014; Obi, 2019)

- iv. Case Examples: Operational experiences from counterinsurgency campaigns in the North-East, North-West, and North-Central theatres (ICG, 2021; Aghedo, 2023).

Analytical Framework

Analysis proceeds through three stages (Yin, 2018):

- Diagnostic Stage: Identifying specific C4ISR-related capability deficits based on documented operational failures and expert assessments.
- Evaluative Stage: Assessing how current initiatives (NiDAR programme, Joint Doctrine Centre) address or fail to address identified deficits.
- Prescriptive Stage: Developing recommendations for doctrinal, structural, and technical reforms.

De-limitation and Limitations

The delimitation of this study is “Restructuring Nigeria's Military Architecture: The Role of C4ISR in Covert and Asymmetric Warfare” while, this study faces several limitations common to security sector research, operational details of ongoing C4ISR implementations are often classified. The MARSS NiDAR programme was announced in 23rd March 2026 and remains in early implementation stages, limiting available performance data. Additionally, attribution of outcomes to specific C4ISR capabilities is methodologically challenging given the multiplicity of variables affecting operational success.

Synthesis and Gap Analysis

Synthesis of Findings

Synthesis of the literature and evidence reveals several consistent themes: Firstly, Nigeria's current military architecture exhibits critical C4ISR deficits across all domains (Obi, 2019; Umar, 2021). Communications remain vulnerable to interception and lack cross-branch interoperability. Surveillance relies heavily on expensive leased platforms rather than persistent, loitering drones. Command and control remain rigidly hierarchical, with tactical units unable to access intelligence or request support without lengthy clearance chains. Intelligence fusion remains fragmented, with agencies maintaining separate databases and slow sharing protocols (Daily Trust, 2025).

Secondly, the recent MARSS NiDAR programme directly addresses many of these deficits. By integrating expeditionary vehicles, regional centres, and a new national headquarters into a single tactical picture, NiDAR promises to deliver a multi-dimensional layered defence capability that is both scalable and future-proofed (MARSS, 2026). The AI-enabled autonomous mission management for uncrewed systems represents a significant technological leap, enabling one operator to oversee multiple UAVs simultaneously.

Thirdly, institutional barriers to effective C4ISR implementation extend beyond technology (Obi, 2019). The AFN Joint Doctrine Centre's mandate to end siloed operations and institutional rivalries addresses the cultural dimension of military restructuring (Premium Times, 2026). Without cultural transformation, even sophisticated technology will be underutilized (Alberts & Hayes, 2003).

Fourthly, the geopolitical context matters. US military support provides persistent ISR and precision targeting architecture, but the critical question is whether Nigeria is building indigenous fusion capacity (US DoD, 2025). The UK partnership through MARSS similarly offers technology transfer, but sovereign capability depends on Nigerian ownership of the resulting systems (MARSS, 2026).

Identified Gaps in Research and Practice

Despite recent progress, significant gaps remain (adapted from Obi, 2019; Umar, 2021; Daily Trust, 2025):

Decentralized Command Authority: Current doctrine still requires tactical commanders to seek approval from Abuja for time-sensitive engagements. No C4ISR system can compensate for decision delays if authority remains centralized. Research is needed on appropriate delegation thresholds for Nigerian operating contexts.

Covert Operations-Specific Capabilities: While the NiDAR programme provides general surveillance and command capabilities, dedicated covert operations support—including low-probability-of-intercept communications, acoustic-stealth UAVs, and biometric databases—requires additional investment not detailed in current announcements (Treverton, 2017; MARSS, 2026).

Inter-Agency Fusion Mechanisms: The Joint Doctrine Centre addresses military coordination but integration with civilian intelligence agencies (DSS, NIA, NPF intelligence)

remains underdeveloped (Daily Trust, 2025). Research is needed on fusion centre models appropriate to Nigeria's civil-military context.

Civilian Harm Mitigation Protocols: Intelligence-led operations reduce civilian casualties when accurate, but errors remain catastrophic for legitimacy (Kilcullen, 2009). Gaps exist in protocols for verifying intelligence before strikes and for after-action review processes.

Sustainability and Maintenance: The NiDAR programme includes training and support components, but long-term sustainability of AI-enabled systems in Nigeria's operational environment remains unproven (MARSS, 2026). Research is needed on local technical capacity building.

Summary

This paper has argued that restructuring Nigeria's military architecture to address asymmetric and covert threats requires prioritizing C4ISR integration as the central organizing principle of defence transformation. The current moment presents both opportunity and risk. The opportunity lies in the convergence of several favourable factors: the March 2026 MARSS NiDAR agreement providing cutting-edge technology; the commissioning of the AFN Joint Doctrine Centre to address institutional fragmentation; continued US military support for ISR and precision targeting; and growing recognition among defence leadership that firepower alone is insufficient. The risk lies in treating technology as a panacea. Without accompanying doctrinal change, command culture transformation, and sustained investment in human capital, even sophisticated C4ISR systems will deliver suboptimal. Foreign support risks creating tactical dependency rather than strategic learning if Nigeria does not simultaneously build indigenous fusion capacity. The paper has identified specific gaps in current arrangements decentralised command authority, covert operations capabilities, inter-agency fusion, civilian harm protocols, and sustainability – that must be addressed for restructuring to achieve its potential.

Conclusion

Nigeria cannot defeat asymmetric enemies by simply buying more armoured vehicles or recruiting more soldiers (Obi, 2019). The enemy's advantage is not firepower—it is agility, covert movement, and information asymmetry (Mack, 1975). Asymmetric actors do not need to defeat the Nigerian military in conventional battle; they only need to survive, adapt, and periodically demonstrate that the state cannot guarantee security (Arreguín-Toft, 2005). This

imposes a fundamentally different standard of victory. To restructure its military architecture effectively, Nigeria must embrace C4ISR as the core of a new warfare doctrine (Alberts & Hayes, 2003). This means decentralising command authority to tactical levels, fusing intelligence across all agencies and services, ensuring every soldier – from special forces covert teams to checkpoint guards – operates within a shared real-time digital battlespace, and measuring success not by body counts but by degradation of enemy networks (Kilcullen, 2009; Boyd, 1996).

The MARSS NiDAR programme and the Joint Doctrine Centre represent significant steps in the right direction (MARSS, 2026; Premium Times, 2026). But they are necessary, not sufficient, conditions for transformation. Without parallel investments in decentralized command culture, inter-agency fusion mechanisms, and sustainable local technical capacity, Nigeria risks acquiring sophisticated systems that cannot be fully utilized (Umar, 2021; Obi, 2019). The ultimate test of military restructuring will not be whether insurgent attacks temporarily decline, but whether Nigeria emerges with stronger institutions, better intelligence culture, and greater capacity to manage complexity (Alberts et al., 2000). Foreign ISR and hardware can change trajectories, but only if Nigeria uses them to think systemically, learn faster than adversaries, and align security action with governance, justice, and economic stabilization (Kilcullen, 2009). Without that integration, even the most sophisticated support will merely reshuffle violence across regions.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented, the following recommendations are offered for policy, practice, and future research.

Policy Recommendations

- a) **Doctrinal Revision.** The Nigerian military should amend its counterinsurgency operations manual to enshrine a "C4ISR-first" principle: no operation to proceed without a confirmed common operating picture accessible to all participating units. This doctrinal change should be promulgated through revised training curricula at all command levels.
- b) **Delegation of Command Authority.** The Chief of Defence Staff should issue directives delegating authority to Lieutenant Colonel-level commanders to request immediate ISR support and execute time-sensitive engagements without Abuja

clearance, subject to after-action review protocols. This addresses the OODA loop deficit.

- c) **Inter-Agency Fusion Centres.** Building on the Joint Doctrine Centre model, the National Security Adviser should establish three regional intelligence fusion centres (Maiduguri for North-East, Sokoto for North-West, Enugu for South-East) with statutory mandates for real-time information sharing among military, DSS, police, and NIA components at those locations.
- d) **Covert Operations Support Cell.** The Defence Headquarters should establish a dedicated Covert Operations Support Cell equipped with low-probability-of-intercept communications, acoustic-stealth UAVs, and biometric database integration capabilities, explicitly resourced for operations requiring deniability.
- e) **Civilian Harm Tracking Mechanism.** An independent Civilian Harm Tracking Mechanism should be established, modelled on allied military experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, to document, investigate, and provide remedies for civilian casualties resulting from intelligence-led operations. Transparency in this domain is essential for maintaining legitimacy.

Implementation Recommendations

- a) **Phased C4ISR Rollout.** The MARSS NiDAR programme should be implemented in phases, prioritising: (Phase 1) secure communications and Blue Force Tracking for units actively engaged in the North-East; (Phase 2) regional fusion centres and drone integration; (Phase 3) national command centre and AI-enabled autonomous mission management.
- b) **Civilian Technical Integration.** The Ministry of Defence should formalize partnerships with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) to create accelerated C4ISR certification programmes, ensuring domestic technical talent for system maintenance and evolution.
- c) **Parliamentary Oversight.** To address concerns about surveillance abuse, the National Assembly Joint Committee on Defence should establish quarterly oversight hearings on C4ISR data usage, with classified sessions where necessary but with declassified summaries made public.

Recommendations

- a. Longitudinal Evaluation. A five-year longitudinal study should be commissioned to evaluate the operational impact of the NiDAR programme, using pre-implementation baselines and tracking indicators such as sensor-to-shooter timelines, inter-agency intelligence sharing velocity, and insurgent network degradation metrics.
- b. Comparative Case Research. Research should examine C4ISR integration experiences in comparable contexts including Colombia, the Philippines, and the Sahel states—to identify transferable lessons and context-specific adaptations relevant to Nigeria.

Success Metrics

Finally, success in military restructuring should be measured not by immediate attack reduction but by strategic indicators identified in the literature: reduced coordination between insurgent cells; longer gaps between major attacks; fragmentation of enemy command structures; higher defection rates from insurgent groups; disrupted supply flows for arms, fuel, and logistics; and improved civilian cooperation with security forces. None of these produces dramatic headlines, but together they signal strategic degradation of asymmetric adversaries. This is the standard against which Nigeria's military restructuring should ultimately be judged.

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