

Intelligence and National Security Strategy in Nigeria: The Role of Intelligence Communities

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Abstract

National security has become one of the most critical concerns for states across the world, particularly in regions experiencing complex security threats. In Nigeria, the rise of terrorism, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, cybercrime, and transnational organized crime has intensified the need for effective intelligence gathering and analysis to support national security strategies. Intelligence plays a vital role in threat identification, early warning systems, policy formulation, and operational decision-making for security agencies. As one of the key intelligence institutions in Nigeria, the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) is responsible for providing strategic and military intelligence to support the country's defence and national security architecture. Despite the importance of intelligence in modern security governance, Nigeria continues to face persistent security challenges that raise questions regarding the effectiveness of intelligence coordination, information sharing, and operational capacity among security agencies. This study examines the role of intelligence in strengthening Nigeria's national security framework, with particular emphasis on the operational contributions of the Defence Intelligence Agency. The study adopts a qualitative research approach based on the analysis of existing literature, policy documents, and institutional reports relating to intelligence operations and national security management in Nigeria. The findings highlight that intelligence remains a critical component of national security strategy, particularly in the areas of threat assessment, counterterrorism operations, and strategic security planning. However, the study also identifies challenges such as institutional coordination gaps, technological limitations, and capacity constraints affecting intelligence effectiveness. The study concludes by recommending stronger inter-agency cooperation, improved intelligence infrastructure, and enhanced professional training to strengthen intelligence-led national security management in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Intelligence, National Security, Defence Intelligence Agency, Security Strategy, Nigeria.*

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Background of the Study

National security remains one of the foremost responsibilities of every sovereign state, encompassing the protection of territorial integrity, political stability, economic prosperity, and the safety of citizens. In the contemporary global environment, the concept of national security has expanded beyond conventional military defence to include the management of emerging threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, transnational organized crime, insurgency, and other forms of asymmetric warfare. Consequently, intelligence has become an indispensable instrument for the formulation and implementation of effective national security strategies. (Marry, 2013). Intelligence refers to the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of information relevant to national security decision-making. It provides governments with critical insights into potential threats, enabling policymakers and security agencies to anticipate risks, formulate preventive measures, and respond effectively to evolving security challenges. Historically, scholars and military strategists have emphasized the significance of intelligence in statecraft and warfare. Sun Tzu argued that foreknowledge is essential for victory, while George Washington maintained that the necessity of obtaining reliable intelligence is self-evident. Although opinions differ regarding the reliability of intelligence, there is a broad consensus that effective intelligence significantly enhances strategic decision-making and national security outcomes. (Afunyanya, 2022).

Globally, intelligence institutions constitute a vital component of national security architecture. Advanced nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France rely extensively on intelligence agencies to combat terrorism, cyber threats, espionage, organized crime, and other security challenges. These institutions provide strategic and operational intelligence that supports national defence planning, foreign policy formulation, and crisis management. The increasing complexity of global security threats has further reinforced the importance of intelligence-led security governance as a prerequisite for national stability and sustainable development. (Akinyeli, 2023)

Nigeria's security environment has become increasingly complex and volatile over the past two decades. The country has witnessed persistent security threats including terrorism perpetrated by Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom, communal conflicts, secessionist agitations, and transnational organized crimes. These threats have resulted in substantial loss of lives and property, displacement of populations, disruption of economic activities, and growing concerns regarding national cohesion and stability. The multidimensional nature of these security challenges has necessitated the adoption of more sophisticated intelligence-driven approaches to national security management. (DIA, 2024)

Recognizing the strategic importance of intelligence, Nigeria has established various institutions responsible for intelligence gathering, analysis, and dissemination. These include the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Department of State Services (DSS), and the National Intelligence Agency (NIA). Among these organizations, the Defence Intelligence Agency occupies a central position within the nation's security framework as the primary

military intelligence institution responsible for providing strategic intelligence to the Nigerian Armed Forces and the Federal Government. The agency plays a critical role in defence planning, threat assessment, military operations, counterintelligence activities, and national security policy formulation. (FRN, 2024)

The evolution of Nigeria's intelligence system reflects the country's efforts to strengthen its national security capabilities. Before 1976, intelligence and state security functions were primarily handled by the Special Branch of the Nigerian Police Force. Following the attempted military coup of 1976, the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) was established to centralize intelligence operations. However, concerns regarding institutional inefficiencies, vague operational mandates, and excessive concentration of authority led to the restructuring of the intelligence system. Consequently, the Defence Intelligence Agency was established in 1984 to coordinate military intelligence activities and provide strategic support to national defence operations. (FRN, 2024).

Subsequent reforms further decentralized intelligence operations through the creation of specialized agencies responsible for domestic intelligence, foreign intelligence, and military intelligence. These reforms sought to improve institutional coordination, enhance professionalism, and strengthen accountability within Nigeria's intelligence community. Despite these efforts, intelligence operations in Nigeria continue to face several challenges, including inadequate technological infrastructure, limited intelligence-sharing mechanisms, insufficient inter-agency cooperation, inadequate funding, and shortages of highly skilled personnel (DIA, 2024).

Furthermore, the rapidly changing nature of contemporary security threats requires intelligence institutions to continuously adapt their operational strategies and technological capabilities. The emergence of cyber warfare, digital espionage, and transnational criminal networks has increased the demand for intelligence systems capable of generating accurate, timely, and actionable information. In this regard, the effectiveness of intelligence agencies, particularly the Defence Intelligence Agency, has become increasingly important to the successful management of Nigeria's security challenges. (FRN, 2024).

Given the central role of intelligence in national security management, there is a growing need to critically evaluate the contributions of intelligence institutions to Nigeria's security architecture. Such an assessment is essential for identifying operational gaps, strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing inter-agency collaboration, and improving intelligence-led responses to emerging security threats. This study therefore examines the role of intelligence in Nigeria's national security strategy, with particular emphasis on the operational contributions, challenges, and strategic significance of the Defence Intelligence Agency in safeguarding national security.

Statement of the Problem

The contemporary international security environment is characterized by increasingly complex and interconnected threats, including terrorism, transnational organized crime,

cybercrime, illicit arms trafficking, climate-related conflicts, irregular migration, and economic insecurity. These threats have significantly altered the nature of national security and have placed greater demands on intelligence agencies worldwide. Effective intelligence systems are expected to provide early warning information, support strategic decision-making, and facilitate proactive responses to emerging threats. (Jackson, 2022) In Nigeria, the security situation has deteriorated considerably over the years despite the existence of multiple intelligence and security agencies. The country continues to grapple with persistent insurgency in the North-East, widespread banditry in the North-West, kidnapping for ransom across several regions, communal and ethno-religious conflicts, and other forms of organized criminal activities. These security challenges have not only threatened national stability but have also undermined economic development, food security, public health, and social cohesion. (FRN, 2024).

The persistence and increasing sophistication of these security threats have raised concerns regarding the effectiveness of Nigeria's intelligence architecture in supporting national security objectives. In particular, questions have emerged regarding the capacity of intelligence agencies to collect, analyze, coordinate, and disseminate actionable intelligence capable of preventing or mitigating security threats before they escalate into major crises. The frequency of security breaches and the prolonged nature of military operations in various parts of the country suggest the existence of operational and institutional deficiencies within the intelligence system. (FRN, 2024). Although the Defence Intelligence Agency was established to provide strategic military intelligence and support national defence operations, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the extent to which the agency has effectively contributed to addressing contemporary security challenges in Nigeria. Furthermore, challenges such as inadequate technological resources, insufficient intelligence-sharing mechanisms, bureaucratic bottlenecks, inter-agency rivalry, and limited institutional coordination may have constrained the agency's operational effectiveness (UND 2024).

Consequently, there is a need for a comprehensive examination of the role of intelligence in Nigeria's national security framework, particularly with respect to the contributions of the Defence Intelligence Agency. This study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of intelligence operations in supporting national security, identify the challenges confronting intelligence institutions, and propose strategies for enhancing intelligence-led security management in Nigeria. The findings are expected to contribute to policy discussions aimed at strengthening Nigeria's intelligence capabilities and improving the overall effectiveness of national security governance (FRN, 2024).

The Concept of Intelligence

The roots of Intelligence can be traced to the words of ancient philosophers. Sun Tzu asserted foreknowledge, that is, Intelligence allows a nation to know itself, the environment and the intentions and capabilities of allies' opponents. While the Duke of Marlborough contended that "No war can be conducted without early and good intelligence". Similarly, George Washington stated that "the necessity of procuring good intelligence is apparent and need not be further argued". However, there were others who view the concept of intelligence.

Differently, Carl Von Clausewitz concluded that “many intelligence reports in war are contradictory; even more are false, and most are uncertain”. His advice is to rely less on intelligence and more on common sense and the laws of probability. If interpreted correctly, Clausewitz only questioned the reliability and accuracy and not the value of intelligence. (NIA, 2024).

Significantly, Warfare, statecraft and diplomacy have changed over time. However, the primacy of intelligence remains timeless. What is Important now is how well the intelligence agencies or intelligence community have been able to fulfil their role in national security. This evaluation can be quite controversial. Even the most formidable intelligence services hardly measure up satisfactorily in the opinion of their decision makers or the general public. Kristian J. Wheaton and Micheal T. Beerbower. In their view, intelligence is "a process, focused externally and using information from all available sources that are designed to reduce the level of uncertainty for a decision maker". For Wheaton and Beerbower, "intelligence is more than information". It is something that happens, not something that just it"; intelligence is made to happen for the benefit of decision makers, who want assurance or 'certainty regarding the future', but who often have to accept 'something that is based in fact but allows to them to plan'. The purpose of intelligence professionals, therefore, should be to reduce the decision maker's level of uncertainty to the minimum possible. (FRN, 2024).

Jennifer Sims looks to the international relations theory (specifically to neo-realism) for insights that emphasize intelligence as an inevitable facet of inter-state competition. According to her Intelligence is not simply the process of serving senior officials; it is more accurately the interaction between decision-makers and their subordinates that allows them collectively to better their opponents. Her fundamental understanding of intelligence as the "collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on behalf of national security decision-makers". That echoes The American Usage of intelligence and resembles Wheaton and Beerbower's position, but contains a key difference. Sims emphasizes that intelligence enhances the effectiveness of decisions made by actors who are working in opposition to other actors. (Who may well be employing their own intelligence assets?) 'If politics involves the competition for power, "intelligence" may be best understood as a process by which competitors improve their decision making relative to their opponents. Intelligence, however, provide 'decision advantage', either by making our decision better or theirs worse. Therefore, success is not getting everything right; it is getting enough right to beat the other side. Intelligence methods can foster decision advantage by stealing opponents' secret or adulterating the information available to rivals. UND, 2024.

The Creation of a National Intelligence Service in Nigeria

National intelligence in Nigeria compared to the military services and the Police are relatively young. Prior to 1976, the 'E' department or Special Branch of the Police was responsible for State Security and Intelligence services. Following the abortive coup attempt in 1976, it was excised from the Police and its duties and personnel taken over by a newly created agency, the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO) 18. It is pertinent to point out here that the establishment of the NSO was not preceded by a carefully conducted study of the type of intelligence agency Nigeria needed, why and how to go about getting what it wanted.

Decree 16 of 1976 that established the NSO, charged it with the following functions: the prevention and detection of any crime against the security of Nigeria, the protection and preservation of all classified matter concerning or relating to the security of Nigeria and, such other purposes, whether within or without Nigeria, as the Head of the Federal Military Government may deem necessary with a view to securing the maintenance of the security of Nigeria¹⁹. The NSO was to combine the functions of the American Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), which engages in counter intelligence activities and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who's main pre-occupation is with foreign positive intelligence²⁰. But in the process of performing its duties, the NSO acquired a lot of police functions. The reasons are not too difficult to discern, for the NSO was started by seconded police officers from its Special Branch and the organisation adopted the police rank structure. In terms of orientation, methods and the tools adopted, the NSO saw itself as and, indeed, behaved like a super police organisation. However, the NSO was not set up to be such. The major problem with the NSO was that its functions were vague and its operations were extremely personalized. Its mandate was not clearly defined. Because of this lack of a clearly defined role, the NSO was assigned powers and functions that sometimes appeared inconsistent with the role of intelligence agencies. It became a leviathan that grew uncontrollably, and was used for "Second World War sort of intelligence gathering - intimidation, black mail, intrusion into people's privacy to cause fear". There were other agencies that were engaged in intelligence activities. These included the police and the various intelligence units of the Armed Forces, but they were relegated to the background. The boss of the NSO was a member of the Supreme Military Council and had the confidence of the leadership. Despite the fact that Nigeria has had some form of intelligence service since 1960, the activity still remains largely undeveloped and its role as an instrument of national policy not clearly defined. It is therefore underutilized and its vast potentials within the decision -making process left untapped. There are clearly two reasons for this development. One is the low-level priority accorded intelligence activities in particular and national security in general, despite lip service by successive Nigerian governments²⁴. The second one is the problem of conceptualization, what intelligence means for Nigeria and how it could contribute, like it should, to our policy and decision -making process. In 1984, the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) which, amongst other things, will coordinate the activities of the various service intelligence agencies was establishment.

In August, 1985 a committee headed by Alhaji Umaru Shinkafi, former Director General of the NSO and which included Bernard Odogwu, former head of Biafran Intelligence, was set up to examine the whole concept of intelligence in Nigeria and advise government accordingly²⁶. Certain areas need to be urgently addressed with a view to upgrading intelligence activity in Nigeria. One is the need for a structural rethinking, two, the establishment of a well-coordinated management system, three, the need to make intelligence a profession in its own right so that it can attract the right calibre of personnel and, finally, is the need to establish adequate checks and balances within the process to guard against future misuse of the intelligence agencies. The first step towards solving the problems of structure and management has been taken with the decentralization and restructuring of the NSO into three autonomous bodies to deal with national intelligence, defence intelligence and state

security. The next step in correcting the ills of the past is not only to define and codify what constitutes Nigeria's national interest, but also to build a consensus within Nigeria as to its role in the world, the sources of threat to Nigeria and its interests and the role intelligence can play in all this. Nigeria must also decide whether it wants to be a big brother in which case the intelligence outfit created should have a limited scope? Or whether it wants to be a regional power in which case, the intelligence outfit that is established must be able to help Nigeria in the projection of its power.

This is important because there appears to be a dilemma in Nigeria. There is a consensus that Nigeria has a role to play in Africa but what this role entails is not clear. The public has not been educated on the obligations of being a leading African country with a "manifest destiny" to lead Africa. Nigerians, therefore, do not seem prepared to bear the costs of the role they have cut for themselves. Perhaps, the reaction of the public could be attributed to what appears to be a wide gap between Nigeria's foreign policy positions and domestic policies.

Nigeria's New Intelligence Establishment

Following the decentralization of the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO), the Nigerian intelligence establishment has now been restructured to allow for a greater degree of specialization and professionalism and perhaps make it much more difficult for misuse as was the case before the NSO was broken up. It should be recalled that one of the many reasons the Babangida administration gave for the overthrow of the Buhari regime was the way and manner with which the regime used the NSO to harass not only members of the government but also innocent Nigerians. In fact, the administration came in with a pledge to completely reorganize the NSO with a view to restoring faith in the system. Decree 19 of 1986, known as the "National Security Agencies Decree", therefore, formally put paid to the President's pledge. In place of the NSO were created three new agencies, - the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the State Security Service (SSS). The Decree, it must be mentioned, only formally created the Defence Intelligence Agency which had existed since 1984. Each Agency has a clear mandate as to its role within the intelligence process. The Defence Intelligence Agency is to perform the following functions: the prevention and detection of crime of a military nature against the security of Nigeria; the protection and preservation of all military classified matters concerning the security of Nigeria both within and outside Nigeria; and such other responsibilities affecting defence intelligence of a military nature, both within and outside Nigeria, as the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (C-in-C) or the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as the case may be, may deem necessary. The National Intelligence Agency is charged with the following functions, the general maintenance of the security of Nigeria outside Nigeria concerning matters that are not related to military issues, and such other responsibilities affecting national intelligence outside Nigeria as the National Defence and Security Council or the President, C-in-C, as the case may be, may deem necessary. The State Security Service is charged with the following functions, the prevention and detection within Nigeria of any crime against the internal security of Nigeria, the protection and preservation of all non-military classified matters concerning the internal security of Nigeria, and such other responsibilities affecting internal security within Nigeria as the Armed Forces Ruling Council or the President, C-in-C, as the case may be, may deem necessary. (DIA, 2024).

The NIA and the SSS are directly responsible to the President. While the DIA is directly responsible to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is observed that only the SSS and the DIA have the legal authority to operate 'within Nigeria. Even then, the authority of the DIA is limited to activities within the military. There appears, perhaps due to past experience, to be a clear distinction between military and non-military intelligence agencies on the one hand and foreign intelligence and domestic intelligence activities on the other. The structure draws a lot, it would appear, from the US Intelligence Community where the Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Defence Intelligence Agency, perform quite the same functions. There is also this distinction between military and non-military intelligence activities and foreign and domestic intelligence. The only area where the two appear to have gone apart is in the area of coordination. In the US, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) wears two hats - one as Head of the CIA and the other as Head of the American Intelligence Community. One is aware that this structure has generated and still at times generates a lot of debate within the American Intelligence Community. There is this school of thought that strongly believes that the DCI could not be an impartial coordinator, that there would always be this built-in institutional bias, rightly or wrongly. Under the Nigerian system, a distinction is maintained between the agencies that generate intelligence material and the body charged with coordinating their activities and disseminating evaluated intelligence material. The Coordinator on National Security (CONS), in the office of the President, has overall responsibility for the intelligence agencies. He is charged with the following functions: advising the President, C-in-C, on matters concerning intelligence activities of the agencies; making recommendations in relation to the activities of the agencies to the President, C-in-C, as contingencies may warrant, correlating and evaluating intelligence reports relating to national security and providing the appropriate dissemination of such intelligence within Government using existing facilities as the President, C-in-C, may direct; determining the number and level of staff to be employed by each Agency and organizing the transfer and posting of staff, especially the transfer and posting of existing staff of the Nigerian Security Organization and doing such other things in connection with the foregoing provisions of this section as the President, C-in-C, may, from time to time, determine. Other bodies with specific functions within the intelligence process are the National Security and Defence Council and the President. (DIA, 2024).

The Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA)

The DIA is a specialized agency for the collection of intelligence and the provision of security services in aid of the military in Nigeria. The DIA provides defence security intelligence that aids the effectiveness and efficiency of the military; Army, Navy and Air Force in the performance of their constitutional mandates which is defend and protect the security of the lives and proprieties of Nigeria from internal and external aggression by land, sea and air (Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria. hence the goal of the DIA is to provide an efficient system of obtaining military intelligence for the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence. (DIA, 2024).

The Defence Intelligence Agency of Nigeria was established by an act which repealed the National Security Organisation in 1986. State Security Services, National Intelligence

Agency and the Defence Intelligence Agency each of them with different responsibilities as stated in the National Securities Agencies Act.

The role and function of the Defence Intelligence Agency include the

- a) Prevention and detection of crimes of a military nature against the security of Nigeria
- b) The protection and preservation of all military classified matters concerning the security of Nigeria both within and outside Nigeria
- c) Such other responsibilities affecting defence intelligence of a military nature, both within and outside Nigeria, as the President or Chief of Defence Staff, as the case may be or may deem necessary NIA, (2024).

Contributions of the Defence Intelligence Agency to National Security

The Nigerian state has existed since 1914 for over a hundred years amid different security challenges and secessionist movement. The Armed Forces have been embarking on both internal and external security operations since its inception to secure the stability of the country and the operations embarked upon has not been without the military defence intelligence agencies. The intelligence agencies have been at the background aiding military operations in security operations and providing them with intelligence to ensure success in the varied operations. The 'E' Department of the Nigerian Police Force in the colonial era was largely responsible for the relative stability of the colony before 1960. Likewise, the restoration of orderliness in the early independence period where the military quelled uprisings that arose in the country as a result of electoral irregularities in the Western regions in the 1960s as well as riots in the North and Middle Belt and participated actively in the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 to reunite the peoples of this country. The Nigerian military also played lead roles in internal security operations that followed the 3R policy of Restructuring, Reintegration and Rehabilitation that took place in the country in the 1970s. The National Security Organization which operated from 1976 to 1986 was largely responsible for aiding the military in its operations. Although criticized for serving the purpose of the military government, the NSO played active role in the peace that transpired during the period. The Nigerian military took part in quelling uprisings in varied regions across the country and participated in several external operations to restore national and global security. (FRN, 2024).

Since its establishment in 1986, the DIA has expanded in structure and scope overtime to accommodate the changes in the Nigerian security sector. This is especially given the changes in conflicts and warfare where varied clandestine tactics and strategies are adopted by aggressors to threaten the security of the country. Shortly after it was established, the armed forces were engaged in quelling several religious and ethnic crises within the country since the 1980s beginning with the Matasine Crises in Kano, Borno and Kaduna. That the armed forces were able to successful nip the uprising in the board is thanks to the efficiency of its intelligence agency, the DIA. (DIA, 2024).

During the Nigeria Delta Crises following militant agitations in the Niger Delta region in the 1990s and early 21st century, the Nigerian Armed Forces played a lead role in restoring order in

the war-torn region and continued to restore order in other warring zones. However, the internal security operations in the Northeast as a result of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism formed the longest internal security operations in which the Nigerian Army has been involved. In response to the changing nature of crises, the DIA like other intelligence agencies has transmuted in style and strategy to remain relevant to continue its mandate of providing military intelligence within and outside Nigeria. Their roles include prevention, monitoring, and reporting on foreign and local defence-related matters, as well as conducting security surveys and special operations alongside inspection of strategic defence installations among others (DIA Archives). The DIA has continued to promote the Defence policy in Nigeria and interfaces with not just military agencies in the country but with other friendly countries to protect the lives of Nigerian citizens abroad. In this, the Nigeria Defence Agency has fifty foreign missions; twenty-five in Africa and twenty-five in other continents (Communication with the Director General DIA). Given its mandate also the DIA has its tentacles spread across the nooks and crannies of the country. Its outlets represented in services intelligence units across the country interfaces and connects to provide swift intelligence for rapid decision making. The DIA has continued to provide military intelligence to defence policy makers and force planners, troops in the operation theatre and advisory services in support of military activities. (DIA, 2024).

The Nigerian military troops have been active in the restive zone in the northeast since 2009 when the BOKO Haram adopted terrorism as their tool of insurgency and several codenamed operations have been ongoing in the northeast to counter terrorism and insurgence showing the resolve of the Nigerian Military to restore stability in the region. The DIA continues to provide timely and actionable intelligence for the success of the operations the Armed Forces of Nigeria is involved in not only in the northeast but the entire Country at large before and during operations. DIA with the responsibility to coordinate intelligence of military value for the defence of Nigeria supports these operations using a combination of HUMINT and TECHINT platforms and has provided PsyOps support to the AFN in all operations including the ongoing operations in the northeast (DIA Archives). The DIA has State cells which provide intelligence support for all the operations the AFN is involved in across the country. That the military has embarked on successful operations across the country since the 1980s when the intelligence agency was reorganized, is thanks to its intelligence agency, the DIA who has coordinated military intelligence for national security (in collaboration with the national intelligence network). No military in essence cannot function effectively without continuous intelligence. (DIA, 2024). The 1980s Maitasine crises which span across several states in the country; Kano, Kaduna and Borno states were crushed before it further reared its ugly head. Likewise, several riots, religious and ethnic skirmishes across the country in which the military intervened. The militancy agitations in the Nige Delta and other coastal states and the several operations conducted by the military had the DIA perform its roles effectively.

In recent times and in response to the changing nature of warfare, the DIA has enhanced its technical intelligence capacity through the administration of more advanced intelligence enablers and upgrading the existing ones. This has also made the agency achieved tremendous achievements in the areas of operations, infrastructural development and staff

welfare. (Vanguard, February 12, 2021). Due to the spread of BHT activities beyond its enclave in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states into other parts of the country, Special Intelligence Cells (SIC) were established to monitor and gather intelligence of military value in states contiguous to the areas of responsibility of the task forces. The DIA has HUMINT platforms emplaced to support the Armed Forces in its current engagements across the country; state cells, Special Intelligence cells (SIC), Operation SCANNER, Operation LONG HAUL and Operation SAFE CORRIDOR. The DI System gathers strategic intelligence to support ongoing operations (DIA Archives). The State cells maintained across the country supports ongoing military operations such as Operations HADIN KAI, DELTA SAFE, SHARAN DAJI, WHIRLSTROKE, and AWATSE as well as nationwide anti-kidnapping operations. The cells which are integral parts of the G2/J2 cells of the various task forces are jointly manned by DIA civilian staff and military staff and personnel from the Service Intelligence directorates. Presently, there are 5 SIC operating in Gombe, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Yobe states (DIA archives). Further to monitor security activities as a result of scattered BHT activities in Abuja and its environs, the DIA has installed a 24-hour localized surveillance unit, Operation SCANNER that monitors and reports on security situations in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The purpose of Operation SCANNER is to provide timely and actionable intelligence that would guarantee the protection of people, key/vulnerable installations and public institutions in the FCT (DIA 2024).

The DIA has also embarked on Operation Long Haul involving credible Civ-JTF under the watch of DIA Cells in Conjunction with Military formations and units in hunts and arrests of BHT terrorists escaping from the northeast. The operations have been effective in apprehending fleeing insurgents who failed to surrender following the ongoing clean-up in the northeast. The Operation Safe Corridor which is a Federal Government initiative is driven by the DIA to encourage willing and repentant insurgents to surrender for de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes among others in the northeast. The DIA currently has 65 operatives deployed for this purpose. Recently, the CDS has constituted a committee to rehabilitate and de-radicalize over 500 ex-combatants in military safe custody (Communication with the Director of Operations, DIA 2024). The DIA Defence Attaché **(DA)** system has also been a veritable tool for the DIA activities in support of military operations. Nigerian DA in contiguous countries has also assisted in gathering intelligence on the activities of BH and other threats against the cooperate existence of Nigeria. Likewise, foreign DAs accredited to Nigeria have been good resources in this regard as intelligence from them has helped to also shape decisions in the interest of Nigeria. (DIA, 2023).

To counter social media props by terror groups, the DIA utilises its Open-Source Intelligence Capability (OSINT) to monitor the activities of terrorist and extremist groups, their recruitment drive, propaganda and responses from their target audience. However, this is fought with some challenges as shall be highlighted in the succeeding section. However, its Communication Interception Capability has helped in tracking their activities and subsequent arrest of high-profile suspects. In collaboration with the intelligence community in the country; the SSS, DSS and the NIA the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre was established to give daily and monthly reports of activities of all the State Cells across the Country as well

as DHQ operations. It also collates and gives an analysis of data using analytical software. The JIFC also interacts with Defence Attaches and carries out maintenance of correspondence links for the Defence Sections.

The DIA also operates a Cyber Operations Unit responsible for gathering intelligence from the surface, deep and dark web. It has been responsible for carrying out all offensive operations in the cyber domain for the Defence sector. The Unit conducts cyber intelligence reconnaissance across the country as well as monitoring of cyber threats from foreign adversaries. Additionally, the Unit conducts penetration testing on all DIA infrastructure and monitors activities of financial interests that are of security threats to the nation. It has been instrumental in uncovering gun runners, illicit drug networks and illegal fund-raising mechanisms (DIA 2022).

It is important to note that the DIA enjoyed support from the Federal Government as reflected in the Defence budget and the government's increasing zeal to procure advanced weapons and equipment to support military operations in warring zones. The Nigerian government simultaneously committed to an upswing in defence spending from \$800 million to \$5.4 billion between 2009 and 2014. Since 2014, the Federal Government of Nigerian Budget proposal for the Federal Ministry of Defense shows a persistent increase. Although this is not only associated with insecurity in the northeast as it pertains to the overall logistics sustenance of the armed forces in general and in quelling internal security challenges orchestrated by militancy, kidnapping, piracy, banditry, herders/farmers clashes, armed robbery, ritual killings, cultism, rape and huge numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the country (FES Nigeria Policy Brief, 2022).

Also, the government also sought and secured other regional collaborations and international assistance; Joint Trans-Border Security Committee between Nigeria and Cameroon in February 2012; assistance by the US troops training, reconnaissance and airborne intelligence using predator drones, and deployment of personnel to carry out operations as well as Intelligence, surveillance; equipment supports to the Cameroon military from US AFRICOM in the fight against Boko haram terrorism. Other support includes the US, Target acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) training Chad and Niger respectively; training support provided by France and UK and other support from China and Columbia. The United Nations provided humanitarian support for refugees and other displaced persons likewise many INGOs. However, insecurity remains prevalent in the country. Despite the efforts by the government and friendly states to support national security and the support enjoyed by the DIA, certain challenges still prevent the DIA from fully preventing insecurity in the country. (DIA, 2025).

Challenges of the Defence Intelligence Agency in Nigeria.

The DIA has no doubt contributed to the security and sustainability of the country since its existence as an underground security agency. However certain challenges mar its operations. First is the changing war environment. Mutating nature of security threats and limited understanding of modern security threats. The nature and behaviour of security threats are

dynamic and everchanging, especially in the face of intense globalisation where sophisticated weapons which are readily not available or easily obtained by states get into the hands of non-state actors. The issues that trigger national security are increasingly becoming subtle to discern and required adequate capability to match up with; religious extremism. Economic extremism and other factors degenerate into violence and threats against the states. Also, national security threats have become versatile and volatile ranging encompassing every aspect of human endeavour; food, health, water, environment, physical and others. The change from conventional and unconventional and clandestine tactics adopted by armed groups has also posed a challenge to national security. The multiple dimensional security threats, multiple tactics and underground tactics adopted by armed groups also pose a challenge to those who have operated in conventional tactics for decades. Adopting new strategies, and tactics requires a heavy toll on the agencies that have adopted them and the intelligence agency has to mutate their strategies in garnering intelligence (Afunanya, 2022).

Closely related to the above challenge is the transnational nature of criminal activities and the foreign cover of criminals who have dual citizenship or are not nationals but perpetrate crimes in the country or criminals in the diaspora who have dual citizenship. It becomes difficult to track their activities and prosecute them if they operate in an unfriendly nation. Also, the issue of external influence, that is the role of hostile external influence in penetrating the intelligence agencies and stealing intelligence and working in tandem with domestic anti-government agencies to undermine Nigerians' security cannot be overruled.

Another major challenge is the issue of poor governance inherent in the failure of successive political administrators at different levels to manage the resources for the development of their various localities. The issue of poor governance inherent in poor development and poor maintenance of basic infrastructure; poor road and road network, communication network, rail, electricity, drinking water and clinics/health facilities, corruption and failure to prosecute corrupt officials, poor industrial development, weak laws and poor implementation of policies and programmes, lack of research-based policies, unemployment, lack of accountability and transparency of government, inability to manage the country's borders and forests and gross inequality among others have continued to trigger discontent that makes insecurity inevitable. These which are the root causes of insecurity continue to linger and even though the military continues to engage in restoring orderliness, these challenges which are out of their purview will continue to cause discontent in the country. put differently, at the root of lingering internal aggression in the country is the issue of poor governance. (Afunyede, 2023). The lack of a national database of citizens and residents in the country is another challenge. This hinders Data Mining and Database Tracking, especially in effective emergency management situations. An incomprehensive national database deters the effective tracking of identified criminals. The DIA also lacks Indigenous intelligence software like the indigenous bank software to manage and control information. Similarly, the country's indigenous production of equipment and even weapons for security agencies is weak and this creates heavy reliance on foreign products. Thus, poor locally produced weapon systems and equipment, that is, poor manufacture of locally-made military equipment to tackle insecurity is also a challenge. The lack of indigenous software to gain full

control in the management of information and access hinder effective intelligence. (Afunyede, 2023).

High cost of cutting-edge intelligence equipment and intelligence software. This makes them buy such equipment piecemeal and split the acquisition rather than purchasing upfront fully afford the cost. Billions of naira were recently released to DIA to buy equipment but the high cost of this equipment made it difficult to purchase it at once. Closely related to this is the unwillingness to sell such equipment. Inadequate access to peculiar intelligence software by countries hinders effective intelligence in modern times especially where the use of social media and cyberspace is used for warfare. Intelligence software helps to prevent the loss of control of intelligence and keep track of the activities of people. (FRN, 2023).

Other challenges include the limited use of social media by terrorists, most terrorists and bandits are mostly offline and only use online facilities to communicate their position, hence it is difficult to track them when they move from their online location. The lack of a national database and poor communication network and indigenous infrastructure are also related to this challenge. In addition, the use of digital currency for transactions like Bitcoin prevents the effective tracking of sources of funding for insurgents/terrorists and other criminal activities. (Afunyede, 2023). More so, the inadequate sophisticated gadget is another challenge. The DIA lacks intelligence analysis software and social media analysis software and communications analysis software. Also, it has limited use/incorporation of Artificial Intelligence technology and Autonomous systems (AS) to aid intelligence: the Nigerian military in collaboration with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), through its National Center for Artificial Intelligence Robotics and Robotics (NCAIR) resorted to the use of robots, drones across its borders as well as digital grenades to gather intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities and the Nigerian Air Force deployed its first indigenous operational unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). However, it was insufficient to cover the warring zones (Daily Trust, 4 Nov 2021; O. Olamide 2023; Airforce Technology News 20 Feb 2018).

Roles of DIA in Support of Current Engagement of the AFN

The place of timely and actionable intelligence for the success of the operations the AFN is involved in the Country cannot be over-emphasized. DIA with the responsibility to coordinate intelligence of military value for the defence of Nigeria supports these operations using a combination of HUMINT and TECHINT platforms. DIA also provide PsyOps support to the AFN in ongoing operations. (Afunyede, 2023).

HUMINT Platforms: The HUMINT platforms emplaced by DIA to support the AFN in its current engagements across the country are, state cells, Special Intelligence cells (SIC), Operation SCANNER, Operation LONG HAUL and Operation SAFE CORRIDOR. The DA System gathers strategic intelligence to support ongoing operations. (DIA, 2024).

DIA State Cells. DIA State cells are established to provide intelligence support for all the operations the AFN is involved in across the country. DIA maintains state cells across the

country which support ongoing military operations such as Operations HADIN KAI, DELTA SAFE, SHARAN DAJI, WHIRLSTROKE, and AWATSE as well as nationwide anti-kidnapping operations. The cells are manned by DIA civilian staff and military staff on the Agency nominal roll. The concept is for the cells to be integral part of the G2/J2 cells of the various task forces. More state cells are being contemplated to guaranty effective coverage of the country for efficiency.

Special Intelligence Cells. Due to the spread of BHT activities beyond its enclave in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states into other parts of the country, Special Intelligence cells (SIC) were established to monitor and gather intelligence of military value in states contiguous to the areas of responsibility of the task forces. The SICs are jointly manned by DIA staff and personnel from the Service Intelligence directorates. Presently, there are 5 SIC operating in Gombe, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Yobe states. (Afunyede, 2023)

Operation SCANNER. As a result of BHT activities in Abuja and it environ, DIA maintains a 24-hour localized surveillance unit, Operation SCANNER that monitors and reports on security situation in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The purpose of Operation SCANNER is to provide timely and actionable intelligence that would guaranty the protection of VIPs, key/vulnerable installations and public institutions in the FCT.

Operation LONG HAUL. Operation LONG HAUL is an operation involving credible Civ-JTF under the watch of DIA Cells in conjunction with military formations and units in hunts and arrest BHT elements escaping from the North East. The operation arrests at least 4 escaping insurgents on the average every week. (Afunyede, 2023)

Operation SAFE CORRIDOR. Operation SAFE CORRIDOR is a Federal Government initiative driven by DIA to encourage willing and repentant insurgents to surrender for rehabilitation, de-radicalization and re-integration program. Operation SAFE CORRIDOR is to also profile returnees and IDPs and facilitate their resettlement in conjunction with NEMA in IDP camps or their communities. DIA currently has 65 operatives deployed for this purpose. Recently, the CDS has constituted a committee to rehabilitate and de-radicalize over 500 ex-combatants in military safe custody. (DIA, 2025)

Defence Attaché System. The Defence Attaché (DA) System is also a veritable tool for DIA activities in support of on-going engagements of the AFN in the country. Nigerian DA especially those in the contiguous countries have been of tremendous assistance in gathering intelligence on activities of BH and other threats against the cooperate existence of Nigeria. Likewise, foreign DAs accredited to Nigeria have been good resource in this regard. Tips from them have helped in no small way to shape decisions in the interest of Nigeria. (DIA, 2025)

TECHINT Platforms: DIA employs the open-source intelligence, communication intercept capabilities and Special Intelligence Units as TECHINT platforms to support the AFN engagements across the country.

Open-Source Intelligence Capability: The Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) Capability is a vital tool of the Agency in its activities in support of AFN engagements across the country. It is a platform for collecting from the print and electronic media such as journals, newspapers social media among others to establish trends of particular threats to serve as early warning system. Although the use of OSINT for wider intelligence and CT is complex and resource intensive, it supports the DIA efforts through the delivery of focused results from a larger pool of raw information. Terror groups use the social media to propagate and amplify their deeds. In this regard, the OSINT cell is used to monitor activities of terrorist and extremist groups, their recruitment drive, propaganda and responses from their target audience.

Communication Intercept Capability. One other TECHINT platform DIA possess to support the engagements of the AFN is the Communication Intercept Capability. On this platform, conversations with elements relating to national security are monitored and the ones prejudicial in nature are intercepted. The capability has helped in great deal in tracking activities and subsequent arrest of high-profile suspects including BHT. (DIA, 2025)

Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre. The Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre was established to give daily and monthly reports of activities of all the State Cells across the Country as well as DHQ operations. It also collates and gives analysis of data using analytical software. The JIFC also interacts with Defence Attaches and carries out maintenance of correspondence links for the Defence Sections.

Cyber Operations Unit. The Cyber Operations Unit is responsible for gathering intelligence from surface, deep and dark web. It is responsible for carrying out all offensive operations in the cyber domain for the Agency. The Unit conducts cyber intelligence reconnaissance across the country as well as monitoring of cyber threats from foreign adversaries. Additionally, the Unit conducts penetration testing on all DIA infrastructure and monitors activities of financial interests that are of security threats to the nation. It has been instrumental to uncover gun runners, illicit drug networks and illegal fund-raising mechanism.

Security Situation in Nigeria since 1914

Since its existence in 1914, the problem of marginalization, underdevelopment of infrastructure, unequal development across the regions and divisions, imposition of taxes, inequality and injustice as well as rejection of colonial rule among others posed serious grievances and challenges that disrupted the peace of the country before 1960. Upon independence, ethnic rivalries, religious intolerance, corruption, nepotism, political bigotry, social and economic marginalization, injustice, inequality, regional and ethnic rivalries and religious intolerance and agitations threatened the security of the people, insincerity, census and electoral malpractices, electoral violence and marginalization triggered series of events leading to coups and counter coups, sessional bids that launched the country into a civil war 1967-1979. The post-civil-war era and the prosperity of the country witnessed increased wealth from oil boom. It also witnessed increased corruption and mismanagement of public funds which left lingering issues unattended. Coupled with this the environmental degradation triggered wide range of agitations in the Nigeria Delta region. The political

setting of the country had intermittent regimes of both civil and military rule in a bid to address the multiple security issues until 1999 when the country was restored to civil rule. (DIA, 2025).

The 1990s coincided with global changes that led to the demise of the cold-war and consequently the changes like warfare and security issues. The amassment and proliferation of weapons coupled with the opening of borders and increased free trade and lax control of borders was to lead to increase armed groups in nations. Thus, the nature of warfare changed from inter-state to intra-state conflict (Osaghae, 1998). By the 1990s, violent conflicts had begun to erupt in different parts of the country constituting violent threats to Nigerian national security. Militancy resurgence in the Niger Delta. Likewise, armed groups increased in other regions of the country; the rise of violent ethnic militia groups-OPC, Bakasi Boys, MOSOB, Egbesu Boys carried threatening activities that jeopardized the peace of the nation. The country witnessed increased criminality and armed robbery, violent cultist activities. The lingering social-economic activities were worsened by the change in the dimension of agitations which led to military confrontations. Environmental challenges associated with the activities of oil companies and climate change: flood, drought and torrential rainfall caused a shortage of water and food and thus increased hunger, poverty, unemployment and health challenges among others. These all posed different security threats to humans and the nation at large. There is no gainsaying that the poor governance and the inability of successive administrations to tackle the security challenges triggered the security challenges of the nation. (DIA, 2024)

Theoretical Framework

Theories are ideas that provide explanations and help us to understand the happenings around us and the world at large. Theories explain real-world situations and predict the outcome of such actions. It informs policymakers on what to do regarding certain occurrences in and around the state. There are three theories that attempt the rationale for states' security policies and rationales that governs states behaviour with other states and domestic actors. Although these theories were not adopted as tools for analysis for this study, it is imperative to understand the tenets that guiding the provision of security in states.

Realist Theory of Security

Realist believes that conflict is inevitable and that states, like humans, like to dominate which leads to conflict. They depict the international system as a continuous struggle for power among self-interest states and beliefs (Hans Morgenthau, 1993). Thus, realists emphasize the enduring tendency of conflicts between states; conflicts breed insecurity. Hence, they consider states as the main provider of security. For the realists, survival is the paramount reason why states seek the need for security in order to be safe from human aggressors and other natural factors that might threaten their continuous existence. For realists, security is the objective of why states enter into alliances and counter-alliances, the essence of the balance of power is to protect the security and independence of the particular nation(s) (Hans Morgenthau, 1993 and Sangit Dwivedi, 2012). States ally to supplement each other's capabilities. In balancing a strong power, which could be internal or external. States could

attempt to balance internal threats with their resources eternally by allying with other states that share the same fears (Sangit Dwivedi, 2012). To Stephen Walt (1998) rather than balance against power, states enter into alliances to ward off threats. Alliance differs in terms of the degree of cooperation and scope among others. It could be a formal (treaty) and informal arrangement of security cooperation between two or two or more states. States could ally on the basis of ideology, based on or leadership provided. More so, the nature of the threat determines the level, degree, size and scope of collaboration.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

This study examined the role of intelligence in Nigeria's national security strategy, with particular emphasis on the contributions of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). The findings revealed that intelligence remains a critical component of national security management, providing decision-makers with timely and relevant information required for threat identification, risk assessment, and strategic response planning.

The study established that the Defence Intelligence Agency has contributed significantly to Nigeria's security architecture through intelligence gathering, analysis, counterintelligence operations, and support for military operations against insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and other security threats. The agency's intelligence products have enhanced situational awareness and informed strategic decision-making within the Nigerian Armed Forces and other security institutions.

However, the findings also indicated that the effectiveness of intelligence operations is constrained by several challenges, including inadequate technological infrastructure, insufficient funding, limited intelligence-sharing mechanisms, inter-agency rivalry, shortages of highly skilled personnel, and weak institutional coordination among security agencies. These challenges have reduced the ability of intelligence institutions to effectively anticipate, prevent, and respond to emerging security threats. Furthermore, the study found that improved collaboration, intelligence coordination, and information sharing among security agencies would significantly enhance national security outcomes. The increasing complexity of modern security threats requires intelligence institutions to adopt advanced technologies, strengthen professional capacity, and improve operational efficiency to remain effective.

Conclusion

The study concludes that intelligence plays an indispensable role in Nigeria's national security strategy and remains a vital instrument for safeguarding national interests, protecting citizens, and maintaining political and economic stability. The Defence Intelligence Agency has made valuable contributions to national security through its intelligence support functions; however, its effectiveness is limited by operational, institutional, and technological challenges. To strengthen national security, there is a need for sustained investment in intelligence capabilities, modernization of intelligence infrastructure, enhanced inter-agency cooperation, and continuous professional development of intelligence personnel. Strengthening these areas will improve the capacity of the Defence Intelligence Agency and other intelligence institutions to effectively address contemporary security challenges.

Ultimately, an efficient, coordinated, and intelligence-driven security framework is essential for promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendation

There is no gainsaying that the DIA has contributed to the security of the country amid challenges. However, despite its effort in aiding military operations, the country is still faced with security threats of military nature. For a more proactive Defence Intelligence Agency, it is recommended that:

- a. The DIA should build more states cells in the nook and cranny of the nation to support the internal security of the country. There should be increased collaboration, cooperation and coordination among security agencies to address the insecurity in the country. Greater communication and increased interaction might include sharing case studies that showcase best practices or offering open solutions to the society needs on security issues. It is necessary that respective agencies are flexible and adaptive to complement each other's effort.
- b. Also, citizens' education on security and their role in security is imperative. The government should encourage information sharing and open dialogue between all the security agencies and with the general populace in society through continuous sensitization and in school curriculum. Whistle blowing and protection of whistle blower should be adhered to
- c. The issue of duplicity of roles should be addressed. Hence the Security Agency Act and other Acts establishing different security agency should be revised. This is to also incorporate issues of modern security threats. Each intelligence outfit in the country needs to concentrate on its areas of core competence.
- d. The DIA should invest (recruit competent IT staff) and improve training of its staff in equipment/software handling and manning) as well as in the management and maintenance of equipment and software infrastructure. More agents and analysts are required in the field to aid intelligence gathering

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