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Fragmented Approaches, Missed Opportunities: Security Coordination Challenges in Nigeria's DDRR Efforts

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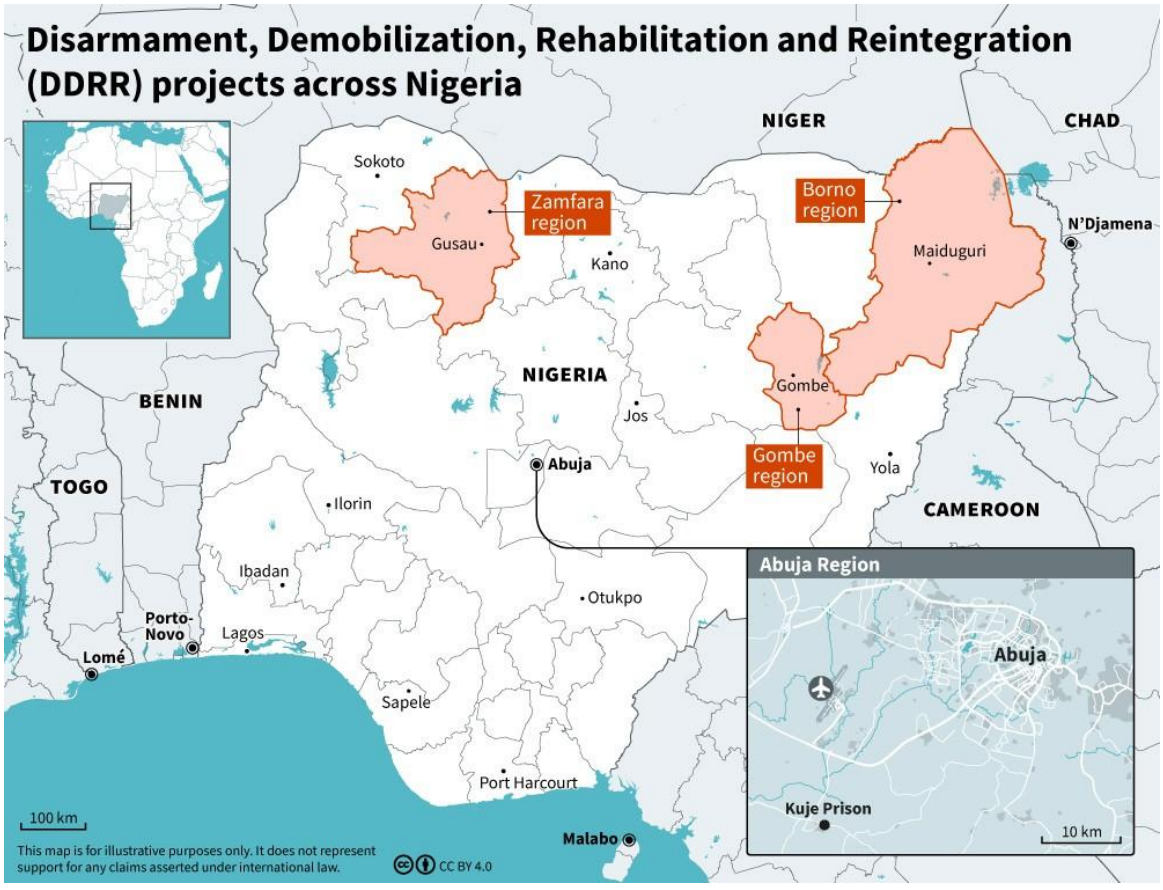
Programmes for the Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DDRR) of members of violent extremist groups have become central to counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria. But their efficacy in weakening jihadist insurgency has been limited, as evidenced by the persistence of insecurity and political violence. This policy briefly examines one contributing factor why this has been the case. It shows the competition and rivalries between and amongst security agencies over control of DDRR programmes. The tensions generated by such rivalries not only obstruct the development of a coherent national DDRR policy framework, but also contribute to a lack of oversight in the management of supposedly rehabilitated fighters thereby increasing the risk of recidivism. Understanding these dynamics is pertinent for European actors, as they suggest that funding DDRR programmes without heed to political and institutional dynamics where they are implemented, risks undermining their efficacy and inadvertently reproducing some of the issues that the programmes seek to address.

Nigeria has seen increasing levels of extremist violent extremism since around 2009. The principal actor is Boko Haram,[1] alongside a splinter group that emerged in 2015, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).[2] The Nigerian state has responded by intensifying its counter-terrorism (CT) and countering violent extremism (CVE) responses. Nigeria's counter-terrorism framework reflects a shift from an explicitly militarized response to more holistic strategies incorporating prevention, disengagement, and reintegration. Initially dominated by kinetic operations under the 2011 Terrorism Prevention Act, the framework evolved in response to persistent Jihadist insurgency, prompting the development of the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) (which included CVE) in 2014, and subsequently the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (NAPCVE) launched in 2017. These frameworks placed a premium on soft, non-militaristic responses to the persistent and longstanding problem of terrorism and violent extremism.

[1] Boko Haram's proper name is Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS). For details on its evolution, see Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria", *Africa Spectrum* 45, no. 2 (2010): 95–108.
[2] International Crisis Group, *JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters*, Briefing no. 196 (28 March 2024).

At the heart of this transformation within the CT and PCVE framework are the Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DDRR) programmes, which is exemplified majorly by two measures. The first is the Kuje Prisons project, named after the Kuje maximum security prisons located in Abuja. This prison-based deradicalization programme for members of jihadists groups was launched in 2014 and is governed directly by the Nigerian Correctional Services.[3] The second is Operation Safe Corridor, a project run by the federal government and governed jointly by multiple security agencies in Gombe state (with new structures in Zamfara state). Two further programmes have been added more recently: the clandestine Sulhu programme, run by the domestic intelligence service since 2021, targets top Boko Haram commanders,[4] while the Borno Model is a DDRR project overseen by the Borno state government in partnership with external actors.[5] According to its operationalising document, the Borno model is a community-based reconciliation policy to manage the reintegration challenges posed by ex-combatants.[6] The common denominator between these programmes is the idea that DDRR functions as a pragmatic tool for ensuring sustainable peace and preventing recidivism. Yet, the operationalization of DDRR is entangled in institutional rivalries, struggles, and legitimacy contests. These frictions and their consequences underscore the need to interrogate how security institutions negotiate authority within DDRR implementation, and the consequences of such contestations.



[3] For more on the Kuje Prisons, see: Atta Barkindo and Shane Bryans, "De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria: Developing A Basic Prison-based De-Radicalisation Programme", *Journal for Deradicalization* 7 (Summer 2016): 1–25.
[4] Obi Anyadike, "Exclusive: Nigeria's Secret Programme to Lure Top Boko Haram Defectors", *The New Humanitarian*, 19 August 2021.
[5] For more on the Borno Model, see Joshua Akintayo, "Sulhu as Local Peacebuilding", *Peacebuilding*, January 20, 2023.
[6] "Operationalising the Borno Model for Integrated Management of the Mass Exit" (2022) (unpublished government document).

Drawing on 37 interviews (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured) with various counter-terrorism security professionals (CTSPs) and policy analysts in Abuja,[7] as well as analysis of secondary materials, this policy brief unpacks how competition plays out within military institutions and more broadly across the security sector. Despite the high stakes involved, and with DDRR processes regarded as an essential component of attaining and building peace sustainably, the institutional dynamics that shape its implementation and outcomes remain underexplored. Institutional competition can lead to fragmented programming, duplication of efforts, and the instrumentalization of DDRR for political and bureaucratic gains, ultimately undermining the efficacy of these interventions and risking reproducing some of the very problems DDRR seeks to address. It is worth noting that there are also positive aspects to institutional competition, such as motivating agencies and actors to work harder, which often drives innovation and creativity. Following an examination of what causes competition over DDRR programmes within Nigeria's security landscape, the brief proceeds to tease out the nature and dynamics of competition and struggle that animate DDRR, as well as some of the consequences of these struggles and tensions. It concludes with reflections and suggestions that could be of relevance to both Nigerian and European policymakers.

DDRR as a Competitive Terrain

Although rivalries are a long-standing aspect of Nigeria's security landscape, they have been intensified by the emergence of terrorism as a security challenge and the counter-terrorism measures adopted in response. DDRR programmes, the newest addition to the CT and PCVE scene, provide a key terrain for agencies to compete. Three main drivers are discernible.

First, economic, and fiscal incentives associated with the governance of counter-terrorism constitute the baseline source of competition. Nigeria's growing counter-terrorism economy[8] has exponentially increased defence budget allocations since the formal launch of counter-terrorism operations. The defence budget increased by 724.5 per cent between 2015 and 2025, from NGN 375.4 billion (EUR 209.84 million) in 2015 to NGN 3.1 trillion (EUR 1.732 billion) in 2025.[9] While the exact amount allocated to counter-terrorism within this budget is unknown, it is likely to account for a substantial proportion of the increase. This growth in the defence budget amplifies the economic dimensions of counter-terrorism, turning control over funding for DDRR efforts into a competitive landscape. Whoever controls DDRR budgets invariably controls a rich war chest: procurement for various camp maintenance equipment, vehicles, food supply for violent extremists, provision of psychosocial services, opportunity for having additional staff on-site, graduation ceremonies. At a broader level, a larger budget elevates an agency's status. The apparently mundane nature of the budget items involved means that the revenue stream from DDRR can be tapped with far less scrutiny than say, weapons procurement, which is core part of militarised approach of counter-terrorism but subject to greater scrutiny. Furthermore, DDRR's humanitarian and peacebuilding framing shields budgetary requests from the scepticism directed towards conventional defence spending; the effect of which is the intensification of

[7] The interviews and conversations were conducted between November 2022 and March 2025, as part of the author's doctoral fieldwork.
[8] Emeka Thaddues Njoku, "Merchants of Terror: Neo-Patrimonialism, Counterterrorism Economy, and Expansion of Terrorism in Nigeria", *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 10, no. 2 (2020): 83–107.
[9] Budget Office of the Federation, *Federal Ministry of Defense 2015*, 10 April 2017; The BudgIT Foundation, "2025 Defense Budget Breakdown", online graphic. Figures calculated using exchange rate as of 29 August 2025.

the competition for control between and amongst security agencies. Technocratic language shields DDRR from the symbolic visibility and political controversy associated with militarized counter-terrorism measures.

The second driver of competition is associated with the repertoire of foreign partnerships involved in DDRR. Inter-governmental organizations and multinational donors like the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the European Union, as well as international NGOs such as International Alert, channel grants and funding into DDRR. Bilateral partners such as the EU, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and more recently Colombia, tend to place a premium on DDRR and stabilization initiatives as a 'soft', low-risk, and politically acceptable aspect of counter-terrorism engagement. These international partners fund the bulk of the DDRR and stabilization programmes in Nigeria. For instance, in 2022 the UN Peacebuilding Fund had an approved budget of USD 2.4 million for reintegration projects implemented in Nigeria by the consortium of UNDP, UNICEF, IOM, and the UNODC.[10] Similarly, the UNDP Regional Stabilization Facility operates across four countries in the Lake Chad Basin region, supported by multiple donors including the EU, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the African Development Bank, with the Nigerian window alone receiving USD 44.7 million.[11] It is worth noting, however, that the national defence budget (EUR 1.722 billion for 2025) far exceeds the foreign contribution to the UNDP's Nigeria window. Nevertheless, whichever Nigerian agency is chosen to participate will gain privileged access to training slots, conference and workshop participation, study tours, and equipment donations, all of which are convertible into future cooperation and career advancement. Hence, agencies compete to ensure only their own name and logo appear beside those of the international partners on DDRR project materials. In essence, rivalries between and within agencies are catalysed by the material, reputational and strategic gains that foreign partners offer. The fragmentation of donor structures also creates openings for rivalry.

The third factor driving rivalry is connected with the political visibility of DDRR measures. Unlike conventional CT measures, DDRR produces positive media coverage,[12] such as destruction of weapons, repentant insurgents in green and white uniforms during graduation and community reinsertion ceremonies, and declarations by repentant insurgent leaders. Such media imagery and the political visibility that comes it with makes DDRR programmes attractive to ambitious security actors. For example, the heads of agencies lobby to either manage existing DDRR interventions or launch new ones, thereby transforming these initiatives into opportunities to extend their tenure in office. They know that a role in a DDRR success story can lead to future appointments (for example to National Security Adviser), or to the establishment of a security think-tank that the government may consult on DDRR issues after their retirement.[13]

[10] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Strengthening Reconciliation and Reintegration Pathways for Persons Associated with Non-State Armed Groups, and Communities of Reintegration, Including Women and Children, in Northeast of Nigeria*, Project Document, Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, May 2025.

[11] United Nations Development Programme, *Regional Stabilization Facility Nigeria: Annual Report 2021,* 30 September 2022.

[12] For more on how DDRR generates significant media coverage, see Search for Common Ground, "Supporting the Efforts of the Nigerian Government on Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), and Promoting Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation (DDRR)", June 2022; United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre*, IDDRS Module 4.60: Public Information and Strategic Communication in Support of DDR*, Inter-Agency Working Group on DDR, 2020.

[13] As the author observed during the fieldwork, in Nigeria it is common for former security personnel (especially from the armed forces) to establish policy think tanks, semi-institutional think tanks, or consultancy outfits upon retirement. These entities often function as advisory mechanisms on security governance, drawing legitimacy from

Turf Wars and Competition over DDRR Programmes

Competition over control of DDRR programmes takes place at two levels: between different branches and agencies of Nigeria's armed forces, and within the wider security sector. The following sections analyse the two contexts in turn, teasing out the interests at play in these clashes over authority and control.

Rivalries within the Armed Forces

The Nigerian army, airforce, and navy are housed physically within the Defence Headquarters. Together with the Defense Intelligence Agency, they form the armed forces. In theory, they are expected to work together and synchronize their counter-terrorism efforts. In practice, however, cooperation between these agencies often suffers from competition. The core rivalry is between the Defence Intelligence Agency and the Nigerian Army over authority, legitimacy, and "ownership" of the Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) programme.

Operation Safe Corridor, as the federal government's flagship DDRR programme since 2016, was originally designed and administered solely by the Defence Intelligence Agency.[14] However, it has since been placed under the control of the Defence Headquarters, reducing the Defence Intelligence Agency to a supporting operational role.[15] Abuja's counter-terrorism insiders highlighted this institutional shift. *"The DHQ has now superimposed themselves on the Safe Corridor programme, and have collected it from the DIA"*, a senior CTSP noted.[16] Abuja's counter-terrorism insiders also pointed out that although the Chief of Defence Staff was officially in charge of the Safe Corridor programme, its involvement had until recently been largely ceremonial and restricted to oversight, with the "heavy-lifting" (operational, administrative, and logistical) being done by the Defence Intelligence Agency.

To forestall any possibility of authority over the programme returning to the Defence Intelligence Agency,[17] the Defence Headquarters signed bilateral accords with certain state governments in the North West region, setting up state-level Safe Corridor DDRR programmes that report exclusively to Defence Headquarters and ensuring its full control of DDRR governance. This is the case with the recently established Operation Safe Corridor Programme in Zamfara State, North West Nigeria, which was created as a way to expand the control of the DHQ over Safe Corridor programme to encompass the relevant state governments.[18] Further epitomising ways of keeping the Safe Corridor program within its reach, the Defence Headquarters also recently established the department of Peace, dialogue, and reconciliation, created to manage issues of Jihadist insurgents disarmament, reintegration,

their founders' institutional affiliations. In practice, however, they also operate as consultancy machines, leveraging personal networks within state and donor infrastructures to shape security discourses and offer paid services.

[14] Author's field notes.

[15] In Nigeria, DDRR and CT operations fall formally under the authority of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Defence Headquarters (DHQ), with the CDS exercising strategic oversight and possessing the authority to delegate implementation to other military agencies. This arrangement fosters and complicates intra-agency competition.

[16] Author's interview with a CTSP, Abuja, August 2023.

[17] The DIA is a powerful agency that sometimes escapes the authority of the CDS – under whose authority it formally falls – especially in matters relating to CT and CVE. The DIA's powerful role and partial autonomy from the CDS are attributable to a combination of structural and contextual factors, including its origins (in military restructuring), direct presidential appointment of its head, distinct roles in security operations, operational secrecy and compartmentalization, and embedding in national security architecture.

[18] Adeniyi Salaudeen, "DHQ Establishes Operation Safe Corridor in North-West to Rehabilitate Ex-Bandits", *Channels Television*, 13 February 2025.

reconciliation and peacebuilding by the office of the Chief of Defence Staff, and whose head reports directly to the Chief of Defence Staff.[19]

For its part, the Defence Intelligence Agency holds up its founding role, constantly portraying itself as the "architect" of the Safe Corridor programme. It claims to have drafted the original programme templates via its involvements in various foreign trainings and visits, as well as mapping out the programme's framework and modalities (including the infusion of a religious component).[20] Some CTSP interviewees argued that the Agency's clandestine profile and the intelligence-driven nature of the highly sensitive Safe Corridor programme provided grounds enough for the Agency to remain in control.[21] According to numerous well-informed sources within the armed forces and the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the Defence Intelligence Agency was the body originally chosen – in 2015 – by the National Security Adviser to develop a counter-insurgency rehabilitation programme, before the Defence Headquarters stepped in and took it over.

The role of the Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC) – the Army think-tank – further complicates the situation. The NARC positions itself as the doctrinal authority on DDRR best practices in Nigeria. The institution claims a "technical supremacy" in DDRR that transcends the Defence Headquarters' command hierarchy and the Defence Intelligence Agency's focus on intelligence. This is mainly carried out through a combination of the experienced field officers the think-tank employs and its penchant for conducting research driven policy interventions. *"We are the best people to handle the DDR programme. We have experience on ground zero, and we also do research that interfaces with practitioners and academics,"*[22] said one highly ranked CTSP from NARC. One of the mechanisms through which the NARC lays claim to the DDRR programme is by translating its operational and research prowess into conferences and workshops, thereby leveraging its civil-military relationships to forge partnerships with civil society organizations, particularly those involved in CVE, DDRR, and peacebuilding activities. In essence, the NARC leverages the credibility of the humanitarian phase of the DDRR programmes to stake its own claim in them and compete (albeit subtly) with other agencies within the Armed Forces.

What emerges from the above dynamic is a tripartite competition over control of decision-making in Nigeria's DDRR programming. The rivalry goes beyond routine jostling for position. It is a product of the dual incentives (as discussed above) embedded in the DDRR programme and the broader Nigerian security governance system. The steadily growing counter-terrorism economy, which is also fuelled by donor funding,[23] has inevitably made control of the DDRR programmes into another lucrative opportunity for economic capture within Nigeria's rentier state. However, the agencies also compete over DDRR to secure political visibility, gain diplomatic recognition, and acquire international partnerships. The rewards include career-boosting visibility, access to international partners keen to be associated with "stabilisation" successes, and diplomatic recognition and prestige in global security forums. In essence, the competition over DDRR promises both cash and clout. This makes the intra-agency rivalry structural, with far reaching consequences for DDRR efforts.

[19] Author's interview with a CTSP, Abuja, March 2025.
[20] Author's interview with two CTSPs, Abuja, November 2023.
[21] Author's interview with a CTSPs, Abuja, November 2022
[22] Author's interviews with a CTSP, Abuja, November 2022.
[23] Budget Office of the Federation, Federal Ministry of Defense, *2015 Budget*, 2017; BudgIT Foundation, *2025 Defense Budget Breakdown*; UNDP, *Strengthening Reconciliation and Reintegration Pathways*, 2025.See notes 9 and 10.

Rivalries in the Wider Security Sector

Whereas rivalry within the armed forces pits agencies within the institution against one another, competition in the wider security sector encompasses the Defence Intelligence Agency, the army, the State Security Service, and the Correctional Services, and generates zero-sum struggles for authority and strategic initiative. This sort of competition, and the tensions that animate it is further underscored by the "whole-of-government" approach, a core principle of the broader PCVE governance.[24] This plays out most clearly in the Safe Corridor programme and the Sulhu project, which are both government DDRR programmes, but run by different security agencies.

The Operation Safe Corridor project, with its facility in Gombe state, North East Nigeria, was envisioned as a multi-agency hub combining psychosocial rehabilitation, vocational training, and risk assessment for surrendering extremists. As such, all the security agencies maintain staff on site – including the Correctional Services, with their expertise in custodial rehabilitation, and the intelligence arm of the armed forces. However, interviewees from Correctional Services reported systematic marginalisation and exclusion from rehabilitation activities, despite their professional competence.[25] They argued that, as specialists in psychological rehabilitation and custodial supervision, they were best positioned to guide the programme's rehabilitative framework. In reality, they reported, the armed forces were in control (principally the Defence Intelligence Agency and the army), relegating correctional officers to subordinate roles.[26]

From the Defence Intelligence Agency's perspective, DDRR in a conflict-zone context like Nigeria is intrinsically intelligence-driven. Profiling extremists, interfacing with members of jihadist groups, and assessing recidivism risks all demand expertise that is only acquired through military training: skills the Correctional Services do not possess, noted one senior analyst from military intelligence.[27] Interviewees from the Defence Intelligence Agency said they thought that Correctional Services should focus on the Kuje Prisons rehabilitation project, which falls explicitly under its custodial remit, and worry less about the Safe Corridor programme.[28] This suggestion is rather symptomatic of the Defence Intelligence Agency's desire to consolidate strategic control over a high-visibility counter-terrorism measure.

Meanwhile, in 2021, the State Security Service (domestic intelligence) quietly institutionalized its own counter-insurgency rehabilitation and deradicalization programme.[29] This is the Sulhu programme, which targets top Boko Haram and ISWAP commanders. It is run by the State Security Service in close partnership with the Borno state government, which has its own separate rehabilitation programme. From its inception until the beginning of 2023, the Sulhu project operated with very little consultation with the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) or other security agencies. Numerous counter-terrorism professionals told me that the State Security Service consistently rebuffed their requests for briefings on the Sulhu programme.

This perceived autonomy of the State Security Service – its ability to control its own DDRR programme – stems from its unique institutional leverage. It reports directly to the president, whereas other agencies report to their respective ministers. This also enables it to

[24] For details of PCVE governance in Nigeria, see Joshua Akintayo, "Whole-of-Society Approach or Manufacturing Intelligence? Making Sense of State-CSO Relation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in Nigeria", *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 17, no. 3 (2024): 659–83.
[25] Author's interviews with CTSPs, Abuja, January–February 2023.
[26] Author's interviews with CTSPs, Abuja, January and May 2023.
[27] Author's interviews with CTSP, Abuja, November 2022 and October 2024.
[28] Author's interviews with a CTSP, Abuja, October 2024.
[29] Atta Barkindo and Shane Bryans, "De-Radicalising Prisoners in Nigeria," *Journal for Deradicalization* 7 (2016). See note 3.

bypass the oversight of the NSA. For instance, the Correctional Services operate under the Ministry of Interior and must obtain its approval before creating DDRR programmes. The armed forces need to secure approval from the Ministry of Defence.

Consequences of Competition

In the aggregate, these multi-layered rivalries have far-reaching consequences for DDRR in Nigeria. They gravely undermine DDRR efforts, with interconnected consequences at the policy and tactical/operational levels.

At the policy level, the rivalries contribute significantly to delays in the development of a comprehensive national DDRR framework. Nigeria still lacks a national and all-encompassing DDRR policy framework. The current document, a draft template from 2017, is for all intents and purposes pedantic and redundant in its outlook, out of touch with the global and local realities of political violence, and its governance. Giving room for the emergence of different programmes by security agencies and even state governments, without anchorage within a unified national framework. In essence, DDRR in Nigeria lacks a clear policy direction, in part because of the fragmented security sector landscape. Attempts by various international organizations, such as the IOM and International Alert, to organize stakeholder workshops to work towards a national framework are consistently undermined by the actions (and inaction) by agencies with respect to their unwillingness to share insights on templates of their existing respective programmes. Wherein each draft has been quietly shelved amid bureaucratic gridlock, as no single agency is willing to relinquish leadership or authority to another. In the absence of a clearly defined policy direction, DDRR efforts risk being perpetually reduced to fragmented donor-funded experiments like the "Borno Model".

At the tactical or operational level, one area of noticeable consequence is with respect to the (mis)management of "rehabilitated" and reintegrated jihadist insurgents. Prominently, this is seen with different agencies running incompatible screening tools and databases, which creates bottlenecks in the processing of ex-combatants and may sometimes allow surrendering fighters to slip through the cracks or return to fighting, due to lack of follow-up. For instance, the Army, Defence Intelligence Agency, the State Security Service, and the Correctional Services all conduct their own assessments of violent extremists using their own risk protocols, with no shared evaluation standards or risk assessment tool. Interviews with CTSPs from different agencies confirmed this. While the Nigerian Correctional Services used a structured framework (the Designated Interest Client (DIC) model) to assess the risk levels of jihadist prisoners,[30] the Defence Intelligence Agency relied more on less structured indices such as the circumstances of arrest, observation of behaviour, and inconsistencies in fighters' statements.[31] The Borno model, in turn, relies on a more haphazard approach employing religious oaths (widely described as the "fighter or farmer" model.[32] This makes it almost impossible to monitor the fighters after reintegration and reinsertion into their communities. The result is predictable: "rehabilitated" individuals vanish into communities without any structured oversight, and easily become involved in various forms of violent

[30] Author's interviews with CTSPs, Abuja, January–February 2023.
[31] Author's interviews with CTSPs, Abuja, November 2022 and March 2025.
[32] Author's interviews with CTSP and other government officials from Borno State, Abuja, November-December 2022. The "fighter or farmer" approach employed in the Borno Model assesses the risks, vulnerabilities, and potential reintegration of jihadist group members by having them swear on the Holy Quran and answer the question: "Are you a farmer or a fighter?" This approach is underpinned by religious and cultural context, which lends it legitimacy and authority.

activity. They are rearrested, go through further programmes aimed at rehabilitating them, come out, and the cycle continues.[33] The above dysfunctionalities are revealing of what every agency stands to benefit from maintaining its own operational fiefdom.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigerian case illustrates how security agencies rivalry over political and economic control of DDRR programmes contributes to entrenching the dysfunctionalities of such interventions and exerts great influence over their ability to realize their stated goals. While the rivalries are embedded in Nigeria's political and institutional landscape, they are not insulated from external influence, as the relevant interventions are mostly bankrolled by foreign governments and external partners. As such, there are lessons to be derived for external actors, including European governments, considering their support to DDRR in Nigeria. These lessons should not be seen as 'dos' and 'don'ts', as they do not necessarily constitute a silver bullet to address the challenges highlighted in this brief. Rather, European governments and multilateral partners could use these lessons to critically reflect on the (un)intended consequences of their security engagement and seek to embrace more politically informed approaches to DDRR support.

Technical and operational support are essential for DDRR programmes and interventions. However, being overly fixated on these factors as the fundamental strictures of DDRR is myopic and conceals the need to pay as much attention to political governance of DDRR processes.

Much the same can be said of the need to reposition DDRR as a long-term political process, rather than a quick-fix technical intervention. DDRR programmes are often underpinned by the attainment of measurable impact within the praxis of donor funding. This can lead to rushed implementation processes that overlook the real ability of institutions to handle the work. External partners such as European donors must align their intervention timelines and funding structures with the institutional realities, rather than bureaucratic deadlines. This should not be taken to imply that Nigeria's security institutions are too immature to run DDRR programmes or to suggest that they are unique in experiencing inter-agency conflicts. Even countries with supposedly mature security agencies and institutions experience competition and lack of coordination in their counter-terrorism governance.[34]

The problems created by institutional and political rivalries in Nigeria's DDRR programmes represent a cautionary tale for European actors committed to peacebuilding. As well as providing funding, European actors must also critically engage with the political dynamics. Their role in shaping the overall security architecture needs to be critically re-evaluated. Counter-terror partnerships, defence cooperation, and foreign aid programmes can mitigate or exacerbate institutional dysfunctionalities. Without analysis of the political and economic context, such engagements risk entrenching power imbalances and incentivizing inter-agency rivalry. European policymakers supporting DDRR processes in Nigeria need to realize that DDRR programmes need more than operational or technical support.

[33] See: Vanda Felbab-Brown, *In Nigeria, we don't want them back: Amnesty, defectors' programs, leniency measures, and a Boko Haram member's journey to deradicalization* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution, May 2018), and International Crisis Group, *An exit from Boko Haram? Assessing Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor*, Africa Report no. 273, March 19, 2021.

[34] See: Frank Foley, "Why inter-agency operations break down: US counterterrorism in comparative perspective", *European Journal of International Security* 1, no. 2 (2016): 150–75.

They must (also) prioritize the governance of these programmes, for example by promoting their integration into broader national peacebuilding and security policy frameworks.

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