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Volunteer Security Outfit and the Fight against Terrorism in Nigeria: A Study of Civilian Joint Task Force in Borno State

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Abstract. The war waged by the Nigerian military against Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State and the North-East at large had suffered setbacks as the complexity of the contemporary security challenges overwhelms the public security sector and therefore government has subscribed to the need to extend the security sector to include 'private security providers' and the citizens as stakeholders. This study assessed volunteer security outfit and the fight against terrorism in Nigeria with focus on Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State. The study employed a qualitative method and the Partnership Theory of Crime Prevention and Resistance Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. KIIs were conducted with ten (10) stakeholders from different professions. Data elicited through KII was analyzed thematically. The study findings revealed that volunteer security outfit is an approach in combating terrorism in Nigeria. The findings further revealed that Civilian JTF activities have helped other government security agencies in coordinating and arresting key Boko Haram members in Borno State thereby becoming a fundamental component to assisting and winning the war against Boko Haram insurgency. The study therefore recommends that educating and sensitizing members of the community and CJTF to be alert to their patriotic duty of reporting crime and illegal entry of other nationals should be advocated and intensified by the Borno State government. The study further recommends that with the current insecurity confronting Nigeria, establishment of local vigilante group of youth in communities across Nigeria should be encouraged to assist and support the security agencies. Since terrorism is a global problem, countries should adopt volunteer security outfit model to end organised crime and terrorism. This should be executed with the highest sense of local ownership and in collaboration with key stakeholders in their domain. Above all, for lasting peace, security and stability to prevail in Borno State, committed and sincere leadership should be demonstrated at all levels of governance in the State.

Key words: Volunteer, Security, Fight, Terrorism, Civilian Joint Task Force

Introduction

Volunteer Security Outfits (VSOs) are a deeply embedded part in the conflict landscape across the globe, and they play an outsized role in the security architecture, contributing to the protection of local communities from violent crimes and terrorism. For most of its history, the United States has supported its peacetime defence establishment on a volunteer basis. However, within most of the lifetime of most living Americans, Volunteer Security Outfits has been the accepted practice (DeStefan, 1979). Indeed, this approach advocates for a paradigm shift in the sense that rather than leaving entirely the job of fighting terrorism to military and police institutions, people are more than ever willing to play a lot of complementary roles in the security affairs of their communities. It is against this background that many national and sub-national governments are subscribing to volunteer security outfits for effective security management and as a means of tackling organized crimes and terrorism. Suffice it to say that since the threats of terrorism come from a variety of sources; from organized groups outside the country to those inside the country, regardless of the source, however, volunteer security outfits in the form of ethnic militias, hunter guards, and community self-defence groups is

critical to identifying those who are planning to carry out acts of violence, preparing communities to respond, aiding public safety officials in the response, and when acts cannot be prevented, help communities to heal and recover (Siobhan, Sherif & Van Broeckhoven, 2021).

Countries like the U.S, U.K, Mexico, Australia and South Africa, etc, have continued to subscribe to the use of volunteer security outfits to meeting their different security needs. Hence, community self-defence has become sacrosanct to effective security management in any community, rationalizing the growing relevance enjoyed by VSOs as alternative security policing framework to address growing security challenges. In recent times, many governments have realized that they can no longer monopolize the business of security in local domains as well as the world at large. Since the 1990s, there had been a paradigm shift as the attention of the world population is now geared towards redefining security and looking for the best approach that could guarantee effective security management, different from the traditional ones that had failed to tackle contemporary security menace such as terrorism, which is now a global security concern. The search for the best approach led to the emergence of Volunteer Security Outfits as an alternative policing approach (Kasali, 2010).

Night guards and vigilante groups have often emerged in response to theft and other crimes within communities. In Nigeria, however, there have been a proliferation of vigilante groups; they have organized at many levels (from lineage to ethnic group), in many locations (from village ward to city street), and for many reasons to fight crime. Due to the failure of state institutions, citizens have risen to the occasional challenges of combating perceived or genuine threats to the security of their community and carried out their actions within the ambits of legal authority. Such groups are generally referred to as “vigilantes.” Their rise usually emanates from the seeming inability of constituted authority to guarantee the security of lives and property of her citizenry from both internal and external aggressions. This has led to extending the security of the community to include private players (in security business), and above all, the civilians take the center stage in security management (Kasali, 2010).

The violent rise and resilience of the jihadist group Boko Haram in the North East since 2009 poses enormous security, humanitarian and governance challenges. Thousands of people have been killed in the terror group's attacks on schools, security forces, government agencies, churches and mosques. Hundreds of thousands of Nigerians have been displaced. The group has ab-initio also seized significant chunks of territory around their home state of Borno. With the increased numbers of cadres, improved and sophisticated weaponry, suicide bombings and well-organised guerrilla tactics, Boko Haram’s challenge to the Nigerian state now also stretches across the entire 36 states of Nigeria, thus affecting the economic, social and political stability of Nigeria (Omilusi, 2016). Nigerian government have sought various means ranging from military operations to partnering with civil and military organizations in and out of Nigeria to bring their destructive activities to an end.

In this vein, volunteer security outfit group emerged in Borno State to partner with the Nigerian military in this direction. The Borno vigilantes fighting against Boko Haram, whose activities have attracted widespread media coverage, illustrate this well. Humorously nicknamed in Hausa as *Yan Gora* (youths with sticks), and later named as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the Civilian JTF constituted themselves into vigilante groups with the aim of cooperating and collaborating with the military to rid their land of these dreaded insurgent elements. While the Civilian JTF have been applauded on several grounds particularly in exposing and arresting Boko Haram sect members, they have equally been criticized for taking laws into their hands by committing series of human rights abuses. It is against this background that this work assessed Volunteer Security Outfit and the fight against terrorism in Nigeria with focus on the Civilian Joint Task Force in Borno State.

Methodology

The paper adopts qualitative research design. Data were sourced through primary and secondary source. The primary data was collected by the use of Key Informant Interviews (KII) guides. This is because, in-depth interviews allow for probing and prompting of community leaders, religious leaders, security personnel, and humanitarian staff of their familiarity with the role of CJTF in combating Boko Haram terrorism in Borno State. While the secondary source includes information from internet, library-based documentation such as published and unpublished materials, text books, e-books, reports, newspapers and journals.

Conceptual Issues

Concept of Volunteer Security Outfit

At every attempt to define Volunteer Security Outfit (VSO), therefore one will be inclined to know from which angle the concept is being approached, this can offer a credible insight as to what actually represents the view point of the author. Thus, VSOs involves a form of ethnic militias, hunter guards, and community self-defence groups freely giving time and labor for community self-defense from external aggression. Volunteer security outfit model try to strike a balance between reactive responses with proactive-problem solving specifically on the causes of crime and disorder, volunteer security outfit is essentially about partnership between security institutions and the citizens. Philosophically, volunteer security outfit represents a drive which aspires to establish partnership between the people and the security institutions in addressing contemporary security challenges such as social and physical disorder, crime and fear towards achieving overall quality of life (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990).

Concept of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)

Olugbode (2013) defined Civilian JTF as some youths who came out to declare that enough was enough. They fought back with sticks, knives, and swords, standing against the bombs and guns of the sects. Yusuf (2014) posited that operating under the aegis of Civilian JTF, the youth vigilante groups who now act as whistle-blowers and informants to the security operatives go from street to street, house to house, and village to town with machetes, iron bars, and wooden batons in their bid to smoke out the remnants of the insurgents from their hiding places and thereafter handing them over to the Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) in Borno State.

According to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN, 2014), the Civilian JTF were originally known as *Yan Gora*, (Youths with Sticks) but their bravery and the role they played in halting and pushing back Boko Haram insurgents earned them the new name Civilian Joint Task Force. This formally brought them to the limelight and also earned them both the federal and Borno State government recognition. IRIN (2014) stated that they are the ‘eyes and ears’ of the security forces. They are also often the first responders to insurgent’s attacks.

On the other hand, Agbiboa (2015) argued that Civilian JTF is an anti-youth vigilantism in Borno state, which is an offshoot and reaction to the failure of the Nigerian military to protect civilians against insurgency. Agbiboa (2015) argued that most youths involved as *Yan Gora* (Youth with Sticks) are largely teenagers without basic education. Some have lost their parents and siblings to insurgents’ attacks and are on a revenge mission. According to him, the CJTF came into existence in Maiduguri in June 2013 and because of its numerical advantage and local knowledge, the CJTF quickly drove insurgents out of Maiduguri city by identifying members house by house.

Concept of Terrorism

Terrorism may have become one of the most used concepts in recent times. The world of the 21st century is bedevilled by this phenomenon and hardly is any country immune to it. Scholars have in various ways tried to understand and define what constitutes terrorism. An action could be classified as terrorism in one place but such an action will be seen as freedom fighting in another place. It is not very easy to define and designate an action as terrorism. This informed Malachy (2013) to state that there is no commonly accepted conceptualization of terrorism. In his argument, during imperial and autocratic regimes, any group that acted against the interests of the imperial or autocratic power, was designated as terrorist, even when they were indeed fighting against despotic rule. This same action will be seen as heroic by nations and persons against despotic rule. Malachy (2013) therefore argued that the debate over what could be designated as terrorism is represented in the saying, 'one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist.'

There are more decisive perspectives on terrorism: for instance, Gurr (1988) defined terrorism as any violent reaction against an established social order. In this definition, terrorists are persons seeking the change in society and use violence as instruments to destroy the existing framework of society to establish a new, perhaps more favourable to them. Gurr (1988) further explained that terrorists are offshoots of the failure of the state to meet up with societal needs. He argued that human needs require satisfaction on a hierarchical basis. Indifference to such needs on the part of government normally leads actors into violence against the state. This implies that if the basic human needs of individual non-state actors are unsatisfied, they can generate grievance terrorism, revolutionary terrorism, or reactionary terrorism, which has an agenda for either destroying or reforming the existing social system.

Some scholars argued that terrorism is relative to who is in power, who is defining it, and who has the power to label another a terrorist. As Wilkinson (2000) noted, the definition of terrorism is relative, whatever the existing government designates as terrorism is terrorism. It, therefore, could be a violent act against a specific target group, particularly civilians. In line with this, the United States Department of Defence in Laquer (2001) conceptualized terrorism as; "Unlawful use of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce and intimidate governments to accept political, religious or ideological objectives." On the other hand, Hoffman (1999) saw terrorism as "threats to the stability of nation-states by non-state actors and nongovernmental processes and organizations."

However, Schmid and Jongman (2004) offered a variant form of the definition of terrorism as; "A method of combat in which random or symbolic victims serve as instrumental targets of violence. These instrumental victims share group or class characteristics, which form the basis for the victimization. Other members of that group or class are put in a chronic state of fear (terror); the purpose of which is to change attitudes or behavior, favouring the interests of the user of the method of combat." This definition implies that terrorism could be viewed as a violent act against a group of people with similar characteristics, the attack against it is because of the characteristics that define them and for an obvious or warranting offence. The aim is to destroy them or scare them into submission or acceptance.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories were adopted to the explanation of the issues of this study. They are the Partnership Theory of Crime Prevention and Resistance Theory. The choice of the selected theories was based on their strength to explaining more vividly, the phenomenon of concern above. First, the Partnership Theory was better suited for explaining the partnership between the Civilian JTF and the Military in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency, while the Resistance Theory was better suited for explaining the circumstances that led to the birth of the Civilian Joint Task Force.

Partnership Theory of Crime Prevention

The proponent of the theory is Dennis P. Rosenbaum (1998). The theory hinges on the assumptions that criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime and disorder in the society, that resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about diverse problems from the inside. To achieve this, the theory advocates for the creation of 'partnerships' a group of organizations that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems (Rosenbaum, 2003). It is on this premise that Volunteer Security Outfits have overtime become a precondition in curbing crimes and terrorism that seems to be prevalent in today's contemporary Nigeria.

However, despite the exigency and the attendant importance of volunteer security outfit to the security needs of the contemporary world, Reiner (2000) logically presented more or less a major critique of this theory. For example, Reiner (2000) argued that by virtue of the tactical disposition and nature of manner associated with the police work, there are inherent tendencies that police would fall prey to political influence. Reiner (2000) however argued that police should not be politicized even in the face of the prone operational uniqueness of the police organization and governance. Reiner (2000) drew memory to some peculiarities of the police work and which have a range of implications on the practice of volunteer security outfit. For instance, Reiner (2000) stated that police are closely connected with resolution of conflicts but usually through the power of coercion and criminal law. In order words, there are actions of the police which will certainly plug individuals and groups into feeling of being policed against and to expect the police to command universal love among the public could be a mirage (Reiner, 2000).

The relevance of the theory to the subject matter can be deduced from its assumptions that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime and disorder in our society, that resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about diverse problems from the inside hence, the intelligence agencies use to combat or prevent terrorism which is better explained within the context of Civilian JTF partnership with Military. Military counterinsurgency of counter terrorism involves preparation, target hardening, command and control, damage mitigation, local security, partnership and tactical units within the military counter terrorism methods.

The war against Boko Haram insurgents relies on the participation of the youths as Civilian JTF in both combat support and non-combat support operations and restoring cultural heritage. The Military JTF is not familiar with the terrain and cannot differentiate between innocent citizens and insurgents. They require the help of the local volunteer security outfits such as the Civilian JTF during combat to identify hideouts and inroads to hideouts, without which most of their operations will fail. Civilian JTF becomes invaluable when it comes to intelligence gathering, they know the language, they know the people, they can obtain information through informal links and this is valuable to the fight against Boko Haram insurgency. Without the organized resistance and support of the Civilian JTF, the war against insurgency in Borno State and the North East at large will suffer setbacks. If the success of military operations depends on the Civilian JTF, it also goes that the operations of the Civilian JTF rely on the people, to both offer intelligence and human resources.

Resistance Theory

The theory of resistance was developed in sixteenth century by a French political theorist, Théodore de Bèze (1519-1605) as the leading proponent of the theory. The development of the theory of resistance in the early modern period was complex and was based in large part on the political, philosophical, and legal arguments of French authors during the religious wars in the sixteenth century. The Catholics in 1576 justified arming themselves against the King's will

with the argument that they were taking arms not against the authority of the king, but against unconventional and evil counsellors of the king and they claimed to be doing this in defence of themselves, property, their king, and their religion. The central assumption of the theory is that, people use violence in self-defence to resist the ruler's authority when he violated the contractual relationship on which he based his power.

It is on this premise that the activities of the CJTF as a vigilante group is evaluated with a view to understanding the roles played by the CJTFs to combating terrorism in Nigeria. The Civilian JTF has greatly resisted Boko Haram due to the untold hardship the insurgency subjected people of Borno to, thereby assisting the Nigerian military in its counterinsurgency (COIN) operations against Boko Haram. The Nigerian Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is a citizen volunteer organization whose members willingly came together to assist in fighting the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria in the face of seeming inability of the country's security services to defeat the group. The commencement of military operations against Boko Haram motivated a group of youths in Hausari Zango ward of Maiduguri Metropolitan Council under the leadership of one Lawan Jafar in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, to resist Boko Haram and organize themselves into what they called the Civilian Joint Task Force to assist the military in their COIN operations against the group. The youths, who were initially armed with only sticks, machetes, cutlasses and other crude weapons to defend themselves, led Nigerian troops to Boko Haram hideouts, sometimes apprehending and handing over suspected members of Boko Haram, their supporters and collaborators to the security forces.

Critics to this theory such as Wendy Brown, however offers fresh consideration of persistently vexing questions posed by poststructuralist philosophy: How is it possible to do away with grounded norms and universal principles and at the same time offer a compelling theoretical critique of the existing order of things? How can thinking practices that call all normativity into question also generate possibilities for resistance to perceived domination or injustice? Indeed, how can such practices perceive domination or injustice at all? To this end the development of the theory of resistance in the early modern period was complex and was based in large part on the political, philosophical, and legal arguments and proven to be relevant in our contemporary clime.

Thus, it can be deduced within the premise of this theory that its relevance lies on how the youth form the *Yan Gora* and Civilian JTF to resist Boko Haram activities and military harassment in the exercise of their duties by participating in the fight against insurgency. This theory is of the view that when people are push to the wall, they tend to resist by retaliating and this is what exactly happened in Maiduguri which led to the formation of *Yan Gora* and Civilian JTF.

Volunteer Security Outfit and the Fight against Terrorism

Volunteer Security Outfit (VSO) and the fight against terrorism in Nigeria balances up the reactive-fast responses with the proactive problem-solving techniques centered on the causes of crime. It requires security agencies especially the police and citizens to join as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these crime-related issues. Volunteer Security Outfits (VSOs) have a long history across Nigeria. With the outbreak of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2009, however, there was an evolution in the role, size, and prominence of self-defence groups in the country's North East. This evolution occurred alongside and in reaction to challenges the Nigerian Military's Joint Task Force (JTF), which was deployed to fight Boko Haram in the region, encountered from the outset. The JTF is comprised of troops from across the country many of which lacked a deep knowledge of the region or were unable to speak the local languages. As such, the JTF increasingly relied on local self-defence groups to operate as their eyes, ears, and even as an extension of them in vetting possible threats and protecting communities. For communities, local VSOs represented

in many cases their only hope for protection from armed groups. Moreover, membership in these groups was a way to "deflect the security forces' suspicion and retaliation (International Crisis Group, 2017) and provide "protection from alleged indiscriminate killing and arrest" (Patricia et al, 2017).

Volunteer security outfit as a strategy for the fight against terrorism and control was informed by the conviction that its philosophical prescriptions and tenets could satisfy the requirements for enhanced service delivery and the need for community members to work in partnership with the security institutions. The democratic periods in Nigeria have also witnessed an increase in the perceptions of the various form of crime and fear (Dambazau, 2007), the latest which is terrorism, which is considered as a major threat to national security. Since its emergence in 2010, Boko Haram has led an insurgency against the Nigerian government predominantly concentrated around the Northern Nigerian states of Yobe, Adamawa, Kaduna, Bauchi and Gombe. Presently in its twelfth year, the Boko Haram insurgency shows no sign of subsiding.

The Nature of Volunteer Security Outfit in Combating Terrorism in Nigeria

Volunteer Security Outfit (VSO) is an effective aspect in combatting terrorism as it is an output that prevents alienation and strengthens partnership. It can also hinder the recruitment process of terrorist organizations and eliminating the excuses that are likely to push people, particularly young generations who are at the heart of combatting terrorism, into the arms of the terrorist organization, In the case of Boko Haram terrorist group, they have recruited young male children and girls to carry out suicide bomb attacks. In addition, promoting community participation by creating social cohesion and decreasing the fear of crime will facilitate efforts to abolish the main causes of terrorism (Scheider & Chapman, 2003).

Under the soft power policies at the macro level of the society, volunteer security outfit is an extremely effective option at the local level. During the last few decades, as scholars and practitioners have claimed that this philosophy gives more chances for security institutions to counter terrorism, specifically, security practitioners have sought to conduct projects to corroborate this idea. For example, Pickering, S., McCulloch, J. & Neville, D. W., (2008) interviewed and surveyed police officers, community representatives, and ordinary citizens in the state of Victoria in Australia to explore the role of community self-defence groups within the context of volunteer security outfit in combatting terrorism. According to their findings, most informants perceived VSOs to be an important component in counterterrorism. Citizens believe that programs that encourages formation of VSOs improve the trust between the security institutions and community as well as strengthen the legitimacy of police institutions.

According to Sandole (2010), a comprehensive approach that concentrates on the root causes of problem and involved multiple actors and functions is required to combat terrorism and violent acts. In this respect, the philosophy of VSO is a useful and effective tool that functions at the local level since terrorism itself flourishes and derives its recruit of foot soldiers or fighters at the local communities. A case in point is the Boko Haram insurgency that started from local and poor communities in the capital city of Maiduguri in Borno State such as Bulabulin Ngarnnam, Kawar Maila, Gwange and London Ciki, etc. It further extended to other local communities in both Northern and Southern parts of Borno State. In other words, VSO help police prevent security problems before coming off the hinges by controlling the heartbeat of the local community. Intelligence gathering via VSO does not involve the same risk as traditional and known methods as it is based on trust and community participation (Pickering et al., 2008). Innes (2006) emphasized the role of volunteer security outfit in being aware of local problems. Positive and cordial relations between security institutions and the community will impair the influence of slander and invalidate propaganda put forth by terrorist

organizations (Scheider & Chapman, 2003). The KII study participants shared their experience through their responses;

> *Volunteer Security Outfit (VSO) is a community self-defence initiative that involves voluntary involvement of community members in checkmating crimes and information and intelligence that will lead to arresting or annihilating the culprits. Before the emergence of the Civilian JTF, the people in the community were a stakeholder in the business of ensuring security of their domain and anything in the community was being controlled by the leadership of such community. In most communities, it is the duty of the person whom the stranger or the visitors stayed with to report it to the immediate authority. When all these security measures are in place, there is hardly a crime being committed in any society...* ***(KII respondent, 2023)***.
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> *Volunteer security organization is all about involving members of a charitable community in security-related issues. I want to quickly review the past. In general, police are a result of a society's growth or development, the dynamism of its economic activities, and the decision by some members of the community to engage in crime. Ultimately, the community felt the need to employ certain members of the community who will be tasked with the responsibility of safeguarding the community, in particular lives, property, and human dignity...* ***(KII respondent, 2023)***.

Achievement of Civilian JTF in Combating Boko Haram Insurgency in Borno

Civilian JTF members have been successful in stopping many attacks through swift identification of strange faces in their communities and have also helped the security agencies in apprehending suspected insurgent members (Okereke, 2013). The formation of Civilian JTF as part of the mechanisms for combating terrorism in Nigeria represents a veritable example of a citizen-driven communal response to security challenge and an indication of how terrorism can be best tackled and prevented in the 21st century. The Civilian JTF group exploit their knowledge of the communities to identify suspected insurgent members or other suspicious individuals (Okereke, 2013).

According to Bamidele (2016), Civilian JTF is an alternative method in the fight against insurgency in Nigeria. The usual hard way had not produced the desired results and using security operatives alone had failed, and therefore in the Northeast region, most activities are shaped by Civilian JTF made up of local people, inter alia: male and female local people, both employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled, etc. Campbell (2014) supported this argument, noting that the Civilian JTF often enables the formal mechanism (special government Joint Task Force (JTF) to function and operate. Campbell (2014) argued that it is within the civilian sphere that the security landscape is defined especially in the area of intelligence gathering. The military cannot operate effectively in a foreign terrain without the help of the locals who know the in-and-out of the terrain. Therefore, the Civilian JTF became their eyes and ears in the fight against insurgency.

Agbiboa (2015) in his work the “Youth as Tactical Agents of Peacebuilding and Development in the Sahel” observed that an overlooked but critical area of the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency is the manner in which the angry youth in Northern Nigeria are contributing their quota as the conflict unfolds. To complement the efforts of the state’s joint task force/multinational joint task force in the anti-terrorism war, they enlist against the insurgents with bows and arrows, charms, swords and machetes in their communities thereby given combat and intelligence support respectively. Contrast to the accusation that the CJTF are a bunch of thugs, they undertake the function of community-based policing. The emergence of youth vigilantism in Maiduguri occurred from the grassroots, in reaction to the failure of the

Nigerian military to protect civilians against Boko Haram. Thus, the group emanated in acts of necessity undertaken in the face of relentless terror. The group consist largely of teenagers without basic education. The integrated regional information networks (IRIN), reported that the Civilian JTF are the "eyes and ears of the security forces and are often the first responders to trouble" (IRIN 2014). Notwithstanding, the Civilian JTF has helped in identifying, arresting and execution of many members of the Boko Haram sect through local intelligence and the use of local weaponry. More so, these youths have used their local skills to fish out hiding Boko Haram members in their various neighbourhoods. In the process, they have greatly helped in improving civil-military relations. Notably, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) has recorded considerable successes against Boko Haram by killing over 200 Boko Haram Militants in March 2014 in Giwa military barracks in the State that was overrun by the insurgents. In particular, the CJTF"s cooperation with regular security forces has also helped deter attacks in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, pushing the militants out into more remote villages (Siollun, 2014, Cited in Agbiboa, 2015). The KII study participants shared their experience through their responses;

> *Well, their greatest achievement is the peace we are seeing today. Basically, the peace we have witnessed today is part of their input. Like I said everybody is putting hands together to ensure that peace and sanity prevails, so you cannot rule out the CJTF in this connection because they have helped the state achieved the level of peace were are enjoying today... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*
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> *For us here in the theatre, the military have worked extensively with the CJTF and their support has been immense to our operations and the successes we have achieved in the counter-insurgency operations, because they know the entire area, they can identify who are the Boko Haram members, they know the streets very well and we have leverage on all that and it has made it possible for us to succeed... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*
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> *Well, the CJTF has been very instrumental because right from the initial stage, most of the insurgents are within Maiduguri. And virtually almost all the households or neighbourhood within Maiduguri has a CJTF member, so you know who is who and they monitor people's movement, and it is only CJTF members that can reveal this is what is happening. So that is the reason why all the security agencies rely very much on the CJTF for whatever information, and whatever information given to them by the CJTF is always accurate. These has helped the security agencies in no small measures in arresting Boko Haram members within the communities here in Borno State.... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*
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> *The military and other security agencies would not have achieved the level of success we recorded today without the CJTF. They came at the right time when the military and other sister security agencies needed them. The CJTF should continue to support the military until the war is finally won. By the time the war is finally won and the enemies defeated, the CJTF will go down in history as a good model worthy of emulation and adaptation by societies and countries that want to put to an end asymmetrical warfare that terrorists use to gain advantage in their activities... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*

Prospect and Challenges of CJTF in Combating Terrorism

The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) which emerged to augment the effort of Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) has been accused of overstepping their bounds; their

youthful age, the low literacy level, their unemployment status, and very little economic engagement have made scholars and even the general public to raise questions about them. Consequently, there are two prominent divergent positions among the people of Borno State on what constitutes the Civilian Joint Task Force. Some regarded them as heroes, who were assisting the military in providing security to lives and properties of Borno State citizens. However, others considered them as nuisance expressing fear of future disaster waiting to happen. Many are of the view that the Civilian JTF will eventually become a problem for the larger society in a post-Boko Haram era if the government does not rein in on them now. Perhaps like some have argued, training them, engaging them in meaningful activities, or even incorporating them into the existing security operatives may help them avoid constituting a menace in the future.

In the light of the aforementioned concerns, the Borno State House of Assembly in 2015, acting on an executive bill forwarded to it by the former Governor Kashim Shettima, passed a law known as Youth Vigilante Empowerment Agency Law 2015. The law specifically targeted 20,000 or more members of the Civilian JTF for job opportunities under the Borno State government. Through the help of the Borno State Government, over 400 former members of the Civilian JTF were also enlisted into the Nigerian Army to support the military in fighting Boko Haram. (Premium Times, 2018). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had also trained some members of the Civilian JTF in entrepreneurship skills (Guardian, 2020) and on human rights and leadership training held for two weeks in Jos, Plateau State (UNDP, 2019). The KII study participants shared their experience through their responses;

> *There are cases of CJTF members engaging in rape activities with our IDPs in camp across the state, even reported robbery incidence of breaking into people's homes and shops, and so on. Some of them have even constituted themselves as nuisance, harassing or flogging citizens. I know of a CJTF member that was close to me and arrested by the police and thrown into detention for close to a year because he used his own gun to shoot at his colleague over a disagreement. But despite these shortcomings, of course they are also humans, we should not blacklist the entire CJTF because of the activities of few bad elements among them ... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*
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> *The perception has changed a bit because whatever you are doing and no matter how good in the thing you are doing, you will still get some bad elements. And these bad elements, if what they are doing is taken into considerations, even the person funding you, providing all this logistics will be tired. So, I have been writing to the government, telling them of some of these challenges... (**KII respondent, 2023)***
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> *It is only the Borno State Government alone that has been shouldering the burden of the CJTF since inception. No any other institution, neither the Federal Government or non-governmental organizations. Everything about the CJTF is being shouldered by the Borno State Government. Operational vehicles, fuelling, maintenance, stipend allowances of the CJTF are all being provided by the Borno State Government. I have attended a lot of workshops and seminars abroad, and within Nigeria, all the embassies here including the European embassies and the UNDP, have called me and we sat one on one with them to discuss the modus operandi of the CJTF. This also goes to show the level of concern that the international community have attached to the operations of the CJTF... (**KII respondent, 2023)**.*

Conclusion

This study concludes that the evolution of volunteer security outfit to fight terrorism in Nigeria balances up the reactive-fast responses with the proactive problem-solving techniques centered on the cause of crime and terrorism. It requires security organizations and citizens to join as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these crime-related issues. Volunteer security outfit is an effective aspect in combatting terrorism as it is an output that prevents alienation and strengthens partnership. It can also hinder the recruitment process of terrorist organizations and eliminating the excuses that are likely to push people, particularly young generations who are at the heart of combatting terrorism, into the arms of the terrorist organization. Looking at it within the context of soft power policies at the macro level of the society, volunteer security outfit is an extremely effective option at the local level. During the last few decades, as scholars and practitioners have claimed that this community-driven philosophy gives more chances for communities to counter terrorism, specifically, security experts have sought to conduct projects to corroborate this idea. According to Sandole (2010), a comprehensive approach that concentrates on the root causes of problem and involved multiple actors and functions is required to combat terrorism and violent acts. In this respect, the philosophy of volunteer security outfit is a useful and effective tool that functions at the local level since terrorism itself flourishes and derives its recruit of foot soldiers or fighters at the local communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Educating and sensitizing members of the community and Civilian JTF to be alert to their patriotic duty of reporting crime and illegal entry of other nationals should be advocated and intensified by the Borno State government.
- With the current insecurity confronting Nigeria, establishment of local vigilante group of youth in communities across Nigeria should be encouraged to assist and support the security agencies.
- Since terrorism is a global problem, countries should adopt the volunteer security outfit model to checkmate crime and other criminal activities.
- Government should profile and enrol volunteers (CJTF) and other para-military groups into the security workforce as this will increase the manpower of our security agencies and also enhance internal security.
- The traditional institutions in Nigeria, from District, Ward, Local and State levels should be an integral part of all volunteer security outfit initiatives of government for effective coordination and maintenance of peace and security of their domain.
- The Federal Government should collaborate with the National Assembly to work out a national policy on community and border security so that community members such as the Volunteer Security Outfits are empowered to man and police our porous borders to stop the infiltration of arms and ammunition by terrorists' groups into the country.
- Government should ensure that the CJTF personnel are adequately equipped and motivated through the implementation of a robust social welfare programme to encourage participation of more volunteers in fighting terrorism.

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