The 3Ds (development, diplomacy, and defense) in Nigerian counterinsurgency: lessons from Uruzgan

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Introduction: Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations necessitate a multifaceted approach that considers political, economic, developmental, and security factors in order to achieve long-term peace and security. Despite this recognition, critical aspects are frequently overlooked, particularly in the context of combating jihadist groups such as Boko Haram in West Africa. This paper investigates the 3Ds (Development, Diplomacy, and Defense) approach to COIN, assessing its effectiveness in COIN efforts and post-war reconstruction in Nigeria and drawing lessons from experiences in Uruzgan province, Afghanistan.

Method: In the qualitative study, the 3Ds serve as a conceptual framework for analyzing the fundamental aspects of COIN in existing literature, with a focus on their relevance in West Africa. It incorporates insights from Afghanistan's Uruzgan province to help inform the study of the 3Ds approach in COIN efforts and post-war reconstruction. Interactions with key stakeholders and counterinsurgency experts provide firsthand information.

Results: The analysis emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive COIN strategy that includes significant governance and political reforms to address historical disparities and ideological motivations of jihadist groups. COIN entails a variety of measures, including political, administrative, military, economic, psychological, and informational strategies, that are used in tandem to achieve stability and transformation. The 3Ds approach is seen as a template for harmonizing these aspects, particularly in dealing with existing insurgencies and preventing future ones in the region.

Discussion: Given the region's underlying human insecurity, the study focuses on how the 3Ds framework can effectively address existing insurgencies and prevent future ones. It emphasizes the importance of carefully implementing and adapting the 3Ds approach to the unique dynamics and challenges of West Africa. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of a balanced and integrated approach to COIN that considers the interplay of security, development, and diplomacy in order to ensure long-term stability and security in the region.

KEYWORDS

counterinsurgency, the 3D, integrated approach, Jihadist, Uruzgan, Boko Haram, Nigeria

1 Introduction

In today's intricate counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, a complete and interconnected strategy is essential, going beyond traditional military tactics (de Wijk, 2020). According to the Canadian and US doctrines, COIN encompasses a spectrum of actions, spanning from military and paramilitary actions to political, economic, psychological, and civic measures, aimed at defeating insurgency (Verret and Army, 2013). Effectively dealing with political, economic, developmental, and security aspects together

is vital for achieving lasting peace and security in Nigeria (David, 2019). These factors are often at the root of conflicts and need careful management to prevent insurgent groups from (re)emerging (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Thus, various international missions have acknowledged the significance of combining development, diplomacy, and defense (known as 3Ds) in COIN (Grandia, 2009; Lijn, 2011). Despite debates and criticisms about its shortcomings, integrating development, diplomacy, and defense in COIN is considered crucial to foster long-term peace. Uruzgan is an important case study for understanding post-conflict reconstruction in Jihadist-affected countries such as Nigeria because it allows us to critically assess the success of the 3Ds. It is critical to comprehend its long-term viability as well as its applicability in other contexts, particularly in light of the Taliban's recent return and the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, including the United States and its allies (Akram and Akbar, 2023). The recent events underscore a disheartening and unsustainable outcome of COIN experience by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and allies in Afghanistan, urging caution in the deployment of the so-called comprehensive approach in another context.

Despite these challenges, considering its promise for international development, as highlighted by Lijn (2011), this study attempts to theorize the applicability of the 3Ds approach in Nigeria's context. In other words, it seeks to answer the questions: what are the lessons derivable from 3Ds regarding its deployment in Uruzgan, and are these lessons applicable in Nigeria? To address these questions, the study confronts the formidable challenges associated with implementing the 3Ds approach, as evident in Uruzgan, within contexts such as Nigeria, which is marked by Jihadist insurgency that feeds on complex political, economic, and social dynamics. The goal is to draw more scholarly attention to the future development of the 3Ds principles in assessing and improving Nigeria's COIN over time. This analysis distills insights from the Uruzgan experience to understand integrated COIN principles. Acknowledging unique socio-political dynamics, it highlights feasible and unfeasible aspects for application in Nigeria. Much like Boko Haram (also known as *Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihad)*, the Afghanistan Taliban seeks to establish an autonomous state guided by Islamic principles, encompassing governance, population, territory, and a robust security foundation. Both groups share an aversion to Western-style structures, advocating for an economic framework centered on trade and agriculture as alternatives to the prevailing capitalist system (Ogene, 1988; Omenma and Hendricks, 2018). Meanwhile, as Onuoha (2010) observes, although Boko Haram draws inspiration from the Afghanistan Taliban, there exists no concrete evidence definitively establishing a direct connection between the two groups beyond their shared ideological basis.

With consideration of the differences and similarities between both groups, this analysis aims to expose critical flaws in Nigeria's current COIN efforts. The study emphasizes extracting broader principles underlying the 3Ds approach to offer universal insights adaptable for developing effective, context-specific COIN strategies. Following the introduction, this paper delineates the research methodology, analyzes the 3Ds approach using Uruzgan insights, and establishes a foundation for discussing the applicability or non-applicability of these lessons in dealing with Jihadist groups such as Boko Haram in Nigeria. The study

concludes by presenting policy recommendations based on an integrated COIN approach, with a particular emphasis on the critical concept of human security for Nigeria.

2 Materials and methods

This qualitative study aims to provide important lessons and strategic insights by investigating how the 3Ds approach to COIN can be relevant in dealing with the ongoing challenges posed by jihadist activities in Nigeria. The study stems from and builds on, an original broader research effort that delved into the intricate dynamics between security and development within groups like Boko Haram and the Niger Delta insurgency (David, 2019). To achieve its goal, this study taps into valuable primary data collected during the period between 2015 and 2019, during the earlier research, including the primary data garnered from interviews with experts and key informants who hold specialized knowledge and hands-on experience in COIN efforts. Respondents are coded with relevant descriptions that reflect their knowledge and expertise, such as peacebuilder, researcher, youth, etc. These individuals were identified using purposeful and snowball sampling techniques.

Additionally, the study draws upon secondary data sources, such as reports and policy briefs, to illuminate the integrated approach to COIN. Acknowledging the ever-changing nature of Boko Haram and its transformation into various other insurgent groups, this study also ensures that its data is up to date, by capturing recent developments that may be of relevance. The study also makes use of recent reports and scholarly publications, which provide an essential extra layer of information, enriching the understanding of Nigeria's COIN efforts (Ogunnubi and Aja, 2022; Nkata, 2023). These sources of information offer recent insights into the evolving situations in Nigeria. Similarly, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021 is also taken into consideration, as it raises questions regarding the sustainability of various COIN efforts in the region including the 3Ds (King, 2023).

Using the 3Ds conceptual framework, this study underlines the interconnectedness of defense, development, and diplomacy in effectively combating insurgencies in Nigeria and across West Africa, where groups like Boko Haram hold influence. It emphasizes the importance of integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive approach that can effectively address the complex challenges posed by insurgent activities. The goal is to contribute insights that can guide the creation of more impactful policies and strategies for the region. Moreover, the study recognizes the necessity of continued regional conflict transformation efforts, given that claims by the Nigerian government and collaborators regarding the defeat of these insurgent groups in recent times seem not corroborated by the security situation in the region.

3 Results and discussion

3.1 The 3Ds approach in counterinsurgency operations

The intricate nature of COIN operations has led to an appreciation in the literature that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Since the twentieth century, COIN strategies have

recognized the value of effectively combining both military and non-military approaches, especially in scenarios involving multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the NATO (Kilcullen, 2006; Glazzard et al., 2018). Various concepts have been developed to encompass this approach, including the Whole of Government Approach (WoG) (Coombs, 2013), the Comprehensive Approach (CA) (Olsthoorn et al., 2016), and the 3Ds (Development, Diplomacy, and Defense) approach (Grandia, 2009), among other designations. Over time, these diverse prescriptions and theories have aimed to address the underlying causes of insurgencies besides trying to contain them, with varying levels of success.

The utilization of the 3Ds in COIN, which is the central focus of this discussion, is often attributed to Dutch foreign policy, particularly their operations in Afghanistan. However, other countries like Canada and the United Kingdom have also embraced similar multifaceted COIN approaches in insurgency-affected Afghanistan since 2006 (Koenders, 2007). Moreover, Lijn (2011) observes that the concept 3Ds did not originate in the Netherlands, and it cannot be solely attributed to a "Dutch approach." Instead, it evolved from the principles of integrated missions, as seen in the UN, and comprehensive approaches, exemplified by the EU and NATO. The United States employed a comparable approach in Vietnam known as the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support Program (CORDS), based on the Hearts and Minds theory (Grandia, 2009). These approaches essentially acknowledge that COIN is not solely the responsibility of the military. Hence, Lijn (2011, p. 10) noted that "As with concepts such as 'whole of government', 'whole of system' and 'whole of nation', the 3Ds approach breathes life into the idea that separate actors working in fragile states or conflict areas (can) aim for the same goal." This underscores the global influence and adoption of the 3D concept beyond national boundaries. These frameworks played a crucial role in shaping the strategy for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation in Afghanistan.

This above understanding has led to an increasing recognition among policymakers and the academic community of the imperative need for effectively integrating various actors in COIN (Moelker, 2014; Glazzard et al., 2018). Broad inter-agency responses to insurgency, encompassing a mix of military, political, and developmental efforts, are advocated, especially in post-conflict reconstruction, as exemplified to some extent in certain parts of Afghanistan within the framework of the 3Ds (Gabriëlse, 2007). Accordingly, the 3Ds conceptual approach provides scope and direction for the unit of analysis, specifically in offering relevant counter-insurgency policies for affected regions, as acknowledged in the case of Uruzgan. Acknowledging concerns about its sustainability, especially in light of subsequent developments that saw the return of the Taliban in 2022 (King, 2023), the 3Ds approach in Uruzgan, for instance, received praise "for establishing and safeguarding a political balance between ethnic groups and powerbrokers" (Moelker, 2014, p. 111). The approach played a vital role in addressing pre-existing social and political divisions within the region. Kitzen (2012, p. 723) highlighted, for instance, the significance of key leader engagement, drawing from the Tactical Liaison Officer's (TLO) findings, which shows the success

of a "bottom-up development strategy that actively involves community leaders."

3.2 Uruzgan's Taliban challenge: the 3Ds response

In 2006, the Netherlands decided to deploy approximately 1,950 troops to Uruzgan province in Southern Afghanistan as part of the ISAF mission. The Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) operated in the region from 2006 to 2010 (Kitzen, 2012). The primary objectives of the Dutch mission were to enhance security, contribute to the reconstruction and development of the region, and promote good governance in Uruzgan (Moelker, 2014). Like other areas in Afghanistan, the region has faced distinct challenges posed by various Islamist groups, with the most prominent being the Taliban. This fundamentalist Islamist organization rose to power in Afghanistan during the mid-1990s and established control over a significant portion of the country. During their rule, Afghanistan became a haven for international terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda. The Taliban, known for their strict interpretation of Sharia law, held conservative values and resisted external influences and ideologies (Grandia, 2009; King, 2023).

Several factors converged to create a favorable environment for the Taliban's influence in Uruzgan. These factors encompass a history of insurgency dating back to the Soviet-Afghan War, a complex tribal and ethnic landscape, geographic isolation, weak governance, economic hardships, and a lack of security. The rugged mountainous terrain in the region further complicates the challenges faced by the Afghan government and security forces in establishing a significant presence (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006; Lijn, 2011).

Additionally, the Taliban derives substantial financial resources for its operations from the illicit production and taxation of opium, a major economic activity in the region. The socioeconomic conditions in Uruzgan, particularly at the time, were dire. According to a report by the Royal Dutch Embassy in 2006, "Uruzgan ranked 30th out of the 32 provinces in Afghanistan in terms of human development. Health infrastructure and service delivery were poorly developed, with only two qualified doctors in the province, leading the population to rely largely on traditional midwives and healers available in every village" (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006, p. 2). Importantly, the high levels of poverty and unemployment among Afghans made many young people vulnerable to recruitment by insurgent groups, further perpetuating the cycle of conflict and instability (Lijn, 2011).

In light of the above, Lijn (2011) maintained that the main goal of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, in line with the broader international strategy, is to assist the Afghan government in securing and stabilizing the country to enable reconstruction. The Dutch aimed to achieve this by gaining local support for Afghan authorities and reducing support for the Taliban and other insurgent groups, as mandated by ISAF. They aimed to counter the presence of Taliban insurgents and other armed groups, disrupt their activities, and create a more secure environment for the local population. Although the Dutch military conducted

various operations, including COIN efforts to address security challenges, by implementing the 3D, the mission ultimately sought to address the root causes of conflicts and create sustainable conditions for peace (Grandia, 2009; Egnell, 2010). The integration of the various aspects of the 3Ds in their COIN is arguably rooted in an appreciation of Mao Zedong's perspective that "a revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political" (cited in Galula, 2006, p. 63). In acquiescence, Kilcullen (2006, p. 10) stressed that "Given pervasive media presence and near-instantaneous propaganda exploitation of all combat action, counterinsurgency may now be 100% political." Accordingly, the mission placed significant emphasis on reconstruction and development projects in Uruzgan. The Dutch mission also sought to promote good governance in Uruzgan. This involved supporting local governance structures, assisting in building effective institutions and encouraging transparent and accountable practices. They also made efforts to strengthen the capacity of Afghan authorities to govern and provide services to the population, thereby fostering stability and long-term progress (Lijn, 2011; Olsthoorn et al., 2016). This involved integrating the efforts of actors and resources from development, diplomacy, and defense. What follows is a highlight of how the 3 aspects of the 3Ds played out in Afghanistan.

3.2.1 Development

The development component of 3Ds recognizes the profound interlinkage between development and security, aiming to tackle underdevelopment and socio-economic conditions that contribute to social unrest. As observed by Egnell (2010), the 3Ds approach emphasizes the equal significance of development and security. Egnell underscored that development is often perceived as an end, whereas within 3D, development serves as both a means and an end. This dynamic is crucial in achieving stability, peace, and holistic progress. The province grappled with longstanding economic woes, including widespread poverty, elevated unemployment rates, and limited avenues for economic advancement. Hence, economic aid and development initiatives were considered to hold a pivotal role in swaying the population's allegiance toward the government rather than insurgent groups (Grandia, 2009, p. 14). These were required because insurgent groups skillfully exploited socioeconomic vulnerabilities to recruit disheartened individuals and capitalize on their economic grievances (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006; Lijn, 2011). Furthermore, resource competition, particularly in the lucrative opium trade, heightened tensions and deepened the insurgency's endurance.

Collaborating with international partners, the Dutch military adopted an integrated strategy to stabilize the region and foster reconstruction (Gabriëlse, 2007). This experience yielded noteworthy insights. Primarily, the emphasis on development initiatives in Uruzgan underscored the pivotal role of addressing socio-economic grievances that fuel the insurgency in general (Ozsoy, 2007; Freytag et al., 2010; Gabriel et al., 2014). Through investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and employment generation, the Dutch forces aimed to provide tangible benefits to the local population, eroding support for insurgents and fostering stability.

Equally international and national NGOs, as well as intergovernmental entities like the UN, actively engaged in diverse developmental programs (Grandia, 2009). This precipitated heightened economic development, particularly evident in the Afghan Development Zones (ADZs). By coupling external aid with agricultural endeavors, economic growth materialized, while bolstering local government service delivery capabilities. Secondarily, effective channels of communication and shared information facilitated the alignment of objectives and optimal resource utilization. Significantly, development projects were framed as initiatives led by Afghans rather than foreigners in order to ensure their sustainability and improve perceptions of the local government's capacity to meet the needs of the population (Grandia, 2009, p. 42). Furthermore, a harmonious equilibrium was achieved between developmental initiatives and aid efforts by international organizations. The improved security environment culminated in escalated economic activities, including the establishment of a market in a village that had previously been under insurgent control (Grandia, 2009, p. 45).

3.2.2 Diplomacy

As a component of the 3Ds, diplomacy shares a symbiotic relationship with the development concept. Its primary goal is to sway the population's loyalty toward the government or shift allegiance away from insurgent groups. Diplomacy, in tandem with governance, seeks to reduce or eliminate ungoverned territories through non-coercive means. When diplomacy aligns with development and is linked to military decisions, it can exert far-reaching influence on overarching objectives (Grandia, 2009, p. 45). This diplomatic facet encompasses countering external support for insurgents while simultaneously rallying external backing for the counterinsurgents' cause. Building effective administration capacity was deemed a crucial factor in delivering security, essential needs, and services perceived as legitimate by the local populace, thereby bolstering the efficacy of the overall COIN efforts (Grandia, 2009, p. 19). An operational manifestation of this strategy was witnessed in Afghanistan through the establishment of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) in 2007, designed to enhance governance and achieve stability (Grandia, 2009). The diplomacy pillar assumed a pivotal role in cultivating relationships with local leaders, tribal elders, and other influential figures. As Kitzen (2012, p. 723) observed "By the time TFU operations ceased in August 2010 co-option had become a fully incorporated tool that was used to reconnect aggrieved segments of the local population with the provincial government. This "bottom-up development strategy that engages community leaders was very successful as it helped to overcome the existing social and political fractures." These connections nurtured trust, facilitated open dialogues, and created opportunities for negotiation and conflict resolution. By actively engaging local communities in decision-making processes and addressing their concerns, the Dutch forces laid the groundwork for enduring peace. While diplomacy alone might not invariably yield stability and peace, negotiation and political settlements

within this framework indeed contributed to these outcomes in Uruzgan.

3.2.3 Defense

The defense pillar encompasses both military and security efforts to neutralize insurgents and safeguard the population. It stands as a linchpin in ensuring the success of both diplomacy and development. In the absence of firm control over insurgent-driven violence, achievements in diplomacy and development risk becoming untenable or short-lived. As a result, the defense dimension encompasses an extensive array of military responsibilities, encompassing warfare, peacekeeping endeavors, and coordinated disaster responses to establish and uphold peace and stability (Grandia, 2009; Lijn, 2011). Within the 3Ds framework, the defense component extends beyond conventional military operations. For instance, Kilcullen (2006) underscores the pivotal role of the military's presence among the populace, emphasizing the value of being a constant presence for the people. This presence is established through close living quarters, regular foot patrols, night patrols, and even residing in local villages. Although these activities may carry inherent risks, they foster connections with local communities, enhance human intelligence, and thereby fortify the security of counterinsurgent forces (Egnell, 2010). It was rightly understood that the absence, or inadequacy, of such a presence not only undermines the efficacy of the other dimensions within the 3Ds approach but also engenders challenges.

According to Lijn (2011), Uruzgan's military strategy is "as civilian as possible and as military as necessary." Its dual nature of using force to suppress insurgents while also dismantling their network and breeding ground through political and socioeconomic measures goes beyond simply combating the Taliban. It also tries to make them "irrelevant" by "winning the hearts and minds of the population," robbing the sect of local support. Accordingly, a central priority of the defense strategy is the development of a comprehensive, long-term strategic security plan, which harnesses various stakeholders, including ISAF, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the provincial government (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006). Likewise, the establishment, provisioning, and staffing of a joint coordination center in Tarin Kowt facilitated the sharing of information, the coordination of operations, and the swift response to security challenges.

3.3 Some critical observations

Despite the merits attributed to the 3Ds approach, some challenges have been observed. For instance, critics such as Zaalberg (2013) contend that the Dutch 3Ds approach was more a construct driven by factors like politics, self-perception, and strategic choices. Regarding it as no more than a "fabrication" for media purposes, Brocades Zaalberg and Ten Cate (2012, p. 136) argued that "the notion of a "Dutch approach" started to function like a sponge, absorbing various concepts and practices, even if these originated in the same classic COIN theory that the Dutch government had consciously been avoiding as a campaign theme in favor of its strong emphasis on reconstruction." From this perspective, the Dutch approach appears to have focused on managing appearances and selectively adopting COIN principles rather than a genuinely comprehensive strategy. Furthermore, the integration of all 3Ds (development, diplomacy, defense) has been infrequent, with a tendency to overemphasize one aspect over an integrated approach (Zaalberg, 2013). Besides, evaluating the long-term transferability and effectiveness of the 3Ds approach remains challenging due to its limited application primarily in Afghanistan and Iraq. The recent forced withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan, with the accompanying return of Taliban rule reinforces the suspicion regarding the effectiveness of the 3Ds (Akram and Akbar, 2023). Moreover, the theoretical foundation of the 3Ds in the winning of hearts and mind (HAM), poses risks of misinterpretation and even abuse, potentially being mere appeasement without asserting authority through force.

In the implementation of the 3Ds in Uruzgan, several weaknesses were also observed. For instance, in a study by Lijn (2011, p. 12), it was perceived that the 3Ds approach lacks a singular goal or strategy, encompassing multiple objectives under the same umbrella. It falls short of being truly comprehensive, remains fragmented in implementation, lacks a lead agency or unified command, and often leads partners to assume someone else will resolve issues. The study further reveals that the 3Ds approach exhibits variations in capacities and pacing, with each of the three "Ds" having distinct times. The development and defense components follow different directions, with one being top-down and the other more bottom-up, thereby constituting a dilemma (Lijn, 2011, p. 13).

Concerning the overall success and sustainability, the recent collapse of the Aghan government raises even further questions regarding the 3Ds and other COIN efforts in the region. Among the noticeable factors that undermined the sustainability of the COIN include institutional failure, weak governance, and systemic corruption. For instance, this dynamic impacted negatively on utilization of international aid, contributing to the eventual state collapse, and undoing the gains of the reconstruction efforts. As Azizi (2021) observed, the influx of substantial funds lacked adequate oversight, inundating a country without the institutional capacity to manage such resources effectively. For instance, according to a report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), the United States alone contributed an estimated $145 billion in development assistance over two decades [cited in Azizi (2021)]. Allegations of "waste, fraud, and abuse" in the reconstruction efforts were particularly highlighted, among which include a $500 million cargo fleet sold for $40,000, an $85 million unopened hotel, and a healthcare facility geographically misplaced in the Mediterranean Sea. These examples underscore a pattern of widespread mismanagement and resource squandering.

Considering these critical observations and perspectives, it is crucial to assess whether these criticisms rule out the potential value of applying an integrated strategy in COIN efforts in Nigeria. This study seeks to highlight that it is important to understand the potential of such an approach and how its application in Uruzgan could be improved where possible to inform COIN strategies in other contexts, including Nigeria. After all, Lijn

(2011, p. 13) maintained that "the overriding perception among diplomats, military personnel and most NGO representatives is that the strengths of the 3Ds approach outweigh the weaknesses by far and that a number of perceived weaknesses stress the need for further coherence." This study's motivation for avoiding the dismissal of potential insights due to perceived shortcomings stems from favorable references to the core concepts of the 3Ds approach - development, diplomacy, and defense - in various COIN literature and contexts, including Nigeria and West Africa. For example, a recent study evaluating the effectiveness of Nigeria's COIN efforts from 2009 to 2021 not only identified deficiencies of the predominant militaristic COIN hitherto but also advocated the endorsement of the fundamental principles of the 3Ds approach, particularly the importance of winning the support and trust of the population (Nkata, 2023).

Hence, this study aims to move beyond merely critiquing the Dutch approach to guide or encourage further scholarship aimed at refining the 3Ds approach, for diverse contexts. As observed by Lijn (2011, p. 55), "Both military personnel and diplomats think other countries may benefit from the Dutch experience and lessons learned in Uruzgan" by copying some parts. This dynamic nature underscores the concept's flexibility and adaptability, allowing for context-specific adjustments of its principles when and where relevant, as could be the case in Nigeria. Lijn (2011) noted that the concept can be further developed at the international level; after all, even in its application in Uruzgan, the 3Ds evolved for instance in terms of advancements in civilian participation. Thus, in what follows I assess the views in the context of Nigeria.

3.4 Nigeria's Boko Haram and the 3Ds

Despite its limitations, the 3Ds approach may provide a useful framework for reevaluating Nigeria's COIN strategies, such as in response to Boko Haram. This, however, necessitates an understanding of Boko Haram in the context of Northern Nigeria. Given the wealth of existing research on Boko Haram, I will only provide an overview of the group, focusing on similarities with the Afghan Taliban. Northern Nigeria has been a breeding ground for Islamic extremist movements throughout the nineteenth century, often aligned against Western culture that is occasionally incorrectly associated with Christianity. Among these movements are the Kala-Kato, Darul-Islam, Ahmadabad Movement, Khadiriyyha, Darika Shi'a Salafiya (Izala), Tijjaniya, Tariqqa group, and the Muhajirun (Pothuraju, 2012). The region's aversion to Western-styled education can be traced to the British's non-intervention education policy in the northern region of Nigeria during the colonial era, which prohibited Christian missionaries from evangelizing the northern region. With the merging of education and religious doctrine for holistic impact (Akanle, 2011), Islam took a deeper hold of the region. This policy gave the North its special "Islamic identity" (Dudley, 1968, p. 18). Parents in the northern region held a strong belief that Koranic education provided superior moral training for their children, especially considering the economic challenges and prevailing societal disorder in Nigeria (Thomson, 2012).

Boko Haram's emergence in northern Nigeria aligns with the described pattern and tendencies. It strategically leverages the shared linguistic and cultural ties within the Kanuri ethnic group to recruit members across the six Northeastern states, namely Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Taraba and Gombe States (Omenma and Hendricks, 2018). While the group's foundation is influenced by ethnic factors, its appeal extends beyond ethnicity to incorporate religious extremism, particularly prevalent in the Northern region whose population is predominantly Muslim (Afoaku, 2017). The ethnic and religious dimensions of Boko Haram are evident in its recruitment strategies and regional focus and need no further belaboring as various studies have addressed these dimensions (Ajayi, 2012; Abdulazeez Malefakis, 2022).

Given that Boko Haram is not a monolithic group, a nuanced analysis of its various splinter groups and/or the different evolutionary phases of the group goes beyond the scope of this study, particularly as this subject has been extensively addressed in the literature. Scholars generally agree that the term "Boko Haram" combines the Hausa word "Boko" and the Arabic word "Haram." "Boko" refers to education, while "Haram" means forbidden. Therefore, "Boko Haram" commonly translates as "Western Education is forbidden" (Waldek and Jayasekara, 2011). The term "Boko" was derogatory, referring to colonial-style education as opposed to Islamic education (ilimin Islamiyya). This rejection of Western education is influenced by broader socio-political factors. Therefore, the term Boko Haram is used loosely here to encompass similar and related sects that have overlapped in operations in the region, including the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP), a name Boko Haram adopted in 2015 to reflect its pledged allegiance to the Islamic state, an offshoot of Al-Qaeda (GTI, 2015; David, 2019). Based on its claim, "Boko Haram is just a version of the Al-Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamized which is according to the wish of Allah" (Vanguard News, 2009, August 14). The Islamist group has been recognized by various names, such as Ahlul Sunnawal'Jama'ahhijra, the Nigerian or Yobe Talibans, Yusufiyyah, and Boko Haram (Danjibo, 2012). The diversity in these names stems from their promotion of similar ideologies. It is also important to acknowledge that chronological differences exist among these groups; for example, Boko Haram emerged in 1995, while the Yobe Talibans emerged in 2002 (Sani, 2011). These Nigerian Talibans mainly consisted of university graduates, ex-military personnel, and professionals. Their appearance, marked by Spartan dress and long beards, was reminiscent of Osama bin Laden (Sani, 2011). They identified as *Al SunnaWalJamma*, translating to "followers of Prophet Mohammed's Teaching" in Arabic (Sani, 2011, p. 22). Similar to the anti-establishment posture of the Taliban of Afghanistan, Boko Haram aims to replace the perceived corrupt government with what they believe as holier administration based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith (Sani, 2011).

In a broader context of jihadism in Africa, the recent surge in terrorism orchestrated by a network of Jihadist groups spanning North, East, and West Africa, with connections to the Middle East, raises questions as to what makes Africa fertile ground for these groups. Notable entities within this network include Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Shabaab, Al-Nusra Front, Ansar al-Sharia, Hezbollah, Hamas, Boko Haram,

and Al Qaeda. While some groups are viewed as offshoots of Al Qaeda, their common goal revolves around establishing or advancing theocratic systems to unify Islamic states. Despite originating from various geographic locations, these groups share a jihadist ideology that appears to serve as a unifying force, driving their expansion across Africa. The recruitment of many disillusioned youths across the continent has been distressingly facile for these groups, due to a range of factors (David, 2019; Abdulazeez Malefakis, 2022). For example, Interviews with former Al-Shabaab fighters, in a study by Botha and Abdile (2016b, p. 3), reveal reasons for joining encompassing "religious identity, socioeconomic conditions (poverty, education, unemployment), political context, and the quest for collective identity and belonging." Similarly, corroborating other studies, Omenma and Hendricks (2018), also observed that Boko Haram's core recruits, mainly from the Kanuri ethnic group, join the terrorist group due to perceived grievances related to failed governance, corruption, lack of future opportunities, and underdevelopment.

These factors are critical in understanding the dynamics and sway of these groups, especially Boko haram in terms of membership, scope of operation, tactics, as well as support among others, which the 3Ds-informed COIN cannot ignore. For instance, in terms of international linkages, just as the Afghanistan Taliban has historically found support from international militant networks, Boko Haram demonstrates a similar reliance on external affiliations to fuel its activities. Among the suspected supporters of Boko Haram is Al-Muntada al-Islami, a UK-based organization intricately linked to Saudi Arabian charity and Da'awa institutions, as well as other entities associated with terror financing (Afokpa, 2013). Furthermore, regarding the scope of operation and membership, reports have shown that the sect, Boko Haram, has international influence. Evidence from captured camps and video footage, examined by Nigeria's military and Reuters, strongly suggests the presence of foreign fighters holding significant positions within Boko Haram (Payne, 2015). The Financial Action Task Force's report further underscores this international dimension, detailing the apprehension of a Boko Haram insurgent in Burkina Faso, exposing the group's involvement in terror financing and activities beyond Nigeria's borders (FATF, 2013, p. 17).

Boko Haram membership extends beyond northern Nigeria, encompassing neighboring countries like Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, and Mali. The porous nature of Nigerian borders, coupled with the Economic Community of West African States' Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, has contributed to this cross-border affiliation. Historical and ethno-linguistic connections between these nations and northern Nigerians further facilitate the fluid interaction of like-minded groups across West Africa (Onapajo et al., 2012). This permeability fosters both logistical and ideological collaboration among these sects within the West African region. The international linkages, recruitment and training dynamics, exemplified by the alleged transfer of around US$300,000 from Al-Qaeda to Muhammed Damugun, echo patterns seen with the Afghanistan Taliban (David, 2019; Sinaee and Khatibi, 2023). The use of young recruits, conditioned in desolate locales to foster resentment and ruthlessness, reflects a tactic that is alarmingly reminiscent of strategies employed by various jihadist groups

globally, including the Talibans of Afghanistan. Additionally, both Boko Haram and the Afghanistan Taliban share similar strategies for funding, such as drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Just as the Afghanistan Taliban capitalized on the turmoil in Afghanistan to engage in the opium trade and arms smuggling, Boko Haram exploited the chaos in Libya to further its financial interests through arms smuggling (FATF, 2013; Friel, 2014). These commonalities emphasize the adaptability of extremist groups in seeking financial resources through various illicit means, which the 3Ds COIN must also address.

3.4.1 Lessons from Uruzgan

The drivers of terrorism in Afghanistan, including Uruzgan, bear striking similarities to the situation in Nigeria. These issues encompass marginalized populations, and disconnection from an authoritarian, unresponsive, inefficient, and corrupt government, which results in significant popular support for insurgents (Gompert and Gordon, 2008). In Uruzgan, a significant portion of Taliban fighters consists of residents who join the group for pragmatic reasons rather than deep ideological convictions (Grandia, 2009). Scarce natural resources like land and water frequently ignite conflicts, and the lack of trust in corrupt local governance leads some to place their faith in the Taliban (Grandia, 2009). Amid government ineptitude, tribes with influential connections at the provincial level often mediate resource disputes, leaving others marginalized and susceptible to aligning with the Taliban. The Taliban skillfully exploit these conflicts and tribal rivalries to garner support. Moreover, Uruzgan's status as a border province exposes it to the influence of the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, making robust border security a crucial consideration in COIN efforts (Grandia, 2009). Similarly, despite Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule in 1999, Islamist-inspired uprisings have continued in the northern region. The same socioeconomic, political, and ideological factors that have contributed to the rise of the Taliban have frequently been identified as making the Nigerian population vulnerable to religious sects like Boko Haram, particularly in the Islamic-leaning northern region. These vulnerabilities have persisted since the era of military rule (Abdulazeez Malefakis, 2022; Adinoyi and Zhizhi, 2022). The primary socio-economic drivers that many respondents alluded to include elevated levels of youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, substandard education, and substantial youth demography in Nigeria (Community/Religious Leader, 2016; Peace-builder3, 2016; Researcher1, 2016; Researcher5, 2016; Youth2, 2016). These elements are interlinked and are further exacerbated by widespread corruption within Nigeria's systems, acting as propellants for conflict throughout the nation.

Recognizing their intricate interplay, these shared elements introduce additional layers of complexity to the required response strategy, one that revolves around an organizing principle of security, governance and development, such as the 3Ds (Lijn, 2011). Although, the implementation of the 3Ds approach in Uruzgan faced numerous challenges, notably a deficiency in seamless integration, the underlying principles remain invaluable in addressing the diverse nature of contemporary insurgencies, which significantly diverge from traditional warfare. Its true power

lies in fostering collaboration and coordinated planning across different organizations, as emphasized by Olsthoorn et al. (2016, p. 264). Its overarching focus on human security is especially significant for this study, given the multifaceted triggers of conflict and terrorism in the modern age, including in Nigeria. These triggers encompass a wide spectrum, from material and ethnic factors to religious and ideological motivations, as exemplified by the challenges encountered in Nigeria. The emphasis on the Comprehensive Approach (3D), recognizing the necessity to integrate development, diplomacy, and defense efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict, is among the key positive lessons from Uruzgan that, when carefully applied, minding contextual peculiarities in Nigeria, can improve the security landscape. The significance of solid alliances between military and civilian entities as seen in Uruzgan, is driven by the need to establish trust and obtain crucial information. This is necessary to comprehend the community and interact with it to better manage the social dynamics that are critical in COIN.

Furthermore, the prioritization of human security, good governance, flexibility, local ownership, international collaboration, well-defined goals, transition preparation, enduring dedication, and cultural awareness constitute the intricate requirements of effective 3Ds operations (Grandia, 2009; Marks, 2010; Lijn, 2011). Admittedly, not all these lessons may have been entirely realized in Uruzgan as initially intended, but they hold significant potential for Nigeria's COIN efforts in the long term if well incorporated. As such, this analysis seeks to encourage additional critical scholarship that can fully flesh out the strengths and weaknesses of the 3Ds' application in various contexts. This goal is consistent with Lijn's (2011) advocacy for the 3Ds' further development as informed by such analysis of Uruzgan. Hence, I now focus on examining how the different "Ds" offer a method for comprehensively understanding and deepening Nigeria's COIN efforts against Boko Haram. As will be subsequently elaborated, the central motivation for advocating the principle of the 3Ds is that an integrated approach inspired by this strategy is vital for effectively addressing insurgency in Nigeria. This model stresses the importance of collaborative efforts among various agencies, recognizing the intrinsic link between security and development in the nation-building process. The 3Ds framework encourages a comprehensive strategy that aligns Nigeria's COIN efforts with integrated approaches encompassing security, governance, development, and political dimensions.

3.4.1.1 Lesson for defense

The Dutch forces in Uruzgan recognized the paramount importance of balancing hard and soft power in their fight against the Taliban. This acknowledgment emerged from a profound understanding of the unintended adverse consequences associated with a solely military response, including harm to civilians and difficulties in garnering local population support. The synergizing of hard and soft power manifested prominently within the implementation of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), a strategic approach that saw delayed integration in Nigeria and was notably deficient during the initial stages of the COIN (Nkata, 2023). Consequently, scholarly discourse on insurgency in Nigeria frequently scrutinizes the default strategy—namely,

the conventional military COIN approach—shedding light on instances wherein these methods inadvertently contributed to exacerbating the conflict (ICG, 2014; Omenma and Hendricks, 2018). Respondents also corroborate the view that military response harms innocent civilians, disrupts the local economy, and alienates the population, leading to cooperation challenges (Youth1, 2016; Youth4, 2016).

Sole military response is in this regard limited in terms of addressing critical social dynamics and leveraging local knowledge to identify and target terrorist groups' vulnerabilities (Builta and Heller, 2011). Civilians are better suited to engage with and understand, the local population, aligning with the population-centric approach to COIN that emphasizes winning hearts and minds, as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the Nigerian context, Omenma and Hendricks (2018) noted the relevance of the strategic collaboration with the civilian population in defense, particularly the Civilian Joint Task Forces (Civilian-JTF), comprising local volunteers, including hunters, retired soldiers, civil servants, youth, and adults, play a crucial role in defending their communities against terrorism. To be sure, Omenma and Hendricks' (2018) study provided tangible evidence of the significant impact of the Civilian-JTF in the fight against Boko Haram. The research revealed a statistically significant decrease in the mean number of Boko Haram attacks after the intervention of the civilian joint task force, from a mean of 11.83 (SD = 4.926) before to a mean of 5.35 (SD = 4.248) after civilian intervention (t = 5.186, df = 59, p = 0.000). Moreover, the data showed a strong positive correlation between Boko Haram attacks and troop responses before civilian intervention (r = 0.635, n = 18, p = 0.005), illustrating that higher troop responses were associated with a higher number of attacks, and these responses were less efficacious. This empirical evidence underscores the importance of incorporating civilian efforts, alongside military ones, to enhance the overall effectiveness of COIN strategies in Nigeria. As Omenma and Hendricks (2018) explain armed with basic weapons, they form vigilante groups known as "Kato da Gora" or "Yan Gora," and are organized under JTF sector commands.

The Civilian-JTF, with a total registered population of about 15,541, constitutes approximately 60 per cent of all counter-terrorism mercenaries in Operation Lafiya Dole (Bamidele, 2016, p. 132). Their strategic relevance lies in their ethnic and linguistic similarities to terrorist members, their understanding of local terrains facilitating penetration of the Sambisa Forest, and their knowledge of neighbors affiliated with the terrorist group. They actively contribute to collecting intelligence, defending localities, and reclaiming territories seized from insurgents. This stark reality reinforces the need for a more balanced and comprehensive approach, mirroring the model observed in Uruzgan. While achieving this balance is no doubt difficult, overlooking this consideration is not viable, especially when existing studies suggest that military force is seldom the sole catalyst for the dissolution of terrorist groups. Jones and Libicki argue that political settlements and effective policing have played pivotal roles in ending most terrorism since 1968 [Cited in Omenma and Hendricks (2018)].

Understandably, the inclination toward military solutions is particularly strong among young respondents from the northern region, which is the region mostly affected by violent attacks

(Youth4, 2016). In this regard, effective policing and security provisions were advocated (Peace-builder4, 2016), as the military approach is more suitable for war or interstate conflict.

Collaborative efforts that exist must be promoted through adequate protection of civilians from groups like Boko Haram, given the fear of retaliation (Botha and Abdile, 2016a; The Guardian, 2016). Certain incidents in Nigeria demonstrate the importance of the defense component in both establishing and maintaining security to support the broader 3Ds strategy, such as when the absence of a military presence resulted in insurgents repeatedly regaining control of territories. As noted in the 3Ds approach in Uruzgan, adequate policing of the populace and prompt disaster response are critical to fostering trust in the vulnerable population (Lijn, 2011). It suffices to also point out that the effectiveness of the defense in this regard is closely linked to the quality of training and the resourcefulness of the security apparatus, which the Dutch mission aimed to enhance in the case of Uruzgan (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006). As a result, calls for increased training and adaptation of strategies to the unconventional nature of insurgencies in Nigeria are appropriate (Botha and Abdile, 2016a).

Furthermore, the criminal justice response to terror groups has been underscored as crucial within the HAM approach, addressing issues of legitimacy among the population. For example, concerning Boko Haram, some respondents emphasize the insurgents' perceived relative legitimacy among the population (Peace-builder4, 2016; Youth2, 2016), suggesting a need for a shift toward a justice-focused strategy rather than solely relying on coercive force, if the sect is to be denied of support from such population. A justice-focused strategy entails a comprehensive approach that seeks to address the root causes of the insurgency, uphold the rule of law, and seek justice for victims while respecting human rights. This is critical to the success of the 3Ds approach in Nigeria, especially in demonstrating a better path to undoing or managing the various reported damages, particularly human rights violations (Akanni, 2019). Indeed, the pervasiveness of injustice has continued to breed mistrust of the government, including its military, undermining the cooperative efforts of locals in intelligence gathering for COIN (Peace-builder1, 2016). Such an approach does appreciate the underlying socioeconomic and political grievances and shows determination to address such issues through reforms and policies that promote long-term stability. At the core of this approach lie matters of accountability for human rights abuses, regardless of whether they were perpetrated by the insurgents or security forces. This entails conducting impartial investigations and ensuring fair trials. Simultaneously, reintegration initiatives are pivotal, aiming to ease the reintegration of former insurgents into society. These efforts go hand in hand with community engagement and strategies to prevent radicalization (Ogunnubi and Aja, 2022). The objective should be to strip Boko Haram of their support base among the population, whether such support is rooted in genuine affinity or coerced alignment.

Achieving a balance between hard power and soft power is pivotal in engaging the population and addressing the root causes of insurgency (Ikyase and Ejue, 2015). The significance of the HAM approach, effectively implemented through the 3Ds

framework, resides in governance excellence. Such was the long-term orientation of defense in Uruzgan aimed at creating a stable environment where insurgent defeat is not necessarily the primary objective (Lijn, 2011). Similarly, with the peak of insurgent attacks in the region now behind them, the Nigerian forces have an opportunity to strengthen their security approach. They can achieve this by implementing effective community policing measures that foster trust and garner support from the local population (Olofinbiyi et al., 2022), similar to the approach employed by the Dutch forces in Uruzgan.

An essential dimension for the operationalization of the 3Ds in Uruzgan was local ownership, given "the bottom-up approach, in which a comprehensive plan is designed in the field with the contribution of local stakeholders" (Lijn, 2011, p. 55). Adopting a comparable strategy could prove advantageous in Nigeria; however, it demands a focused initiative to combat corruption within the military ranks. For instance, Afoaku (2017) observes that President Jonathan's era saw rampant corruption in the security sector, hindering counterterrorism efforts. Security funds meant for anti-terrorism operations were misappropriated, with over 70% of police officers killed in Boko Haram conflicts not receiving their entitled payments. Considering that Nigeria's defense response is predominantly national, not international, essential reforms are indispensable to address some reported commercialization of COIN, characterized by embezzlement of defense funds (Ojo et al., 2020). This commercialization of conflict by conflict entrepreneurs is frequently driven by vested economic interests held by military officers and other political elites, thereby perpetuating the ongoing insecurity (Oyekanmi and Adenuga, 2023). Over time, there have been reports indicating the involvement of political elites in terrorist financing. The failure or reluctance of different administrations to hold these elites accountable underscores the systemic issues within Nigeria. This situation not only weakens the effectiveness of Nigeria's COIN but also poses a significant threat to the viability of the 3Ds. It is reasonable to anticipate that such entrepreneurs would consistently oppose any comprehensive strategy that undermines their vested interests.

Meanwhile, a notable consideration for the long-term sustainability of the 3Ds in Nigeria is the diminished risk of foreign departure, if carefully deployed. This contrasts with the situation in Uruzgan, where the 3Ds approach primarily functioned as a foreign policy instrument and was led by foreign actors such as the Dutch. This reduces the likelihood of policy changes or withdrawal by foreign powers, events that, as recent incidents demonstrate, significantly undermine the gains of the 3Ds and other COIN efforts in Afghanistan. While Nigeria actively participates in international collaborations to enhance its defense capabilities, it predominantly relies on its own military forces rather than depending extensively on foreign troops to drive its design. Additionally, the nature and quality of international support often reflect the interests of intervening nations, which may occasionally diverge from Nigeria's objectives. Nonetheless, this dynamic offers an opportunity to develop enduring response strategies guided by the 3Ds approach, subject to periodic reassessments to ensure adaptability to evolving circumstances. It is indisputable that the absence of a demonstrable commitment to formulating a comprehensive response to insecurity poses a potentially greater

threat than the variations among foreign interveners. For example, Nigeria's inconsistency in implementing policies could be a significant impediment and requires attention to ensure that the 3Ds approach has a meaningful impact in the long term.

3.4.1.2 Lessons for diplomacy

Diplomacy in conflict resolution goes beyond mere negotiation and dialogue; it encompasses governance and the restoration of government legitimacy (Grandia, 2009). It involves addressing human rights violations, reconciling with both insurgents and the affected population, and tactfully addressing grievances through soft power (Zartman, 2000). By addressing the significant impact of ineffective administration or administrative absence on insecurity, effective governance plays a critical role in anticipating and managing the actions of insurgent groups such as Boko Haram. In this context, diplomacy serves as a preventive mechanism and necessitates careful consideration of regional sensitivities and grievances. Effective peacebuilding and diplomacy demand the inclusion of citizens' aspirations (Peace-builder1, 2016). This signifies an advancement over prior colonial paradigms of withdrawal and narrower perspectives on legitimacy. Governance assumes a pivotal role in the HAM approach.

In Uruzgan, for instance, diplomatic priorities encompassed a dedication to inclusive participation, dialogue, reform, policy development, and effective communication (Royal Dutch Embassy, 2006). To this end, a respondent advocated enhanced synergy between leaders and intellectuals in universities and research institutions, as a diplomatic tool for promoting the culture of peace in Nigeria (Peace-builder1, 2016). For instance, such collaboration offers numerous advantages. By collaborating, they can develop national policy frameworks that genuinely address the needs and desires of the people. These include enhancing engagement with relevant stakeholders, integrating evidence-based conflict analysis from academia, and facilitating the training of future generations. Such partnership can lead to policy development driven by university resources and networks fostering the exchange of best practices. Besides challenging the assumption that leaders always possess all the answers, such partnership incorporates diverse perspectives and expertise in crafting successful strategies for nation-building, which is critical to managing the identity politics, tribalism and religious extremism that undermined peace and development efforts in Nigeria (Peace-builder1, 2016; Researcher1, 2016).

Similarly, addressing the relative absence or limited representation of youths in leadership becomes an imperative task, as such inclusion is pivotal in mitigating generational tensions and safeguarding sustainable peace and development. To this end, respondents emphasize the importance of recognizing and appreciating the contributions of many youths in the northern region who are collaborating with the government to restore peace (Researcher1, 2016; Youth/Religious Leader1, 2016). Bolstering their efforts through suitable incentives is crucial according to one of these respondents (Youth/Religious Leader1, 2016). Impliedly, a better approach that actively engages—rather than simply contains—young people (both peaceful and potentially radicalized) at the community level is required for channeling their constructive energies toward peacebuilding and development in the affected region.

Furthermore, diplomacy plays a critical role in addressing jihadist activities and ensuring regional security, through international cooperation, as evident in Afghanistan. As various pieces of evidence have demonstrated over the years, Boko Haram's influence has transcended Nigeria's borders, especially during the peaking of its attacks, with escalated attacks unfolding in neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. For instance, 2015 was marked by an upsurge in attacks by the Islamist group within the neighboring West African states of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon (David, 2019). This period marked a distinct surge in their transnational activities, reflecting their determination to extend their influence beyond Nigeria's borders. As Shekau articulated, "We don't recognize Cameroon or Chad... I don't adhere to a nation. What I uphold is Islamiyya" (Zenn, 2014, p. 1). This regional shift in focus was arguably influenced by the collaboration of these neighboring nations with Nigeria in suppressing the sect (Adinoyi and Zhizhi, 2022). This collaboration curbed the ease of cross-border movement that the group had previously exploited due to porous borders and inadequate border management. Consequently, Boko Haram intensified its assaults in these countries as a strategy to dissuade the neighboring nations from aiding Nigeria's security forces.

Nigeria must continue to work collaboratively with other affected nations to share intelligence and coordinate counterterrorism efforts. This cooperation fosters a comprehensive understanding of the threat, enabling synchronized actions to effectively combat it (Afokpa, 2013). For example, establishing robust border control measures with neighboring states remains imperative to curbing the illicit flow of arms and terrorist movement across borders. Securing borders restricts the movement of armed groups and disrupts their supply chains, making their activities more challenging. By combining intelligence sharing with effective border control, Nigeria can bolster its ability to counter jihadist groups' activities in the region (Yahaya, 2016). Unfortunately, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that have played an important role in this regard, has encountered numerous challenges, such as logistics, funding, and a lack of commitment from member states, which have contributed to the ongoing terrorism threat (Nkata, 2023). These factors undermine effective and efficient diplomatic relationships aimed at promoting security and safety in the region. A 3D-informed COIN approach may be better suited to overcome these challenges, as it consolidates resources and expertise from multiple actors, including Anti-corruption agencies.

Furthermore, borrowing from the experience in Uruzgan regarding the involvement of the local population in the design of the comprehensive approach, engaging with religious institutions and other civil society organizations is pivotal to mitigating the influence of Islamist groups like Boko Haram, utilizing their values to prevent radicalization (Cox et al., 2014). Collaborative efforts between the government and religious/community leaders hold the potential to effectively reach the masses and counter the compelling narrative put forth by these extremist groups (Botha and Abdile, 2016a). Like in Uruzgan, a key element in the reconstruction efforts in Nigeria's Northeast should be a strong emphasis on cultural awareness training (David, 2019). The battle against jihadism underscores the critical importance of countering the driving narratives across various levels. Therefore, while Nigeria's

security forces concentrate on addressing active terrorists and their violent actions, the battle of ideas falls within the realm of politics, involving the advocacy of political policies that tackle grassroots radicalization.

In this context, rather than solely focusing on the immediate threat, counter-narratives should adopt a bottom-up approach. This underscores the significance of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), as exemplified in the Uruzgan case. This aspect of the 3Ds underscores the utility of developing "solid partnerships with reliable local allies, to design, in concert with those allies, locally tailored measures to target the drivers that sustain the conflict and thus to break the cycle of violence" (Kilcullen, 2010, p. 4). Such collaborations are particularly effective in the deradicalization of sympathizers or individuals at risk of becoming sympathizers, rather than those who are already deeply entrenched in radical ideologies (Leuprecht et al., 2010). By targeting those on the periphery of radicalization, these efforts hold the potential to prevent further escalation and foster a gradual shift away from extremist beliefs. This approach acknowledges the complexity of radicalization and aims to address it through comprehensive engagement and strategic messaging.

In terms of diplomatic efforts, there arises a concern regarding the viability of engaging in peace talks with terrorist groups, as they often appear more inclined to demolish the negotiation table than to sit at it (Nia, 2010). Although the veracity of government claims about negotiation efforts remains in doubt, Boko Haram, particularly under the leadership of Shekau, consistently rebuffed dialogues with the government and quashed any voices advocating for discourse (ICG, 2010). Nonetheless, subsequent events indicate that dialogue with the group was not impossible or irrelevant in certain instances when it occurred (Shalangwa and Iwuamadi, 2021). Moreover, numerous Boko Haram members reportedly surrendered to authorities in Niger and Chad in 2016, while others voluntarily surrendered to the Nigerian Army in the hope of receiving clemency (Premium Times, 2016; VOA, 2016). These events provided opportunities for political engagement with the group. The participation of some former Boko Haram members in previous elections suggests their potential openness to political dialogue and desire for effective governance, which a 3D response strategy could capitalize on Botha and Abdile (2016a). This suggests that not all Boko Haram members are opposed to government authority. Instead, some use insurgency to demand good governance, the abolition of corruption, and other things, as they admit in some cases. A medium and long-term diplomatic strategy informed by the 3Ds would seek to better win the hearts and minds of such insurgents. The mutual perception of insincerity from both the government and, on occasion, the sect, is a significant challenge in achieving meaningful peace talks with the sect. For example, the government's decision in June 2012 to place bounties on the heads of Shekau and other designated commanders as terrorists, offering substantial rewards for their capture, hampered negotiations. Terrorists may understandably be skeptical of the government's intentions in seeking dialogue in such circumstances, fearing potential traps for capture. Simultaneously, negotiating with Boko Haram necessitates finding a middle ground that does not jeopardize national interests or spark a religious civil war (Audu, 2011; Egbue et al., 2015).

Additionally, the reintegration of former insurgents, including those coerced or misled into joining, is crucial, especially in resolving the prevailing trust deficit in Nigeria. In line with these considerations, Botha and Abdile (2016a) propose that deradicalization initiatives should stress the need to perceive Boko Haram fighters as victims rather than only as threats. While the Nigerian government has been making strides in enhancing its soft approach to COIN, recent studies, such as the one by Sowale and Aduloju (2023), have underscored a variety of challenges, particularly institutional deficiencies, that persist in these efforts. These challenges are especially evident in the complex task of deradicalizing and reintegrating former combatants. Notably, the emphasis on intersectoral cooperation inspired by the principles of 3Ds may hold significant promise.

Based on insight from Uruzgan, the necessary political reforms for attaining peace and security in Nigeria should center on reinforcing governance mechanisms, and ensuring transparency, accountability, rebuilding relationships, and responsiveness across all levels of the Nigerian government (Onuoha, 2014; David, 2019). These are critical in alleviating the pervasive sense of impunity and impoverishment that fuels support for anti-state groups such as Boko Haram, as well as winning their hearts and minds.

3.4.1.3 Lesson for development

The promotion of human security was regarded as a central goal of the Dutch mission, which sought to win the hearts and minds of Afghans away from insurgent groups. They hoped to accomplish this by investing in bettering people's lives. According to the Royal Dutch Embassy (2006), priorities included a commitment to fostering socio-economic development, improving living conditions, and empowering local communities to actively participate in their development processes. While these were primarily long-term oriented, short-term economic supports were also used. For instance, as Lijn (2011, p. 56) noted, the majority of military personnel observed that the "cash for work" initiatives not only provided short-term employment to tens or even hundreds of workers but also served as a viable alternative for individuals involved in daily insurgency activities. Outsourcing such projects to the local community proved effective, offering opportunities to those who were marginalized. The reconstruction goal through the development pillar of the 3Ds was made possible by the collaboration of different bodies, including Dutch NGOs and the Dutch private sector that expanded their activities in Uruzgan province, in addition to the Dutch government's involvement in 2006 (Lijn, 2011). A consortium known as the Dutch Consortium for Uruzgan (DCU) was established to coordinate the efforts of various Dutch NGOs, including Save the Children, Cordaid, Healthnet-TPO, the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan, and ZOA Refugee Care. This collaboration aimed to contribute to the development and welfare of the region (Lijn, 2011).

In the context of Nigeria, such a robust collaboration is crucial in prioritizing conflict-sensitive development, with a focus on tackling poverty, inequality, social welfare, and corruption (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). The interplay between (under)development and security/conflict takes on a circular nature, underscoring how conflict and insurgency can be both influenced by deficient development and, in turn, exacerbate developmental challenges. This cycle is illuminated by the fact

that conflict detrimentally affects development through a range of channels. Yet, the absence of development itself fosters grievances rooted in poverty, inequality, marginalization, and exclusion, often serving as triggers for violent conflicts (David et al., 2015). Herein lies the view, that "peace is development in the broadest sense of the term" [cited in Ramsbotham et al. (2011), p. 105]. Although social and human underdevelopment, encompassing factors such as poverty and weak institutions, might not directly precipitate conflict, human agency can catalyze their potential into actual conflict.

Consequently, it becomes imperative for the government to effectively address the underlying socio-economic drivers that fuel the insurgency, taking careful consideration of the region-specific conditions that foster poverty (Cold-Ravnkilde and Plambech, 2015). As corroborated by a respondent, responses to insurgency can inadvertently sow the seeds for further conflicts (Peace-builder2, 2016). Overlooking this intricate nexus can undermine endeavors aimed at establishing lasting peace, as it becomes imperative to address both security and development intricacies concurrently. For instance, the resettlement of forcibly displaced individuals and the adequate provision of their basic needs are crucial in curtailing their vulnerability to radical ideologies and diminishing social tensions within host communities (David, 2019). Recognizing that underdevelopment erodes institutional strength and exposes individuals to radicalization underscores the need for deepening this pillar of the 3Ds in the ongoing COIN efforts in Nigeria.

In the post-conflict reconstruction phase, a focus on conflict-sensitive development is paramount to tackling the root socio-economic grievances underpinning the Boko Haram crises. Recognizing that personal and group grievances are interconnected, addressing broader societal development challenges can contribute to alleviating individual grievances over the long term (David et al., 2015; Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). As was the case in Uruzgan, to ensure effectiveness, development programs should be locally driven, engaging stakeholders and aligning with the aspirations of individuals and communities, thus circumventing the repetition of unsuccessful strategies (Grandia, 2009). Given the localized dynamics of the insurgency, conflict-sensitive development, involving meaningful participation of the populace, plays a pivotal role in resolving both crises.

When crafting development priorities, it is essential to account for region-specific challenges. For example, the imperative of a profound mental shift through education and "de-doctrination" in the northeast is of paramount significance, notwithstanding Boko Haram's public aversion to Western education (Enweonwu et al., 2022). Given the current distortion of Islamic teachings by Boko Haram's anti-Western education rhetoric (Peace-builder3, 2016), it becomes the Nigerian state's responsibility to scrutinize religious teachings to discourage religious intolerance (David et al., 2015). This is necessary as religious grounds and institutions such as madrassas have served as recruitment grounds. Strengthening efforts to promote Western education within these institutions is a critical means of discouraging the religious extremism that often underpins Islamism (Enweonwu et al., 2022). Moreover, embedding the culture of peace into the formal education

curriculum is essential to counteract the growing culture of ethno-religious intolerance. Aligning with this, Dr. Ahmed Shield Gunmi lauds former President Jonathan's administration's establishment of Almajiri schools across the north, albeit lamenting their flawed execution. Indeed, the task of "countering narratives of grievance, along with offering a better vision of the future, is the job of development" (Mercy Corps, 2015), a facet integral to effective COIN strategies. Importantly, history education should be tailored to adequately address intergenerational traumas and animosities that contribute to various agitations across the country.

A strategic long-term approach that erodes the appeal of jihadism in northern Nigeria should be prioritized (David, 2019). These include robustly tackling a range of human development crises, including health issues, food insecurity, capital flight, forced migration, environmental degradation, and infrastructure breakdown. Similarly, the promotion of vocational education is critical in light of the government's diminishing capacity to provide jobs for the burgeoning youth population, which resonates with the 3Ds operations in Uruzgan (Lijn, 2011). Equipping the youth with vocational skills, accompanied by seed funds to initiate businesses, empowers them for self-reliance (Nwachukwu, 2016). These are some of the approaches being encouraged in Nigeria that demonstrate an appreciation of the centrality of development in COIN.

As observable in Uruzgan, within the framework of the 3Ds approach, the vital role of the international community in supporting the Nigerian government cannot be overstressed. Given the inherent fragility of the Nigerian state, it lacks the necessary human and material resources to effectively confront these insurgencies. The international community's contributions, spanning humanitarian aid, monitoring and evaluation efforts, training programs, and provision of equipment, must remain consistent and sustained. This collaboration is especially evident in the continuous support of regional military coalitions like the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in countering insurgency in the northeastern region. However, the scope of assistance should extend beyond military cooperation to encompass civil society collaboration across various domains, including intelligence gathering and addressing the foundational causes that fuel insurgencies in the broader West African sub-region.

Much like the situation in Uruzgan, where porous borders were facilitating insurgent activities, the importance of long-term border management through international cooperation holds valuable lessons for Nigeria. This is especially crucial given the transborder nature of the insurgency. Public sector institutions in nations like Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, which play a vital role in this coalition, need consistent strengthening to improve their service delivery to citizens. Like in Afghanistan, richer nations can offer crucial assistance in these domains. Accordingly, the complementary role played by the international community remains of paramount importance to Nigeria's COIN endeavors, especially in terms of technological support, cutting-edge gadgets, and sophisticated intelligence-gathering tools. By fostering this international synergy, Nigeria can enhance its COIN strategies and work collectively toward lasting peace and development (David, 2013).

It is sufficient to acknowledge, however, that the presence of weak governance structures, fragile political and social systems, and a lack of well-coordinated COIN and post-conflict peacebuilding institutions can impede the effective implementation of the 3Ds approach, mirroring the challenges faced in Uruzgan (Hilker and Fraser, 2009). Without addressing these structural challenges, the application of the 3Ds is hardly possible. For instance, political elites and factions entrenched in the existing power dynamics resist change, fearing the loss of influence and benefits associated with the current status quo. Corruption and governance inefficiencies further impede the 3Ds, as elements accustomed to opaque practices resist the call for a transparent and accountable governance structure. A threat is also posed by the lack of institutions capable of managing interreligious affairs and promoting interfaith dialogue. The absence of these presents direct challenges to achieving the COIN goals. Hence, the feasibility of the 3Ds approach in Nigeria would depend on how much it is tailored to address challenges that are socio-cultural and religious in nature, as the country's diverse ethnic and religious groups may view this strategy as incompatible with their values, hindering widespread acceptance. Economic interests linked to current COIN efforts may also contribute to resistance, particularly among those benefiting economically who are wary of changes in resource allocation or economic structures. Additionally, entrenched procedures and structures within Nigeria's military and security forces, historical precedents, public skepticism, and concerns about international collaboration pose formidable barriers to the seamless integration of the 3Ds approach.

4 Recommendations and concluding remarks

It is critical that, in designing the 3Ds for Nigeria, efforts are made to mitigate some of the shortcomings identified in its implementation in contexts like Uruzgan as much as possible. This would require a comprehensive restructuring in the case of Nigeria, especially as it will be driven predominantly by national agencies and institutions. Defining a single overarching goal or strategy that unifies the diverse objectives of the 3Ds to ensure clarity and focus is one of the things to think about. Concurrently, establishing a lead agency or unified command structure is critical for reducing fragmentation. By collaborating with relevant government agencies, military forces, and international partners, this centralized authority can coordinate efforts, streamline communication, and foster more cohesive execution of the 3Ds. To counteract partners' tendency to assume that someone else will resolve issues, fostering an accountability and collaboration culture, which is notably lacking in Nigeria, is critical. Clear roles and responsibilities, as well as regular communication and coordination mechanisms, are required. Coordinated planning and execution are required to address pacing and capacity variations among the three "Ds." The dilemma of differing directions in top-down and bottom-up approaches should be resolved through a hybrid model, integrating elements of both, informed by a thorough understanding of local dynamics and the active involvement of local communities in decision-making processes to promote

inclusivity and sustainability. Critical to note is that the challenges emanating from rent-seeking political economies, as observed in the case of Nigeria, underscore the imperative for comprehensive reforms (Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Okorie, 2014; David, 2019). These reforms are essential to ascertain that financial assistance plays a substantive role in fostering enduring stability and facilitating the establishment of governance structures that are both legitimate and accountable. Overall, the 3Ds approach's operationalization in Nigeria necessitates a concerted effort to glean relevant lessons from its guiding principles while tailoring them to internal socio-cultural, political, and economic nuances. The ever-changing nature of insurgent groups emphasizes the need for adaptable and context-specific countermeasures, recognizing that what works in one context or period may not work in another (Kilcullen, 2010).

The foregoing accents the view that easy recourse to traditional militaristic approaches often undermines the centrality of human security (HS), which is central to the 3Ds, in achieving and promoting sustainable peace and development (Schirch, 2016). As could be discerned from the approach of the Dutch mission in Uruzgan, the attention to human security acknowledges that traditional national/military security should not be an ultimate end; instead, it should be one of the means to achieve "freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity" (Sen, 1999). Achieving socio-economic transformation in the reconstruction efforts entails robust monitoring, periodic evaluation, and accountability mechanisms to counteract fund diversion and mismanagement within society (David, 2019).

While implementing the 3Ds approach may be difficult, especially given Nigeria's historical inclination toward a militaristic approach and the general problem of state failure, it is recommended in the current deteriorating security landscape bases on its outweighing merits (Lijn, 2011). The approach benefits from its coherence and comprehensiveness. Organizational learning and adaptability emerge as critical in the evolving landscape of COIN knowledge, particularly when dealing with insurgencies such as Boko Haram. As a result, the study refrains from endorsing a one-size-fits-all application of 3Ds. Instead, it encourages a critical examination of Uruzgan's successes and failures, while acknowledging the limitations of direct transferability. To some extent in Uruzgan, the 3Ds approach represents "an investment in fostering trust, respect, and mutual understanding among the diverse actors involved, thereby rendering the distinct strategies of the military, diplomats, and development workers more multifaceted and interconnected" (Lijn, 2011, p. 12). This approach advances the objective of comprehensive human security and human development, the lack of which has been recognized as a central and sustaining factor in Nigeria's lingering security challenges. A human security orientation in COIN engages multiple stakeholders at various levels including government bodies, civil society organizations, businesses, academia, religious institutions, and the media (Schirch, 2016). In this regard, the 3Ds approach is a useful tool in assessing the human insecurity that underpins insurgency, while also providing a broad scope to address them.

This study advances the view that skillful orchestration of defense, diplomacy, and development is an important strength in a long-term COIN endeavor that outweighs the weaknesses, in line with Lijn (2011). Evaluating Uruzgan's accomplishments,

challenges, and best practices provides diverse perspectives on the adaptability of the 3Ds approach in the context of COIN efforts in Nigeria and neighboring regions contending with Jihadist movements. Nigeria's COIN can be improved if the pitfalls of its deployment in Uruzgan are carefully considered. Although complex, with the requisite political determination, Nigeria can glean adaptable insights from the positives and negatives of the Dutch experience in Uruzgan. These insights can aid in simultaneously addressing the socio-economic root causes and negative developmental impacts of insurgencies like Boko Haram and similar cases. By embracing the principles of the 3Ds, governments in insurgency-infested regions such as West Africa, can strive to attain freedom from fear and want, advance human security, and cultivate enduring peace. Thus, this analysis provides insights for academics, policymakers, military planners, and stakeholders committed to peace and security, with implications extending beyond Nigeria's borders.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the Faculty of Arts, University of Zululand. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

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