

DEFENCE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES OF THE NIGERIAN ARMED FORCES: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract: With the country's insecurity on the rise, the incessant attacks by insurgents in some parts of the country, and the heavy costs of curbing this menace, the role of Defence Industries Corporation Nigeria (DICON) has become significant and possibly a solution to enhance the operational efficiency of the Nigerian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force). To this end, this study examines the contribution of Defence Industries Corporation Nigeria to enhancing the operational capabilities of the Nigerian Armed Forces. This study used a descriptive survey research approach of the ex-post facto type. The target population of the study is 2,698 members of the Nigerian Armed Forces based in Kaduna, Lagos, and Abuja. A sample size of 250 respondents was selected using a convenient non-randomized sampling technique. A validated questionnaire with a cumulative alpha value of 0.86 was used along with three research questions. Five trained research assistants assisted the researchers in the questionnaire distribution and retrieval. Descriptive statistical analysis tools, such as mean and frequency tables, were used to summarize and provide interpretations of the responses. The findings demonstrate that DICON has been more active in the following areas: firearms and ammunition manufacture, institutional and legal framework establishment, shipbuilding and maintenance, military hardware export, and international security architecture cooperation. A recommendation is the establishment of specific funding programs to enhance local production and military R&D capabilities.

Keywords: Defence, Nigerian Armed Forces, Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria, and Operational capabilities.

INTRODUCTION

National security is a vital pillar that supports any country's stability and sovereignty. As threats to national sovereignty develop from conventional warfare to asymmetric and hybrid conflicts, governments must adapt by enhancing their military capabilities. National security remains a country's greatest asset, uniting all other resources to ensure sustainable prosperity and development (Ubabudu & Ahmed, 2024). Renowned economists and philosophers, such as Adam Smith, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, and Roman Emperor Frederick II, have

recognized the importance of a strong military for the development and stability of a nation throughout history. In his seminar work, Smith acknowledged the military's role in national security and property protection, both of which he considered essential for economic growth. Plato envisioned philosopher-kings overseeing a group of Guardians trained in both combat and wisdom in his concept of the ideal state. Marcus Aurelius, the Roman Emperor and Stoic philosopher, emphasized leadership and discipline, viewing military service as both a duty and a path to virtue. Meanwhile, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, a polymath, recognized the need for a strong military to achieve his political objectives.

Abraham Maslow recognized the significance of safety needs, which is equivalent to security in this context. As far back as the 1940s, Maslow categorized it under the basic lower physiological needs for survival that must be met before achieving the other higher-order needs. Maslow's five hierarchical needs include lower-order physiological needs, such as food, air, and water; safety needs; and higher-order needs, such as love and belongingness; self-esteem, and self-actualization. These safety needs are relevant to this discourse because a lack of accomplishment may aggravate state insecurity. This increases a state's requirement for the protection and security of its citizens and property. In this context, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Bentham conceived the state as an organized group of people living within a defined territory under a sovereign authority (government). It exists to ensure its inhabitants' safety and security (Moshood & Oshodi, 2018).

As a sovereign state, Nigeria established its armed forces to secure the sovereign integrity of the state. The armed forces consist of the Army, Navy, and Air Force, which are the tri-services of the country. Section 217 subsection (2) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999) provides the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) with the authority to perform the following duties: 1. Defending Nigeria from external aggression. 2. Maintain territorial integrity and secure its borders from violation by land, sea, or air. 3. Suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order when the President calls upon it, as prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly 4. Perform other functions as stipulated by an act of the National Assembly.

Additionally, defence is on the exclusive list of the 1999 Nigerian constitution, meaning that only the federal government can enact laws pertaining to defence. This makes the protection of people's lives and property essential to full democratic consolidation. The Defence Agency is the Nigerian government agency responsible for overseeing and managing the country's armed forces. The Minister of Defence oversees the Ministry of Defence and is a cabinet-level executive who reports directly to the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. His duties include providing timely and efficient administrative support services to the president and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

The Nigerian Armed Forces have historically played vital roles in maintaining national unity, territorial integrity, and peacekeeping efforts both within and outside Nigeria (Ogundipe, 2019). Corroborating this fact, Essien (2019) stated that the Nigerian Armed Forces have contributed to regional peacekeeping missions, provided humanitarian and disaster relief, and undertaken various civic action activities to improve the public's living standards. Military capability is sometimes referred to as a defence capacity to accomplish specific goals under predetermined circumstances (Bakhshi & Efatmaneshnik, 2025). Military capability is more than just capacity; it is the capacity to produce desired operational outcomes in certain settings, over specific periods, and over specific durations (Smith & Oosthuizen, 2011). This is supported by the assertion made by Van Fenema and Van Kampen (2021) that having the means (capabilities) alone is insufficient; one also needs to be willing and able to employ these tools.

According to Ge, Hipel, Fang, Yang, and Chen (2014), to complete crucial missions, military capabilities frequently necessitate a mix of material and non-material solutions. This emphasizes the multifaceted nature of military operations and the essential role of both material and immaterial elements in their effectiveness (Bakhshi & Efatmaneshnik, 2025). Muraina (2014) distinguished between combat and non-combat operations, noting that the former prioritizes extensive, protracted military operations meant to swiftly destroy the enemy, while the latter aims to prevent conflict and advance peace. Equipping and maintaining the armed forces through the purchase and upkeep of military gear against combat or non-combat actions is necessary to achieve and foster national security.

Nigeria still faces several complex security challenges, including banditry, terrorism, oil bunkering, piracy, separatist protests, and an increase in extrajudicial killings and kidnappings. For example, Nigeria ranks third, after Mexico and India, among the top 20 countries with the highest kidnapping rate (Oluwadare, 2019). Aside from this fact, Kyle, Dietrich, and the Center for Civilians in Conflict (2018) report showed that Nigeria's struggle against Boko Haram is one of the gravest security threats in the world today, especially where the military's equipment and support for deployed troops were also inadequate.

In an attempt to ensure national security, the Nigerian federal government has begun criminalizing terrorism while circumventing the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011, increased physical security measures throughout the country to prevent or disrupt potential attacks, strengthened security agencies by providing security facilities, and developed as well as disseminated security tips in the mass media (Aluta, 2021). Also granted amnesty to the militants to enable the ex-militants to surrender their equipment, arms, and ammunition, and inaugurated rehabilitation and reintegration programs for the ex-militants. Additionally, the military command and control centre for the fight against Boko Haram was moved to Maiduguri, where Abuja would lead as a new regional joint military force in 2015, replacing an existing ad hoc military coalition. This was justified by the need to improve counterinsurgency efforts against Boko Haram, streamline operations, minimize bureaucracy, and expedite decision-making. Moreover, states of emergency were declared in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa States as far back as May 2013 to curb insurgency, but the violence continued to date.

Beyond the supplies it buys to defend its territory and the lives and property of its citizens, the Nigerian government has also received foreign aid from other nations, particularly the United States, in the form of equipment and cash gifts. According to the US Department of State's 2024 facts sheet, Nigeria received approximately US\$650 million in military aid from the US in 2024, in addition to US\$1.8 billion in foreign military sales (FMS).

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and ranks as the seventh most populous nation in the world, with over 211 million people (World Bank, 2022). However, it was not among the 40 countries with the highest military expenditure in 2020. This is despite Nigeria's military spending increasing by 29% from 2019 to 2020 (Da Silva, Tian, & Marksteiner, 2021), and the military budget rising from US\$2.4 billion in 2020 to a hefty US\$4.5 billion in 2021 (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database). Between 2016 and 2022, Nigeria spent more than US\$19.9 billion on security alone (Policy Brief of Transparency International, 2024, cited World Bank). Ubabudu, Ahmed, and Basharu (2024) noted that military combat preparedness and the achievement of national goals, which often utilize these budget resources, are how the projected defence capability is realized.

Surprisingly, despite the efforts of the federal government, foreign aid in the form of funds and equipment, and rising military spending, Nigeria still faces complex security challenges. Scholars such as Aluta (2021) and Ubabudu et al. (2024) have lamented the unprecedented level of insecurity Nigeria has recently experienced,

including Boko Haram operations, banditry, abduction, and fights between Fulani farmers and herders, among others. All of these issues undermine the objective of raising defence spending and the democratic government's institutions. This is a wake-up call, and the roadmap's main goal is to enhance the operational capabilities of the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) through indigenous technological and industrial means. The only viable strategic approach for achieving this goal is through the development and expansion of a domestic defence industry, known as Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON).

While scholarly studies provided valuable insights, they often treat Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) and the Armed Forces as separate entities and fail to investigate the potential synergy between them. There is a research and knowledge gap in understanding how enhancing DICON could directly influence the operational capacities of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

Based on this, the overall goal of this study is to assess the role of defence industrialization in enhancing the operational capabilities of the Nigerian Armed Forces, while the specific objectives are to: examine the current operation of Nigeria's Defence Industrial Base and how it has affected operational efficiency of Armed Forces (AF's), identify the impact of locally manufactured military equipment on the operational effectiveness of the Nigerian Armed Forces and determine the factors that limit defence industrialization in Nigeria. Considering this, the three research questions addressed in this paper are as follows: To what extent has Nigeria's defence industrial base affected the AF's operational efficiency? To what extent does locally manufactured military equipment impact the operational effectiveness of the Nigerian Armed Forces? What factors limit defence industrialization in Nigeria?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Defence industrialization has become a vital strategy for strengthening the military power and national security of sovereign nations worldwide. By enhancing Nigeria's domestic industrial and technological resources, which serve as a catalyst for the armed forces to effectively address current threats and challenges within the Nigerian State, operational capability essentially supports Nigeria's national interests and its emerging democracy. According to Oosthuizen and Roodt (2008, p.2), cited in Ubabudu and Yunusa (2022), this explains why "a country's defence capability may be regarded as an insurance policy covering the ability of a government to ensure the sovereignty of the nation and the security of its people."

The researchers believe that a strong defence industry will strengthen national security, improve and sustain the operational capacity and economic growth of the armed forces, decrease dependence on importing foreign weapons, and foster innovation and technological progress both domestically and internationally. Thus, the only option to overcome these threats is to create and grow domestic companies devoted to the study, design, production, and maintenance of military technology, logistics, and equipment (Ikelegbe, 2021). It can be viewed as the creation and growth of indigenous capacity to develop, produce, and sustain military technologies and equipment.

Defence industrialization embodies the entire efforts by a nation toward achieving strategic autonomy by reducing dependency on foreign suppliers, enhancing rapid response capabilities, and fostering innovation in military technology. Brzoska (2004) argued that in major world powers, such as the United States, Russia, China, and India, defence industrialization has not only ensured military superiority but also contributed significantly to these countries' economic growth and technological advancement. This is a demonstration of how a robust defence industrial base not only strengthens military prowess but also contributes to economic development and technological innovation. Adefulu (2020) posited that for developing nations, defence industrialization offers

strategic autonomy, cost savings, job creation, and the capacity to respond swiftly to domestic and regional threats. Adefulu argued that countries such as South Africa and Egypt have made modest strides in Africa, while Nigeria is still grappling with a fragile defence production ecosystem despite its sizeable armed forces and security needs. In response to the need for indigenous defence production, Nigeria established the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) in 1964. The corporation was tasked with producing arms, ammunition, and other military hardware to support the NAF. Nwagboso (2012) pointed out that initially, based on the Defence Industries Corporation Ordinance of 1964, DICON's mandate aligned with Nigeria's broader security strategy to achieve self-sufficiency in defence production and reduce the country's dependence on foreign suppliers. Over time, DICON has attempted to manufacture a range of products, including small arms, protective gear, and, more recently, tactical vehicles such as the Ezugwu Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles developed in collaboration with the Nigerian Army. Nairametrics (2025), Lionel (2025), and Vanguard (2024) affirmed that the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria has resumed large-scale production of ammunition and rifles. These efforts signify Nigeria's commitment to building a domestic defence industry that is resilient. However, the outcomes have been modest, and the country still relies heavily on foreign military imports to meet operational needs. Despite its long-standing existence, DICON's operational capacity remains limited. While some success stories, such as locally manufactured ballistic vests, assault rifles, and tactical MRAP vehicles, demonstrate potential, these outputs are inadequate despite increasing security demands.

Nigeria's security environment has become more complex with the ongoing insurgency in the northeast, separatist agitations in the southeast, banditry and kidnapping in the northwest, and oil-related militancy in the Niger Delta. Scholarly researchers have acknowledged the constraints faced by DICON and the NAF. These include bureaucratic bottlenecks, corruption, inadequate funding, lack of skilled manpower, and poor coordination between defence stakeholders (Ogundipe, 2019). Ajayi and Adeleke (2020) noted systemic problems, such as bureaucracy, corruption, and a shortage of qualified staff, as barriers to DICON's development. Similarly, Ajayi and Adeleke (2020) contended that DICON's production lines cannot satisfy Nigeria's expanding security requirements, especially in the battle against militancy in the Niger Delta and terrorism in the Northeast. Outdated technology, a lack of raw resources, and a poor R&D culture limit DICON's production. Ogundipe (2019) argued that inadequate local support infrastructure and inconsistent supply chains significantly hampered the Nigerian military's capacity to engage in sustained combat operations. This implies that a significant gap exists between what is needed and what is locally produced, raising questions about the effectiveness of Nigeria's defence industrial policy and DICON's capacity to meet strategic objectives.

The ability of the Nigerian Armed Forces to function effectively is largely dependent on DICON's operational capacity. However, Olumide (2017) complained that the operational capabilities of the Nigerian military have been repeatedly tested due to inadequate equipment, delayed logistics, and a heavy reliance on imported technologies, as DICON's operational effectiveness has become questionable. The corporation is hampered by obsolete infrastructure, inconsistent funding, and limited R&D initiatives (Ikelegbe, 2021). Moreover, most of the Nigerian Armed Forces' high-end weaponry and strategic systems are still procured from foreign countries. The intricacies of asymmetric warfare, continuous delays, dependence on antiquated equipment, and logistical failures all hinder the Nigerian Armed Forces. This makes this research study crucial because it raises questions about Nigeria's military forces' logistical, combat-ready, and strategic independence, even as operations become more technologically advanced.

One prominent theory related to national security, which is apt in this context and the choice of the researchers, is the Realist Theory of International Relations, propounded by Hans J. Morgenthau in his 1948 book "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace," particularly as it relates to national security and defence industrialization. This theory provides a solid theoretical basis for the reasons why countries pursue defence industrialization as a way to increase their power, guarantee their independence, and protect their national interests in an unstable international system. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will aid in revitalizing Nigeria's defence industrial complex in line with global best practices and national security goals.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive survey research design. This approach allows researchers to systematically gather data on existing conditions, opinions, and attitudes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study also helps explore the perceptions of active military officers and personnel regarding the role of defence industries in enhancing the operational capabilities of the Nigerian Armed Forces.

3.2. Population of the study

The study population consisted of 2,698 officers and military personnel from the Armed Forces of Nigeria (Air Force, Army, and Navy) stationed at offices in Kaduna, Lagos, and Abuja. They were chosen due to their direct roles in defence production, procurement, policy-making, and military operations (Akinyemi & Bello, 2021), which is relevant in this context, given the significance of the three-armed forces station offices. For instance, Abuja is the headquarters of Nigeria's Tri-services (Army, Navy, and Air Force); Lagos was the former headquarters before relocating to Abuja when it became the country's administrative capital; and the DICON office is located in Kaduna. It is important to note that Kaduna State hosts several training commands and schools for the Tri-services, such as the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna, Nigerian Navy offices at Kaduna, Nigerian Air Force Training Command Kaduna, Nigerian Air Force Institute of Technology Kaduna, Nigerian Army Depot Zaria, Armed Forces Command and Staff College Jaji, and the Nigerian Army Infantry Corps at Jaji. The total number of personnel and officers at these locations was not disclosed in this study due to the sensitive nature of the Armed Forces.

3.3 Sample size and sampling technique

A sample size of 250 respondents was selected using a convenient non-randomized sampling technique. This technique involves selecting participants based on accessibility and willingness to participate, which is suitable for sensitive or restricted populations, such as military personnel (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The sample included a cross-section of Nigerian Armed Forces serving officers and personnel.

3.4. Instrument for data collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers based on the study objectives and existing literature, which was validated by an expert in this area of study. The questionnaire had four sections: Section A covered respondents' characteristics; Section B addressed the extent of operations of Nigeria's defence industrial base; Section C examined the impact of locally manufactured military equipment on the Nigerian Armed Forces' operational effectiveness; and Section D explored the factors that constrain defence Industrial base in Nigeria. To gather qualitative insights, the questionnaire included Likert scale items, closed-ended questions, and a few open-ended questions. Babbie (2020) described this as a more comprehensive way of collecting data to gain deeper insights. The main instrument, the questionnaire, was structured on four Likert scale options: 1 for very low extent, 2 for low extent, 3 for high extent, and 4 for very high extent.

3.5. Validation of the instrument

To ensure content and face validity, three subject matter experts reviewed the questionnaire: one from defence studies, one from public policy, and one from educational measurement and evaluation. The expert review process helped refine ambiguous items and ensure that each question was properly aligned.

3.6. The reliability of the instrument

A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted. The pilot data were subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The instrument yielded a cumulative alpha of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability. This reliability coefficient exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, recommended by Tavakol and Dennick (2011) as basic for social science research.

3.7. Method of data collection

The data were collected over six weeks through both physical and electronic distribution of the questionnaire with the assistance of five trained personnel who helped the researchers in both the distribution and retrieval of the instruments. Hard copies of the questionnaires were administered to serving officers and personnel of the Armed Forces of Nigeria (Air Force, Army, and Navy), stationed in Kaduna, Lagos, and Abuja offices, with appropriate permissions. The entire copies of the administered questionnaire were retrieved, indicating 100% retrieval of the 250 completed questionnaires.

3.8. Method of data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26.0. Descriptive statistical tools, such as means and frequency tables, were used to summarize and interpret the responses. The following range of values was used for the remarks on each item: 1.0 – 1.49 =Very Low Extent (VLE); 1.50 – 2.49 = Low Extent (LE); 2.50 – 3.49 = High Extent (HE), and 3.50 – 4.00=Very High Extent (VHE).

4. Results

Research Question 1: To what extent has Nigeria’s defence industrial base affected the AF’s operational efficiency?

Table 1: Respondents’ mean ratings regarding the extent to which Nigeria’s defence industrial base has affected operational efficiency.

S/N	Rate the extent to which Nigeria’s defence industrial base is actively developing:	$\sum F$	$\sum FX$	\bar{X}	Remark
1.	Ammunition production	250	635	2.54	HE
2.	Firearms manufacturing	250	695	2.78	HE
3.	Armored vehicles	250	610	2.44	LE
4.	Advanced technology and unmanned aerial vehicles	250	575	2.30	LE
5.	The legal and institutional framework	250	703	2.81	HE
6.	Shipbuilding and maintenance	250	645	2.58	HE
7.	Export of military equipment	250	628	2.51	HE
8.	International Collaborations in Security Architecture	250	708	2.83	HE

The results in Table 1 show that the mean rating for items: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 fall within the range of 2.5–3.49, which are classified as high extent (HE). However, only items 3 and 4 fall within 1.50 and 2.49, respectively, and are considered as low extent (LE). This implies that to a high extent, the Nigerian defence industrial base, such as DICON, has been more active in: ammunition production; firearms manufacturing, legal and institutional

framework development, shipbuilding and maintenance, export of military equipment, and international collaborations in security architecture. On the contrary, the industry has fallen short of expectations in the production of armored vehicles and advanced technology, and UAVs.

Research Question 2: To what extent does locally manufactured military equipment impact the operational effectiveness of the Nigerian Armed Forces?

Table 2: Respondents’ mean ratings regarding the extent to which locally manufactured military equipment impacts the Nigerian Armed Forces’ operational effectiveness.

S/N	Rate the extent to which you think locally produced military equipment makes the operations of the Armed Forces effective.	ΣF	ΣFX	\bar{X}	Remark
9.	Enhance responsiveness in counterinsurgency operations	250	775	3.10	HE
10.	Improved logistical efficiency and maintenance	250	730	2.92	HE
11.	Strengthens strategic autonomy and training capacity	250	755	3.02	HE
12.	Cost-effectiveness and scalability	250	720	2.88	HE

Table 2 shows that the mean rating for each item, from 9 to 12, falls between 2.5 and 3.49, indicating a high extent (HE). This means that to a high extent (HE), all items are rated by Nigerian Armed Forces personnel in various ways, and locally manufactured military equipment impacts operational effectiveness. In other words, with the availability of locally made military equipment, their responsiveness in counterinsurgency operations, logistical efficiency and maintenance, strategic autonomy and training capacity, and cost-effectiveness and scalability would potentially become enhanced.

Research Question 3: To what extent do identified factors limit defence industrialization in Nigeria?

Table 3: Respondents’ mean ratings regarding the extent to which identified factors limit defence industrialization in Nigeria.

S/N	Rate the extent to which you think the following constitute the challenges of Defence industrialization:	ΣF	ΣFX	\bar{X}	Remark
13.	Dependence on the imported raw materials	250	710	2.84	HE
14.	Inadequate technological infrastructure	250	673	2.69	HE
15.	Bureaucratic Inefficiencies and Policy Inconsistencies	250	690	2.76	HE
16.	Inadequacy of funds and allocation	250	750	3.00	HE
17.	Limited public-private sector collaboration	250	723	2.89	HE
18.	Inadequacy of skilled personnel	250	720	2.88	HE
19.	Inadequacy of cutting-edge R&D efforts	250	770	3.08	HE
20.	Negligence and lack of political will to advance the country’s defence industries	250	778	3.11	HE
21.	Corrupt practices and funds mismanagement	250	693	2.77	HE
22.	Poor systemic maintenance culture	250	753	3.01	HE
23.	Political instability and policy inconsistencies	250	773	3.09	HE

A closer observation of Table 3 above revealed that the individual items, ranging from 13 to 23, attracted mean ratings, ranging from 2.5 to 3.49, and these were considered as high extent (HE) ratings. This means that, to a high extent, most personnel of the Nigerian Armed Forces who responded to the questionnaire perceive the

identified factors as key challenges facing the country's defence industrialization. As shown in Table 3, these challenges include: dependence on imported raw materials, inadequate technological infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiencies, inadequacy of funds and allocation, limited public-private sector collaboration, inadequacy of skilled personnel, inadequacy of cutting-edge research and development efforts, negligence and lack of political will to advance defence industries corporation in the country, corrupt practices and mismanagement of funds, systemic poor maintenance culture, and political instability as well as inconsistencies in policies.

5. Discussion of the Findings

The study found that, to a large extent, the Nigerian defence industrial base, such as DICON, has been more active in ammunition production, firearms manufacturing, legal and institutional frameworks, shipbuilding and maintenance, export of military equipment, and international collaborations in security architecture. The findings align with the findings shared by Nairametrics (2025), Lionel (2025) and Vanguard (2024), which revealed that the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria has resumed large-scale production of 7.62mm ammunition, producing four million rounds for the Nigerian Army in early 2024, and aiming for an annual capacity of 20 million rounds, with a long-term goal of producing 300 million rounds annually. They are also currently manufacturing approximately 2,500 rifles per quarter, including the Nigerian-made version of the Beryl assault rifle in partnership with Poland's PGZ.

Similarly, Lionel (2024) stressed that in collaboration with the Nigerian Army Vehicle Manufacturing Company (NAVMC), DICON has developed indigenous MRAP vehicles, such as the Ezugwu and Alkali, tailored for asymmetric warfare and counterinsurgency operations. Also, in existence is the ongoing efforts to produce unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), ground drones, and other high-tech systems. In the same vein, DefenceWeb (2024) stated that partnerships with the U.S.-based NEANY aim to establish local assembly lines for surveillance drones and radar systems, as well as a \$1 billion defence agreement with India, which was signed to support the modernization of DICON and achieve 40% defence self-sufficiency by 2027. Additionally, Dicon signed a memorandum of understanding with Gray Insignia Nigeria, also known as DGI, and Buckler Land Systems, a Nigerian manufacturer of military equipment, to develop weapon systems specifically for the armed forces. DGI has already produced the Hawk Sniper Rifle (Lionel, 2025). Furthermore, the goal of DICON's partnership with D7G Limited was to improve intra-African trade and collaboration in vital areas like defence. It is also understandable that Nigeria has started exporting arms and ammunition to several African countries, signaling increased confidence in its local defence products.

The study also discovered that with the availability of locally made military equipment, their responsiveness in counter-insurgency operations, logistical efficiency and maintenance, strategic autonomy and training capacity, cost-effectiveness, and scalability would potentially become enhanced. This implies that the ability of the Nigerian Armed Forces to respond to security threats, maintain operations, and lessen reliance on foreign weapons has been greatly enhanced by the development of indigenous military hardware. Additionally, the availability of firearms and ammunition, such as the Nigerian version of the Beryl assault rifle and locally produced 7.62 mm rounds, has increased, reducing delays caused by bottlenecks in international procurement. This aligns with Nairametrics (2025) and Vanguard (2024), which stated that local production empowers the Nigerian Armed Forces to train and adapt their personnel on homegrown systems, improving familiarity, operational readiness, and reducing reliance on foreign trainers. For instance, DICON was found to have produced 2,500 rifles quarterly at a reduced cost compared to imports, ensuring a more evenly equipped armed forces.

The researchers discovered that the constraints that DICON and the Nigerian Armed Forces are currently facing include reliance on foreign raw materials, a lack of technological infrastructure, ineffective bureaucracy and inconsistent policies, inadequate funding and allocation, a lack of cooperation between the public and private sectors, a shortage of skilled workers, a lack of government commitment to advancing the nation's defence industries, carelessness and a lack of political will, corrupt practices, mismanagement of funds, political instability, a lack of a practical defense strategy, a systemic culture of inadequate maintenance, and inconsistent policies.

The findings of this study also follow those of The Cable (2024) and Leadership (2023), which lamented that the Nigerian Armed Forces have continued to acquire key hardware, including fighter aircraft and surveillance systems, from foreign suppliers, indicating the current limitations of the local industrial base. The recent establishment of the Defence Industry Technology, Research and Development Institute (DITRDI) under the new DICON Act 2023 is a step forward, but it is still in its infancy and lacks adequate funding and skilled personnel. The defence industrial sector has historically suffered from policy inconsistency, lack of political will, and frequent leadership changes at DICON and the Ministry of Defence, which disrupt continuity and long-term planning. Lionel (2024) pointed out that Nigeria's local defence firms face challenges in accessing military procurement contracts due to a lack of trust, the absence of clear public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks, and poor government support for domestic entrepreneurs in the defence space. This is even though the industry faces a shortage of skilled engineers, scientists, and technicians, largely due to inadequate training and the brain drain of qualified personnel to foreign defence contractors or civilian industries. This implies that local tertiary institutions and research bodies are not sufficiently aligned with the needs of Nigeria's military-industrial sector.

Conclusion

This study concludes that while Nigeria has made significant strides in revitalizing its defence industrial base, the sector is still evolving. The capacity to produce small arms, ammunition, and tactical vehicles has improved operational effectiveness across the armed forces, contributing to enhanced local security responses, reduced procurement costs, and improved equipment sustainability. However, for Nigeria to achieve a fully autonomous and resilient defence industrial complex, critical funding, technology access, policy implementation, and industrial integration bottlenecks must be addressed. The current foundation is promising but requires strategic consolidation, long-term planning, and robust stakeholder coordination.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for this study:

1. Local production, research, and development capacity should be strengthened. Dedicated funding schemes for military research and development should be established through partnerships with universities, polytechnics, and international collaborators. Expanding this means that the mandate and capacity of the Defence Industry Technology, Research and Development Institute (DITRDI) to serve as a national hub for defence innovation and prototyping will be promoted.
2. Public-private partnerships should be emphasized with the creation of a national policy framework that incentivizes private sector participation in defence manufacturing through tax breaks, risk guarantees, and local procurement quotas. By encouraging licensing agreements and co-production deals between DICON and local defence technology firms, the operational capacities of the Armed Forces will be enhanced.
3. There should be more strategic human capital development with enhanced policy consistency. Launching specialized training programs with state-of-the-art technology in defence engineering, systems integration,

management sciences, and manufacturing within military academies and technical institutions, as well as international scholarships and exchange programs, will help build a pipeline of skilled defence professionals and improve logistical efficiency. Moreover, ensuring the full implementation of the new DICON Act 2023 and establishing the National Defence Industries Corporation Council to coordinate inter-agency actions with clear timelines, milestones, and stakeholder roles will help improve operational capacities.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS;

UBABUDU Mary Chinelo played a key role in creating the title, writing the text, generating the background, conducting the literature review, methodology, designing the instrument, distributing and gathering data, discussing the results, editing, and approving the manuscript.

BASHARU Aminu Ismail was responsible for creating and making the title succinct, drafting the manuscript, designing the instrument, distributing and gathering data, analyzing, editing, especially cutting the manuscript length from 40 to 25 pages, and final approval of the manuscript.

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