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## **The influence of the civilian-based defense movement on the armed conflict: What explains their success? A case study of CJTF in Northeastern, Nigeria**

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### **Citation**

Ezeokoli, I. H. I. H. (2021). *The influence of the civilian-based defense movement on the armed conflict: What explains their success?: A case study of CJTF in Northeastern, Nigeria.*

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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**The influence of the civilian-based defense movement on the armed  
conflict: What explains their success?**

A case study of CJTF in Northeastern, Nigeria

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S2554216

Master Thesis

Word count: 17358 excluding bibliography

Supervisor: Corinna Jentzsch

Second Reader: Vanessa Newby

21 MAY 2020

**Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs  
MSc. in International Relations and Diplomacy**

## **Acknowledgement**

Academic writing in form of ‘a thesis writing’ can be a daunting experience whereby having the privilege to be under the tutelage of some people is crucial towards making the experience a less daunting one. Thereby, in all my gratitude, I am most grateful to my supervisor, Corinna Jentzch whom ever- listening ear and expertise I have relied on while writing the thesis itself.

To my second reader, Vanessa Newby for all your critical comments on my final proposal which was most helpful in positioning me both structurally and critically in the actual writing. My thanks equally go out to my thesis lab tutors both Klien and Bobic, their unwavering patience and vivid research examples at the initial process of test-running our ideas during thesis lab 1& 11 made the experience equally less daunting.

I am equally grateful to my family, the core of my support system. On each shoulder, I lean on, in pursuit of my academic dreams both financially and emotionally. To all my friends and classmates at MIRD, I am happy to have had the honor to study and learn both academically, culturally and socially from each one of you during these two years of this advanced master at Leiden.

Finally, I am honored to have friends that understand me in all, most especially Victor who patiently listened to my all frustrations and ranting and was a major source of encouragement especially at times when I was overwhelmed.

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### List of Abbreviations

Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)  
Non-governmental Organisation (NGOs)  
Armed Conflict Location Events Dataset (ACLED)  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
The United Nation Refugee Agency (UNHCR)  
Multinational Joint Effort (MNJTF)

## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Within the last decade, we have seen the increasingly active participation of civilians in the form of civilian-based defenses movements in the context of armed conflict which are assisting and ensuring that local communities<sup>1</sup> are physically protected from violence. The rise of civilian defenses movements which comports with the violent dimension of civilian (self-protection) strategies outlined by the Jose and Meide (2015, p.519) are becoming imperative towards assisting many civilian communities in achieving successful effect on armed conflict specifically a significant reduction on the rate of existential violence coming from the armed conflict. Whereby, ensuring their physical safety and well-being. In the end, such trajectories of events are changing our traditional narratives on civilians defenses movements and how they can actively contribute towards their local communities' well-being and physical safety in the midst of armed conflict. However, explaining why civilian-based defense movement was successful on influencing the level of violence in armed conflict are still empirically explained from a particular perspective.

Against this backdrop the introduction commences. As early as 2009, the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has become a major insecurity menace. (Agbiboa 2018, p. 361) The Nigerian government decided to deploy several massive military efforts in order to curb the activities of this insurgent group. Unfortunately, rather than ameliorating the insecurity menace, this became an intense armed conflict where the civilian population in northeastern Nigeria were caught between one-sided violence attacks<sup>2</sup> (Amnesty International 2015; Omenma and Hendricks 2018, p. 766). For instance, in major states such in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe where the activities of the armed conflict were felt most, the civilian community had to live and cope with the constant persecution and mishandling resulting from the excesses of the Nigerian military and other pro-government militia groups

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, I use the term local communities and civilian population to refer to the local residents caught within the crossfire between the dominant warring actors. Therefore, both terms, refers to same terminology.

<sup>2</sup> The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015) the summary on Jama' aAhl as-Sunna Lida' wal al Jihad' <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/1051> retrieved on 2 April 2021.

fighting on behalf of the Nigerian state against Boko Haram (Dan-Azumi 2018, p.42). These experiences gradually came to equate with the brutal and collective punishment projecting from Boko Haram. Hence, caught between the crossfire between the Boko Haram insurgents and Nigeria's state security agencies, the civilian communities within these states had to resiliently adapt various civilian self-protection strategies (Jose and Medie 2015, p.519) with the hope of navigating these dynamic situations, thereby providing human security and protecting themselves and their communities from the continued violence among these warring parties.

From mid-2013 to 2017, northeastern Nigeria witnessed the rapid formation and mobilization by the local community into a civilian-based defenses movement—initially known as the ‘Kato da gora’ but now officially addressed as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)<sup>3</sup> (Gana 2020, p.345)—against the security menace which was emanating from the activities between Boko Haram and Nigeria's state security agencies. The rapid formation and the active presence of this group within the armed conflict did not only combat the activities of Boko Haram but it equally tackled mayhem caused by activities of Nigeria's security agencies (Agbiboa 2018, p. 361). From 2013 to 2018, the active participation by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was reported to have achieved major success against Boko Haram, even reducing the level of indiscriminate violence against the state, whereby restoring a sense of normalcy<sup>4</sup> back to this region.<sup>5</sup>

Thereby, by employing an empirical comparative analysis based on the frequencies of Boko Haram's attacks, Omenma and Hendricks outlined that “the significant influence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is illustrated on how the active participation of CJTF reduced the rate of Boko Haram's attack from 11.83 to 4.926 whereby reducing other mayhem caused by activities of Nigeria's security agencies.” (2018, p. 766) Hence, this has attracted the attention

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that in this study, I will use the terms ‘Kato da gora’ (youth with sticks) or the Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF and the the civilian-based defenses movement ‘the CJTF’ in northeastern Nigeria interchangeably. All of these terms reflect the same terminology on the particular case study under study.

<sup>4</sup> By a sense of normalcy, I mean relative stability in the social, economic and safety whereby the rate of the security dilemma was curbed to a low level.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Civilian in Conflict (2017) ‘Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria’ Conflict <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021

of various security practitioners and equally that of the scholarly world who seek to understand and examine the influence and the success of this civilian militia group. These were also a great number of accounts producing different explanations for the success of this civilian militia group; hence the influence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is widely known across a wide spectrum of studies (Okoli 2017; Gana 2020, Hassan and Pieri 2018; Peic 2014; Yahaya 2020; Agbiboa 2020; Agbiboa 2015; Agbiboa 2015; Bamidele 2016). One major narrative propelled by this success rests on how civilians can actively contribute towards their well-being and physical safety in the midst of armed conflict and equally can become a powerful force for positive change even if they are still traditionally conceptualized as passive victims (Kalyvas 2006; Bellamy & William 2009; Jentzch 2014, p.260; Kaplan 2017, p. 34)

However, because most existing accounts that focused on the success of CJTF theorized it as an irregular armed militia group mobilized by the state, commonly referred to as pro-government (Carey and Mitchell 2016), they focused on its success within the framework of military and civilian collaboration rather than civilian oriented approach towards ensuring their physical well-being in the midst of an uncontrollable armed conflict. Hence, its success is buttressed alongside that of the Nigerian state rather than a mobilization started by the civilians for the purpose of physical protection, with the objective of reducing the rate of existential violence from the conflict. Thereby, these existing literatures fail to adequately explore why the CJTF as a civilian-based defenses movement formed by civilians was successful in combating the anti-terror rule coming from Boko Haram and mayhem created by the Nigerian state security agencies in the broader theoretical context of their strategic presence and possession of vital resources within the armed conflict, which greatly influenced the success of CJTF as a civilian strategy for protection from violence. Hence, the accounts fail to adequately explore the case of CJTF as a civilian-based defenses movement and its influences, whereby the relevance of the active participation of the civilians towards their physical protection in armed conflict is underscored as a state's initiative rather than alongside the pertinence and resilience of the active participation of civilians towards their own self-protection in armed conflict. Thus, the study argues that the central explanatory reasons why the CJTF was successful in eliminating violence from the activities of these warring parties, whereby significantly contributing to providing physical protection for their local population, can be linked to their possession of vital resources and strategic position which they leveraged towards success in reducing the rate of violence coming from the Nigerian state's security forces and Boko Haram.

Hence, the central argument anchored by study stress that, by forming civilian-based defenses movements, local communities can leverage their intrinsic values. In other words, the formation of a civilian security movement can be utilized as a communal approach to reshape and recondition the interactions between the major warring parties in their own favor whereby, by positioning themselves strategically and utilizing the vital resources within their possession. Local population has the option of using such civilian security movements to a great extent to successfully protect and defend their local population from violence. However, this line of argument has critics because armed conflict settings are most unlikely to be the same. Thereby, an extreme armed conflict setting with highly fragmented power among multiple actors might give way to intense situations where the use of local armed groups such as the formation of a civilian defenses movement is unlikely to be successful in defending and protecting the local population from violence.

But the case study of the civilian-based defenses movement ‘the CJFT’ in northeastern Nigeria is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the pertinence and resilience of the civilian community for their own physical protection in armed conflict. This can also be seen in Kamajors in Sierra Leone (Hoffman 2017, p. 640). In Darfur, the local community largely consists of main groups organized into local security initiatives to protect their communities (Bellamy & William 2009).

## **1.2 Research Aims, Approach and Scope**

Based on these arguments, this study attempts to provide empirical and theoretical answers to explain why the mobilization of the CJTF by the civilian community as a violent strategy to navigate armed conflict was successful in influencing the violence within the armed conflict in northeastern Nigeria. It takes a qualitative research method based on a deductive style with a key focus situated on a historical narrative style geared with explanatory research propositions<sup>6</sup>, whereby through a congruence analysis the study identifies two similar but complementing theoretical explanatory (research) propositions from the theoretical framework of insurgency and counterinsurgency literatures. This places these research propositions within the case study

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<sup>6</sup> By this, I mean that my study seeks to revise existing hypotheses tested in the context of the insurgency and counterinsurgency theoretical framework to empirically probe into my case study, in order to demonstrate their plausibility or relevance for my research question (Van Evera 1997, p. 90)



of CJTF under investigation. This approach can assist in providing a strong plausible explanatory evidence for the success of the CJTF in armed conflict in northeastern Nigeria and making such empirical evidence comparable with similar movements across the world with same general underlying objective.

The study is delimited in years and equally limited to a specific scope in argument. Firstly, the thesis seeks to analyze the case of CJTF within the wider framework of civilian defenses movements or civilian self-defense forces in the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency, without placing its involvement alongside the state or the insurgent side. This is pertinent to this study because most existing literature on civilian- based defenses movements affiliated their successful mobilization alongside an incumbent actor whereby the plausible explanations for the success of such movements, popularly known as civilian self-defense forces, are theorized in the light of the state or the rebel group.<sup>7</sup> In this light, not much emphasis is placed on other broader issues such as strategic presence and the possession of vital resources which had assists such civilian security movements in combating the activities of the insurgents and eliminate the insecurity mayhem created by the state's security agencies. In this way, even if they succeed in reducing the level of the violence from the armed conflict within their local community without even maintaining an affiliation with the state or the insurgent group. Their success is still theorized along these actors. The study focused on 2015-2017 because these were the pivotal years in which the success and influence of the CJTF as a violent self-protection strategy were significantly felt.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the study finds it pertinent to explain why it was successful during these aforementioned years which the case study of CJTF provides an excellent opportunity to address the arguments mentioned above. Likewise, as a result of its successes witnessed within these years it becomes a major inspiration to the rise of similar

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<sup>7</sup> As pertaining to the latter points, please see Estancona C, Bird. L, Hinkkainen, K and Bapat, N (2019) 'Civilian self-defense militias in civil war' *International Interaction*, pp 215-266; Biberman Yelena (2016) 'Self-defense Militias, Death Squads and State Outsourcing of Violence in India and Turkey' *Journal of Strategic Studies*; Clayton G and Thomson A (2016) 'Civilianizing Civil Conflict: Civilian Defense Militias and the Logic of Violence in Intrastate Conflict' *International Studies Quarterly*, vol 60(3), pp 499-510; Clayton G and Thomson A (2014) 'The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend... The Dynamics of Self- Defense Forces in Irregular War: The Case of the Sons of Iraq' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol 37 (11); Peic, G (2014) 'Civilian Defense Forces, state capacity and government victory in counterinsurgency wars' *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol 37(2), pp 162-184.

<sup>8</sup> Center for Civilian in Conflict (2017) 'Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria' *Conflict* <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021

movements in other part of northeast Nigeria and even spread to neighboring countries like Chad and Cameroon (Amnesty International 2015; Omenma and Hendricks 2018).

Furthermore, the main argument provides answers to the research question by drawing a research proposition from two aforementioned theories primarily found within the context of armed conflict and counterinsurgency literatures. The theories were derived from the previous framework that exist within the broader theoretical framework on insurgency and counterinsurgency conflict. In the end, by situating the case study of CJTF as a civilian- based defenses movement and explaining its success alongside these theories, the study hopes to achieve originality and open a new perspective on the narrative of how civilian defenses movement can actively contribute towards their local communities' well-being and physical safety in the midst of armed conflict, whereby contributing to the pertinence, resilience and adaptation of the local community in the midst of armed conflict.

### **1.3 Academic and Societal Relevance of the Study**

In the last decade, there has been a rise in advocacy among various international practitioners and scholars on the need for more holistic approaches towards civilian well-being, specifically local populations in armed conflicts, as the state's effort towards maintaining internal security during armed conflict proves to be insufficient; in fact, such efforts exacerbate the insecurity dilemma during the armed conflict whereby the safety of the civilians is inevitably threatened. Though these efforts speak to the achievement of one goal, each individual effort had been focused on framing the phenomenon surrounding civilian well-being in armed conflict in order to drive home the sense of urgency and support required (Keck and Sikkink 1992, p. 2). Yet, these also seem insufficient (Bellamy and William 2009). While these efforts are gradually making progress, they inadvertently result in civilians relying on their own efforts such as the mobilization of civilian security movements for the provision of self-protection from violence. This is more crucial for those facing greater violence where internal state protection is limited and external protection (in the form of responsibility to protect) is non-existent (ibid. 2009).

Given the relevance of these civilian- based defenses movements in actually filling in the gaps where the internal state's responses or external help seem limited, the general ideas about the role which such civilians played towards their own protection remains underappreciated (Barter 2012, p. 546). Hence, the realities across both academia and the general society are yet to chime with the realities on ground. Hence, such civilian- based defenses movement and efforts led

and formed by civilian agency (especially communally) has been explored at a limited level or even conceptualized as passive, irrelevant or explained as a state's partnership initiatives rather than activities done by the civilians for themselves (Suarez and Black 2014, p. 1; Kaplan 2008, p.359; Mégret 2009). One of the reasons behind this can be traced to the theoretical underpinning of who is a civilian, their role and the general discourse within the concept of armed conflict. Thereby, as the state is largely still considered as the sole legitimate source of human security, other sources or contributors of civilian protection are deemed incomprehensible or irrelevant. In the end, the theoretical underpinning of these ideas which are predominately found within the theories of neorealism and neoliberalism still largely dominate the world of academia and societal discussion today (Jose and Meide 2015, p. 525) without no existing groundbreaking theories studying the emerging role of the civilian agency towards ensuring their own well-beings in armed conflict. Hence, as the underpinning of these theories remains limited in understanding the emerging role of civilian agency in their own protection, such gives rise to the underappreciated and undertheorized nature of other sources of security such as the mobilization of civilian defenses movements which in essence needs new spotlights so we can understand future implications.

These last lines of above arguments are now gaining grounds in these last decades but at a limited level. Thereby, studies in recent decades have illustrated the influence and pertinence of such civilian defenses movements, especially in ensuring the physical protection of the local community during armed conflict. Equally, the pertinence of these movements is seen in terms of influencing and shaping a new order in wartime and during post-war times (Jentzch forthcoming; Bonwick 2007, p. 276; Baines and Paddon 2012, p. 246; William 2013, p. 287). This hence had opened a new understanding and appreciation of the role of the civilian community towards their own safety and further implications of what such a role has for the state and invariably society at large.

These trajectories of argument are most relevant to this particular case study looked at in this study. The active role and success of the CJTF in providing physical protection for most of the civilian communities within the armed conflict between Boko Haram and Nigeria's government is well known around the region of West Africa, and their continued existence (even though they are now co-opted as a pro-government militia) is stirring up new discussions and implications within these regions (Bamidele 2016, p.125; Dan-Azumi 2018, p. 46). Particularly, as it is greatly stressed above, academically there still remains a lack of a clear

theoretical framework explaining why the formation of civilian- based defenses movements independently mobilized by local community are more successful towards ensuring the safety of their civilian community in armed conflict than the state. Which are inevitably, opening up a new general understanding on future implication on our understanding on how civilian- based defenses movement in general and conceptualization of security provider as a state's initiative especially in the midst of armed conflict. The active role played by the CJTF in providing physical protection for most of the civilian communities within the armed conflict between Boko Haram and Nigeria's government indicates the untapped or emerging local community security options imperative in solving complex security menace especially in the context where internal state's responses remain ineffective or external assistance inexistent. Thus, success of the CJTF in providing physical protection for most of the civilian communities within the armed conflict between Boko Haram and Nigeria's government contributes to shading more lights on the existing understanding on civilian- based defenses movement in general. Hence, existing as a proactive local initiative driven by a citizenry-communal response towards ensuring their own safety which invariably alters our understanding on security provision as a unitary effort done solely by the state or an external form done by the international communities especially for civilians population in armed conflict.

#### **1.4 Organizational Structure of the Study**

The study continues with Chapter two, which is a literature review focused on existing arguments of the major topic under the study, namely 'civilian- based defenses movement in armed conflict specifically conceptualizing as a violent strategy for self-protection done by local community for themselves in the amidst of armed conflict'. However, still linking it to existing literatures on local armed militias in armed conflict context. Thereby, through contrasting and comparing the existing argument within the literature, the study hopes to identify gaps and a clear definition that will guide the rest of the study. The chapter continues with a theoretical framework that will provide a research proposition towards answering the research question. Chapter three focuses on justifying the research design, the case selection, data collection and method of analysis employed to answer the research question. Chapter four focuses on the historical context of the study, which is the armed conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram. This chapter tentatively situates the ground on what gave rise of the CJTF. Chapter five commences with an overview of the emergence, success of CJTF and equally involves an empirical discussion seeking to answer the central question under investigation. Chapter six offers a conclusion, aiming to summarize all the main arguments

within the entire body of the thesis, its implication and its limitation. The study ends with the complete bibliography utilized within the entire body of the study

## **Chapter 2**

The literature review focused on conceptualizing the existing arguments of the major topic under the study, namely ‘the mobilization of civilian- based defenses movement on armed conflict specifically conceptualizing as a violent strategy for self-protection done by local community for themselves in the amidst of armed conflict’. However, still linking it to existing literatures on other local armed militias mobilized by the state in armed conflict context. This line of argument (to this study) is essential because, as it is argued within the entire body of this study, this remains the core reason why the success of the rise of civilians- based defenses movement as a local armed initiative for physical protection is yet to be adequately theorized or even still considered as state’s initiative. This is because, as they usually share the same objectives with other militias groups irrespective of how they were created. In the end, this contributes to further advancing such highlighted reason above. Thereby, through contrasting and comparing the existing argument within these literatures, the study hopes to identify gaps and a clear definition that will guide the rest of the study. The chapter continues with a theoretical framework that will provide a research proposition towards answering the research question. This chapter moves further and ends with the theoretical framework and operationalization of the explanatory research propositions.

### **2.1 Literature Review**

An increasingly emerging discussion within the international arena is how local armed militias groups mobilized by the civilian community have been able to successfully defend their local communities, whereby successfully reducing the rate of violence within their communities. Explaining this success is conceptualized in different perspective.

As an armed conflict between the state and the insurgent armed group intensifies, it tends to have an adverse impact on the physical well-being of the civilians. Rebels can use repressive targeted attacks; states can equally employ counter-effective approaches in their defense

thereby constituting an existential threat for the local population, primarily comprised of civilians (Eck & Hultman 2007, p. 235). To a great extent, recent works focused on civilian communities in armed conflict have continue to demonstrate and even stressed that as the armed conflict intensifies, the level of the existential threat against civilians increases likewise. This is because warring parties become more inclined towards coercive violence with a focus on strategizing and reshaping the conflict landscape back in its favor (Wood et al. 2012, p. 647; Kalyvas 2006). In the end, this has a devastating impact on the local population, whereby they are inevitably caught within an endless perilous circumstance threatening their physical well-being (Raleigh 2012, p.477). For clarification sake, the armed conflict referred here is limited to interstate civil war depicting an insurgency and counterinsurgency diagram where increasingly violence against the civilian population from both sides<sup>9</sup> is witnessed.

In the absence of effective security provision for such local communities, either from the state and in form of external security provision (Jose and Meide 2015, p. 523), the local communities are most likely to depend on themselves for their own well-being, thereby taking an active role in the search for various survival strategies with the agenda of restoring a sense of security and stability back to their local communities (Shane 2012, p. 562; Shane 2015, p. 350).

Over the years, these active roles employed by the civilians have begun to gain scholarly attention, recent studies focused on unpacking these contextual issues existing within the phenomena of armed conflict have revealed various survival strategies often resorted by the civilians in the time of armed conflict which varies per each armed conflict. (Jose and Meide 2015, p. 523; Sanallah 2020, p. 274) Hence, utilizing a wide range of empirical case studies with the aim of shading a meaningful insight on the different typologies of survival strategies. These literatures suggests that local communities mainly consisting of the civilians residents take an active role via the formation of violent survival strategies in the form of their own local self-defense initiative, whether as an independent armed militia group or incorporated in the state's defense force (Jentzch forthcoming; Bellamy and William 2009; Kaplan 2017, p. 34; Jentzch, Kalyvas and Schubiger 2015, p. 76; Kalyvas 2006)) with the aims to achieve physical protection from violence.

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<sup>9</sup> By both sides, I simply meant that is from the state and equally the insurgent's sides. Furthermore, from the state, I uniformly considered it as all pro-government militias and official state force (such as, the military forces) fighting the insurgent's side on the behalf of the state.

Thereby, the formation of local armed militias groups which equally existing empirically under the umbrella pro-government militias(Carey et al 2013, p. 250) and varies in term of their structural alignment to the armed conflict, their strategic aims in terms of how they are formed, and equally the degree of identification with the state's conventional armed forces (Carey, Mitchell and Lowe 2013, p. 250), are popularly known to share the same tasks or objectives of trying to defend and protect the physical well-being of the civilian population within their areas of their operation, and in areas within their local community where the internal state is fragile, or targeted areas where the hostile presence of the insurgents is more prevalent. Hence, their explaining their impact theoretically had been generally viewed in mixed outcome. By local armed militias groups, the literature review limits it to all other fighting forces that is traditionally referred to the third orders (Jentzch forthcoming)

Different empirical studies debate their success, specifically how they have been able to successfully defend their communities and offer physical protection for their local communities from violence. Thus, despite having a uniform agenda of defending and protecting their community from the adverse impact of violence, the continued existence of such armed militia groups, whether as independent local armed militia groups or incorporated in a state's defense forces, has been strongly linked with human rights and civilian targeted abuses (Neil, et al 2014, p. 813). Most studies focused on these trajectories of arguments revealed and linked their activities to human-rights violations, especially those officially or informally linked to the state as a (cheap) means through which extreme methods are offloaded on the militias and equally the target opponents without holding the state accountable for such while enjoying the benefits of such. This is because, as a result of their nature of structural alignment to the state makes it difficult for such state to hold them accountable while utilizing their service for its own benefits. (Campbell 2002, p. 13; Carey et al 2015, p 860). Hence, these existing literatures illustrates and contributed to these arguments stressing that, their presence in weak states offers the incumbents governing weak institutions a cheaper method of offsetting the insurgents (Ahram 2011, Sabine et al. 2011, p. 6), but, giving way to insurgents to increasingly targeting the civilian population as a means to usurp the state's legitimate rule within these regions and equally as a pay-back tactic as a result of the active presence of such local armed militia groups or incorporated as the state's defense forces (Clayton and Thomson 2014, p. 957; Stanton 2015, p. 921).

However, local armed militias are widely known to equally assist their local communities to navigate and survive conflict, whereby their activities can positively influence the outcome of successful counterinsurgency and increase the rapid mobilization of civilian participation. (Biddle et al. 2012, p. 30; Peic 2014) Working independently or alongside a state's forces in the form of defense tactics, and the popular community support needed to sustain such counterinsurgency movement (Strandquist 2015, p. 110). However, introducing an alternative security system for such communities might affect the state's security monopoly in the long run. Thereby, some empirical studies had stressed that the longer such armed militias exist, specifically in fragile communities where the state's effective governances are highly fragmented, the greater their presence can exacerbate ethnic polarization and instigate local rebellion against the state (Sarosi and Sombatpoonsiri 2011, p. 388). Therefore, even if their role assists in reducing the level of the violence within such communities where a relative level of security and stability restored. Such set of arguments had revealed that such security and stability can be short-lived because their presence in weak states often complicate security and a state's governances, especially in weak states (Schuberth 2014, p. 297; Carey et al 2013, p. 250).

Nonetheless according to most armed conflict theorists, the active presence of (local) armed militia groups remain crucial in impacting the process of the armed conflict whereby their support or collaboration with either of the warring parties can serve as a definitive point that can result in a success or boost the military capacities of either of the warring parties. This illustrates the relevance of such groups in state's victory in armed conflict setting specifically within the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare (Peic 2004, p. 164). Hence, the structural alignment of their presence within the armed conflict, their strategic aims and degree of identification with the state's conventional armed forces can greatly offset the relationship within the conflict. This is even more evident specifically in conflict's settings where their degree of autonomous from state, makes them an indispensable element within the context of the armed conflict (Aliyev 2016, p.500). Thus, impacting the conflict processes and outcomes either successfully or negatively.

In the end, local armed militias groups prove better at securing internal security protection for most local communities and equally can help to offset the state's indiscriminate violence against civilians by separating the insurgents from the local populations and effectively disrupting insurgent territorial control within their local community. Hence, from these



empirical perspectives, this demonstrate that local armed militias groups independently formed by civilian communities takes an active role in armed conflict in terms of physical protection, but such roles can prove to be effective both for the state, the rebel sides and invariably the entirety of the armed conflict setting. However, existing in a broader framework of other militia groups incorporated explaining their successful and how they influenced the armed conflict setting are often theorized alongside these aforementioned trajectories of arguments whereby shading lights on their impacts are often viewed in a broader framework of all other armed militias group. This particularly, makes it difficult to theoretically dissect their success as an autonomous entity. Whereby, explaining their success pertaining to the context of armed conflict irrespective of their structural alignment to the state or not remains largely conceptualized within framework of the dominant actors. Therefore, little emphasis is placed understanding their success as an autonomous entity without affiliating them to the state or the rebel's sides. Hence, based on this, the study intends to find answers to the following research question: 'what are plausible explanatory theories answering why the rise of local armed militia groups independently mobilized by local communities in armed conflicts is successful in defending their local communities against violence.' Thus, proving as an essential strategy for physical protection for their local communities especially in the context of armed conflict.

## **2.2 Conceptual Framework**

As this study seek answers 'what are plausible explanatory theories answering why the rise of local armed militia groups independently mobilized by local communities in armed conflicts is successful in defending their local communities against violence.' Hence, successful is defined as a reduction in violence in the armed conflict whereby the active presence of such civilian defenses movements formed by civilians is able to reduce the rate of the state's indiscriminate violence, and equally reduce the rate of the insurgent's repressive attacks in such local communities, thereby contributing to lowering the targeted violence against their local population popularly considered as violence against civilian. In this sense, they improve the rate of stability and security in their communities.

Similarly, (independent) local armed militias group for the purposes herein will be referred to as civilian defenses movements. A civilian- based defenses movement is defined as a local community movement essentially comprising of civilian combatants actively drawn from the community independently. My definition concurs with other existing definitions focused on community-initiated militias (Jentzch forthcoming, p. 21). However, the scope of my definition

needs to be broad enough to include existing definitions of civilian self-defense forces (Peic 2014, p. 166; Estancona et al. 2019, p. 216; Clayton and Thomson 2016, p. 500) owing to the fact that I need to rely greatly on their theoretical framework to deduct explanatory research propositions in order to provide answers for my research question. However, in contrast to their definitions, this broader approach to my definition on civilian- based defenses movement means active civilian participators which are not mobilized by the state. Hence, running contrast to their definition which in these aforementioned literatures on civilian self-defenses forces, which are summarized and defined as a local militias groups encouraged by the state (Peic 2014, p. 166) or mobilized by the state conversely (Estancona et al. 2019, p. 216; Clayton and Thomson 2016, p. 500). Hence, in such latter literatures, the success of civilian defenses movement is considered in the light of pro-government efforts or state security approach to civilian protection whereby, such definitions misplace adequate explanations why civilian-based defenses movement independently mobilized by local communities were able to achieve success even without having any affiliation to either the state or the insurgent groups. Hence, failing to adequately theorize the success of civilian- based defenses movement as an independent entity and their successful influence. (In term, how they were able to achieve such successful, especially with limited access to military ability and weaponry)

Hence, from these definitions, civilian- based defenses movements may appear to be defined as active civilian participators operating with little or no fighting experience and limited access to military weapons. However, by active civilian participators, I mean young people or active participants drawn from the younger generation, without a formal link to the state, which are communally sustained by all members of such communities based on shared common local security issues faced by all within the same conflict setting. By communally sustained, I mean that such civilian-based defenses movements have the popular support from all members of the community where they were initiated. They leverage their popular support and embedded social networks in order to facilitate cooperation and sustain the movement for a long time, in order to have a successful influence in reducing the level of violence substantially<sup>10</sup>. So, in my definition it is a loosely structured local militias group independent from the state mainly comprising of youths from the local population that sporadically emerges as a result of the

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<sup>10</sup> Although this is equally debatable because the longer such civilian security movement exist, the more likely they are to constitute one of the highlighted issues raised within the body of the literature review.

increasingly devastating impacts of the armed conflict in their region. As a result of its sporadic formation, it does not necessarily need to be affiliated to existing fighting forces such as local vigilantes or the existing state's militia groups or forces. Although they can be later co-opted into existing local forces or state's militias groups or forces because of the similarity of their objectives as to these latter groups. This usually occurs at a later stage within the conflict and not at the initial stages of their emergence. Thus, in this study the focus is on providing theoretical explanatory propositions for the successes of an independent civilian- based defenses movement at an early stage of its emergence before it has been integrated into a state's military force<sup>11</sup>. The reason for this approach is because the study seeks to understand why they were successful in achieving their objectives: defending their local communities and providing physical protection for themselves in armed conflict. Therefore, it is civilian self-protection done for themselves via themselves rather than civilian self-protection done by others for such civilian communities. (Jose and Medie 2015, p. 519)

In the end, from these highlighted aspects of my definitions on civilian- based defenses movement which comports with the conceptual frameworks of community-initiated militias (Jentzch forthcoming, p. 21) and doesn't improve it. However, it runs contrast with those within the conceptual framework of civilian self-defenses forces. In this way, choosing to consider my conceptual term as civilian- based defenses movement helps to achieve a middle ground effort between these two popular existing frameworks which assisted in taking a detailed account for their existing theoretical framework deducted as a plausible and explanatory research propositions in order to provide answers for my research question in consonant with my case study.

Furthermore, the armed conflict under investigation is primarily an internal conflict consisting of an insurgent armed group and the state, (Bartusevicius and Gleditsch 2014, p. 31) whereby the former engages with the state in an asymmetrical offensive war specifically in rural communities where it is predominately comprised of the civilian population. Thereby, as the state's response (maybe) by deploying its security agencies which is geared towards

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<sup>11</sup> These approaches comport with my case study. The civilian joint task forces CJTF in armed conflict in northeastern Nigeria established its major successes within the initial periods of its emergence before it was integrated into Nigeria's military force in 2017 (Okoli 2017; Gana 2020, Hassan and Pieri 2018; Peic 2014; Yahaya 2020; Agbibo 2020; Agbibo 2015; Agbibo 2015; Bamidele 2016)

reestablishing internal security and protection of civilians does not only exacerbate the conflict but propels a reaction from the local population: the formation of local armed militias to mitigate the devastating activities from these warring parties. In this sense, the sense of urgent needs to ensure their survival propels the formation of local armed militias. Therefore, in this definition, an armed conflict depicts an insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare whereby the local population referred to here is civilians caught within the crossfire of both warring factions. Thereby, in a summary, my approach to the definition on armed conflict is likened to as an interstate civil war because it is broad enough to encompass many aspects of armed conflict equally as such as insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

In my theoretical framework, I aim to provide a research proposition to answer the aforementioned question: I focus on two possible explanatory propositions. The first is the strategic presence of such civilian- based defenses movements in the armed conflict which can offset the rebel's social cohesion and most-needed link with the local community. The second possible explanatory proposition is their possession of vital resources which can eliminate the state's indiscriminate violence, thereby successfully influencing and lowering the rate of the violence in local communities. However, these lines of arguments also have their critics. I will deliberate on these explanatory propositions further. However, as highlighted above in my conceptual definition, I will tentatively rely on the theoretical framework of civilian self-defense forces in the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency theories. However, ensuring that the parameters remain within my conceptual framework and research aims.

#### **Strategic presence of a civilian-based defenses movement as an explanatory factor for its success**

Here I seek to explain that the strategic presence of the civilian- based defenses movement within the armed conflict in their local community disrupted the insurgents' social networks which can be tied to their military's survival in such community. Whereby, isolating the insurgents' continued physical presence from their local population. Fundamentally, among the various assumptions attested for the long survival rate of many insurgent's group despite their limited military possession is tied to their dependent on the consequential role of the civilian population either coercive or willingly. The consequential role of the civilian population offers

the insurgent a wide range of intangible benefits<sup>12</sup>which can enable to facilitate cohesive social networks necessary for their military survival. (Clayton and Thomson 2016, p.501). Thereby, by forming civilian- based defenses movements, this strikes the ability of the insurgent to further maintain such dependence whereby through sustaining and maintaining an active presence, the strategic presence of civilian-based defenses movement reduces the density of social network required from their local communities. Hence, making it difficult for the insurgent's group maintain a level of dependence from the local community. This isolates the insurgent armed groups physically from their local communities, which in turn induces a disruption of the social cohesion of the insurgents' fighting network, thereby undermining the ability of the insurgent groups to draw, maintain and sustain access to major sources of essential resources such as human resources from the local population needed for survival. The result of such strategic presence to a great extent threatens the most-needed survival link by the insurgent group with the targeted local community where they operate.

Hence, although the trajectories of these arguments can be debatable, several studies have illustrated that there is a level of dependence by the insurgent groups on the local population whereby most insurgent groups depend on the civilian population where they operate from for most of the essential resources needed for their survival, including manpower, funding and logistical support (Mkandawire 2002, p. 182; Zahar 2000, p. 117). This means that the local communities in which the civilian- based defenses movements operate have a wide range of options to utilize to its advantages such as denying access, hence isolating them from their local community.

In sum, the continued maintenance of strategic presence by civilian- based defenses movements can successfully eliminate the presence of the insurgents in their local communities. However, this does have its critics because it produces an opposite effect in the long-term, its wider effects increase the chances of reprisal attacks from the insurgents against the local communities, driving a wedge of increasing repression from the insurgents against such local communities.

**Hence, research proposition one:** the acts of occupying various strategic presence by the civilian- based defenses movement within their local community can disrupts the insurgent's

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<sup>12</sup> By a wide range of intangible benefits, these includes material resources such as food, shelter and finances. It also includes social network essential for cohesive mobilization

social network, isolating their continued physical presence from their local population and thereby posing a plausible explanatory proposition for its successful influence.<sup>13</sup>

**Possession of vital resources by the civilian- based defenses movement as an explanatory factor for its success.**

Secondly, given the prominent nature of their operation and emergence, civilian- based defenses movements primarily operate within the local terrains from where they were formed, enjoying a wide range of vital resources useful to the military survival of both warring parties. Hence, according to the major theories within the framework of insurgency and counterinsurgency literature, the formation and sustenance of civilian-based defenses movements can invariably alter the level of violence whether indiscriminate by the state or targeted repressive attacks from the insurgents projected within such local communities.

Thereby, unlike any other form of armed conflict, insurgency and counterinsurgency conflicts, the essence of this highlighted factor above proves to be indispensable towards altering the level of violence. In essence, operating in local terrains and possessing some key and vital resources essential towards impacting the level of violence drastically (Kydd and Walter 2006, p.67; Khalili 2011, p. 1475). Hence, typically native to the local community from where they emerged and possessing a vital range of resources such as a vast knowledge of the local terrain and a superior familiarity of the armed context. Such vital resources within the possession of the civilian- based defenses movements can assist them in yielding great outcomes such as successfully influencing the activities of the warring parties, which in return effectively results in lowering the rate of physical violence against their local communities. From the trajectories of these arguments this implies that, because they are native and resident of the local communities from which they are actively operating, they can easily sustain informal social networks and utilize their better knowledge of their surrounding environment either in alliance with the state or the insurgents in order to successfully defend their local community and provide physical protection for themselves and their local population from violence.

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<sup>13</sup> I expect that this first research proposition does explain to an extent the success of such civilian- based defenses movements. However, it has a mixed outcome in that though it achieves a level of success against the activities of the insurgents and limits their access to their local communities, it also has counter-effects whereby it might increase the likelihood of reprisal attacks from the insurgents as a payback tactic, thereby complicating the safety of the local community that the civilian- based defenses movement emerged to protect and contributing to heightening the violence against their local communities.

This in essence comports with general understanding within the literature on insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare which stresses that the lack of access to vital resources such as information increases the tendency of violence in such local terrains. (Kalyvas 2004, p. 103) Control and accurate access to information is central in order to influence the level of violence coming from both of the warring parties (that is, the state and the insurgents) to a great extent, such that it can greatly shape the level of the violence coming from both warring parties targeted against the civilian population within such local community (Hultman 2007, p. 218). The arguments raised here imply that the level of violence against such local communities is significantly reduced when vital resources such as intelligence gathering, and timely information supply are carried out by a civilian- based defenses movement for either of the warring parties. In its effect, such minimizes the level of collateral damages within their local communities from the armed conflict (Peic 2014, p. 165; Strandquist 2015, p. 110)

**Hence, research proposition two:** the act of delivering of vital resources within the possession of the civilian- based defenses movement to either of the warring sides can assist in lowering the level of violence coming from the armed conflict against their local population. This poses as a second plausible explanatory proposition for its successful influence.

In essence, these explanatory factors seem to be similar and irrelevant to distinguish between them. However, this approach taken by the theoretical framework is built on the fact that, both explanatory factors remains different but complementing. Because, as Kalyvas argues that, “indiscriminate violence which largely occurs within the context of the state’s military is caused by the lack of information whereby the incumbent (the state) adopts a large military counterinsurgency operation which is geared at encircling and eliminating insurgents from the civilian basis. However, such operations often result in countereffects where the propensity of the rate of state use of excess violence against the local population becomes inevitable whereby lacking the accurate information on the whereabouts of the insurgents who had already entrenched and assimilated themselves locally within the most local terrains of this region. Hence, to reduce the rate of these countereffects from the state’s military operations which were exacerbating the conflict dynamic for the local community, a local-based administrative approach through which the facilitation of timely access to information is to be collected are usually adopted or spring up independently” (2004, p. 103). With the objectives of identifying the members of the insurgents through this medium, whereby tentatively aiming to successfully

influencing the rate of violence specifically from the state's sides. (2004, p. 109). With this explanation, information is most vital for the state in order to eliminate the rate of state use of excess violence against the local population and actions of intelligence gathering is most beneficial to influence the state's use of excess violence.

On the other hand, to a reasonable extent, the insurgent's group entirely depend on the civilian communities for its military survival. Such reliance on the civilian communities needs to be cohesive in order to sustain its guerrilla style of warfare with the state essential for the advancement of its agenda. Thereby, by forming civilian-based defences movement, the strategic presence of such civilian-based defences movement can thwart such dependence. Whereby, the prospect of maintaining social network and acquisition of all other intangible resources such as human resources from the local communities is threaten because of the active presence of such civilian-based defences movement. In a nutshell, the result of such strategic presence to a great extent threatens the most-needed survival link by the insurgent group with the targeted local community where they operate. Thereby, in most case serving as an instrumental role where the stronghold of the military-base of operation in most of its controlled regions are disrupted. In this, sense, their social network within such region can be highly threatened where their dependence for military survival or even further brutal rule on such local communities is eliminated.

In conclusion, the essence with this approach of differentiation between these similar but complementing explanatory factors remains crucial because the study seeks to understand how violence from both sides was successfully reduced in the case study itself. Thereby, the study focuses on violence against the civilian population from both sides and equally collateral damages resulting from both sides on the civilian population.

#### **2. 4 Operationalization of the research propositions**

For the first research proposition on 'the strategic presence of the civilian- based defenses movement' as a plausible, explanatory theoretical propositions for its success, I operationalize and expect that when I look at existing empirical evidence, I will find that the strategic presence of CJTF such as their defensive role and how they strategically position themselves within the local areas where they operate and emerge from will offset the social cohesion of the insurgent. Thereby by denying them access into their local community, they effectively reduce the rate of



repressive attacks from the insurgents within their communities. This equally includes their defensive roles such as combating roles which effectively extirpate Boko Haram from the local community. However, I expect that this proposition will invite reprisal attacks back to such local communities in the long term; because of the strategic and active presence of the civilian security movement there could be a counter-reaction from the insurgents against the local communities. So, to a great extent, this explanatory theoretical proposition for the success of civilian- based defenses movements prove plausible, but it has its limitations.

By possession of vital resources, I operationalize this abstract theoretical strand as the practical activities of civilian- based defenses movements in delivering timely vital resources such as intelligence and information on the whereabouts within their local communities of the state's rival, the insurgent armed group members, to the state's security force. In this way, by delivering these vital resources to the state's security forces, the level of the state's violence and excess use of military forces in search of members of insurgents within such local communities is reduced, which in the end greatly influences and lowers the rate of collateral damage from the warring activities of both sides in such local communities.

## **Chapter 3**

### **3.1 An Overview of the Research Design**

The study primarily utilizes a qualitative (single) case study focused on the civilian- based defenses movement known as the CJTF in Nigeria. This is done with an intensive epistemological approach which includes critically engaging with this case study through a theoretical approach focused on analyzing a variety of data sources (Baxter and Jack 2008, p. 544) to provide an answer to the central research question under study. This allows for a flexible approach to look at a particular component of an entire phenomenon in order to understand and interpret possible answers for such component under investigation (Yin, 2009, p. 14). Hence, in contrast to experimental research design, a qualitative case study approach is particularly useful for empirical probing into the contemporary context of a phenomenon more in-depth especially if such exists in its real-life context (Crowe et al 2011, p. 2). Thereby, by employing intensive focus on a particular component, one can gain a broader and rich

understanding which can be compared to similar cases or issues across the world (Stake 2008, p. 445).

Furthermore, a key focus is placed on a single unit, which is the civilian- based defenses movement of the CJTF, and what explains its successful outcome in northeastern Nigeria theoretically. Thereby, as the use of a single case study is good for probing the explanatory power of such theory within the case study. Hence, through such approach, a rich understanding of it can be produced which can be comparable to other reliable similar units (Gerring 2004, p. 342; George and Bennet 2005 p.17). A single case is equally useful for the operationalization of broad concepts (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Conversely, it is highly beneficial and useful for descriptive or explanatory questions focused on gaining a refined and new understanding about the phenomenon in its real context without deliberately manipulating the environment in which the phenomenon exists or seeking to test a specific hypothesis (Crowe et al 2011, p. 5). Thereby, the implication from a qualitative case study is useful to develop future testable hypotheses, to build and refine a theory pertaining to other similar issue. It can strengthen or weaken existing historical explanations on that particular case study under focus. (George and Bennet 2005 p.32) In the end, if properly applied, allows for the generalization beyond the particular case study to other studies (Bryman 2009, p. 67). However, the major limitations of a qualitative single case are the relatively constraints to render the implications from such study to other broader and similar units of population whereby by focusing on understanding a single part of a phenomenon more intensively, generalizing beyond the case becomes a constraint. In a nutshell, I utilize a single case study with an exploratory qualitative type of research approach without no solid comparative case studies.

### **3.2 Case Selection and Unit of Analysis**

The study focuses on a qualitative case study geared with an intensive approach into providing theoretical explanations why a particular case study of the civilian- based defenses movement of (CJTF) or initially known as , 'Kato da Gora' (youth with sticks) which was formed as a violent strategy by the local community for physical protection as a result of an uncontrollable violence from the armed conflict between Nigeria's government and Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria which was threatening well-being and its successful within this region. As this civilian-based defense movement remains pivotal, where because of its active presence, it was able to greatly influence and reduce the rate of insecurity dilemma against the local community emanating from this conflict, whereby from 2013 up till 2017 the movement was

majorly influential towards stabilizing and returning a sense of normalcy back to the region. This influenced other similar civilian security movements across other local communities (Agbibo 2018, p. 1024). Hence, this particular was chosen because it comports with the research aims and the central intentions in this study. Similarly, as argued within the societal and academic relevance section, the case study of the civilian- based defenses movement of (CJTF) indicates the untapped or emerging local community security options imperative in solving complex security menace especially in the context where internal state's responses remain ineffective or external assistance inexistent. Thus, success of the CJTF in providing physical protection for most of the civilian communities within the armed conflict between Boko Haram and Nigeria's government contributes to shading more lights on the existing understanding on civilian- based defenses movement in general. Hence, existing as a proactive local initiative driven by a citizenry-communal response towards ensuring their own safety which invariably alters our understanding on security provision as a unitary effort done solely by the state or an external form done by the international communities especially for civilians population in armed conflict. In a nutshell, this case study has twofold policy implication. Firstly, it broadens our understanding on civilian- based defenses movement in general and the different dichotomies surrounding their existence. Secondly, it shows how the security initiative horned by local communities can effectively tackle insecurity threats and proves to be a vital channel of protection from violence.

Furthermore, another main reason why this case was chosen is because the various moments within this conflict propelled a reaction which led to the emergence of 'Kato Da Gora' (CJTF) civilian- based defenses movement adopted by the civilian community for self-protection from repression, which in the end was a major success, thereby proving to be great opportunity to study. Although the 'Kato Da Gora' (CJTF) civilian- based defense movement had been studied to great length in previous studies (Okoli 2017; Gana 2020, Hassan and Pieri 2018; Peic 2014; Yahaya 2020; Agbibo 2020; Agbibo 2015; Agbibo 2015; Bamidele 2016) it has not been considered as an independent entity. These previous accounts often allied Kato da Gora's mobilization, rise and success as a Nigerian state initiative, hence failing to vividly highlight how the resilience of the local population primarily consisting of the civilians protected and defended themselves successfully in a messy armed conflict where the state's internal security provision or even external assistance was non-existent. Hence, as Jose and Meide resound, "the significances of such civilian security movement can be attested in the various ways in which the movement can assist such local communities collectively as opposed

to individual efforts in order to navigates hostile and violent environment whereby displaying the pertinence of the civilians as active participants to their own protection” (2015, p. 515).

Thus, following the trajectories of this latter argument by Jose and Meide. (2015) The significance of the CJTF as a communal effort and its effectiveness as a strategy of protection for all equally disrupted the classic collective action problem (Oslo 1965) where risk of opportunity cost and uncertainty over future gains are usually a main dilemma against achieving a desirable outcome for the benefit of all was resiliently overcome. Hence, acting as communal initiative, the active presence of Kato da Gora’s (CJTF) civilian-based defense movement adopted by the civilian community in the local communities in northeastern Nigeria which can be viewed as a communal approach strategy saw a significant decrease in violence against their local communities, thereby serving as a collective local security protector rather from the state. Hence, the remarkable influence of the CJTF did not only disrupt the classic collective action dilemma but it brought a sense of hope of survival for most of the communities where it was actively present<sup>14</sup> Thus, based on these remarkable aspects of CJTF, it is apt as an excellent choice of case study for study above others.

In conclusion, my unit of analysis focuses on a civilian-based defenses movement formed in 2013 as a result of the declaration of emergency by Nigeria’s government based on the severe lack of state control over the armed conflict with Boko Haram insurgents (Agbiboa, 2018, p. 1024). By mid-2013, the civilian community was propelled to resort to different self-protection strategies in order to provide protection for themselves, which saw a significant influence in reducing the insecurity dilemma within their community. Furthermore, the study starts with 2015 and ends in 2017 because after 2017 because it was the year when CJTF was finally co-opted by Nigeria’s security agency (the military). Therefore, this timeframe concurs with the research question, aims and approaches as outlined in chapter one. However, the study still tentatively takes into account 2013- 2014 because, these years were the formation years of the CJTF which need to be discussed in order to understand their origin. In a nutshell, study years is from 2015 and ends in 2017 because of its significances to the central question and research objectives under study here.

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<sup>14</sup> Center for Civilian in Conflict (2017) ‘Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria’ Conflict <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021

I equally focus specifically on civilian community in northeastern, Nigeria which I consider as one region. The reasons behind this approach are because of the scarcity of data especially if I disaggregated into sub-regional basis. Hence, as most existing empirical evidence consider the success of CJTF as a single unit in a single region popularly known as northeastern, Nigeria. Disaggregating the success of the CJTF into various sub-regional basis will require an historical (field work) observation which is not feasible for this study. Hence, based on these reasons, the study concentrates and considers the CJTF as one entity with a key consideration of northeastern, Nigeria as a (one whole) region. Hence, the regions such as Borno, Maiduguri and Yobe was considered as a whole entity without disaggregating them.

As outlined within the last section of chapter two, the study focuses its lens on seeking theoretical explanatory expectation in consonant with the operationalized research propositions within the context of the case study. Therefore, I will look into existing empirical evidence on how strategic presence of the CJTF at the various locations within their local communities disrupted Boko Haram's social cohesion in their local communities and equally their defense tactics such as combating roles, which further isolated the insurgent group. This equally includes the various acts of delivering vital resources such as intelligence gathering, and timely information supply are carried out by a civilian security movement for either of the warring parties which minimized the level of collateral damage within their local communities from the armed conflict. This last point is what most empirical evidence on the CJTF referred to as the information-centric approach of this civilian- based defense movement. (for instance; Gana, 2020, p. 353)

### **3.3 Data Collection and Approaches**

As the approach of my case study is an exploratory qualitative type of research. The collected data used for interpretation is empirical in nature, ranging from primary to secondary sources. Data and information needed for the research was sorted from reputable existing variety of sources. For example, a wide range of textbooks, journal reports, and government transcripts from well-renowned publications both from Nigeria and beyond were consulted as empirical sources of evidence which acted as a form of inferential evidence by engaging with the theoretical strands of the case study, with the aim of finding evidence for discussion.

This includes well-documented transcripts from Nigerian government agencies like Nigeria's Institute of Security Studies<sup>15</sup>: The Institute has an extensive online catalogue on issues pertaining to security matters in Nigeria<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, international NGOs such as International Crisis Group<sup>17</sup> have intensive primary sources on this case study, as well as various local agencies like the Center for Civilians in Conflict<sup>18</sup> and other relevant bodies. Another source of data used were those easily accessed online, e.g., Leiden University's catalogue and Google Scholar. In the end, the ACLED<sup>19</sup> and Upsala<sup>20</sup> online datasets provided graphs depicting the activities of CJTF and its influence and successes on lowering civilian related violence which further strengthen the secondary and primary data. Furthermore, some quantitative studies<sup>21</sup> on the CJTF provide descriptive statistical numbers which equally illustrated the success of CJTF, In the end, all these approach towards the utility of a wide range of data sources assisted the study in mitigating inherent or omitted bias from these existing data sources hence triangulating across various data sources can ensure the soundness of the study and contribute towards making the study reliable.

However, because of the nature of my research questions and goals, I will look more into these pre-existing works in order to find answers for the research question and to check such answers

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<sup>15</sup> National Institute for Security Studies '<https://nissnigeria.gov.ng/>' Accessed on 20 March 2021

<sup>16</sup> I initially wrote an email to them and was granted access to relevant well-documented transcripts on the case under study. Although, while actually consulting them while writing this thesis, I found out what most of them focus on their emergence rather than on the topic at hand within this study. So, to a great extent, I spent a great deal of my time researching on this online catalogue without much achievement for the benefit of my topic.

<sup>17</sup> International Crisis Group <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/246-fighting-boko-haram-chad-beyond-military-measures>. Accessed on 7 March 2021

<sup>18</sup> Center for Civilians in Conflict <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021.

<sup>19</sup> ACLED (2015) 'Boko Haram' <https://acleddata.com/?s=bOKO+HARAM> retrieved on 4 April 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program dataset (2015) <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/4000> retrieved on 27 April 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Omenma J.T and Hendricks, C. M (2018) 'Counterterrorism in African: an analysis of the civilian joint force and military partnership in Nigeria'. Security Journal, vol 31, pp 764-794.

with the theoretical strands of the research proposition outlined in chapter two. Thereby, I engage in a detailed discussion on which one of these competing research propositions explains and answers the research question hence, explaining why the case study of the ‘Kato Da Gora’ (CJTF) civilian- based defense movement in the armed conflict in northeastern Nigeria was successful as a civilian strategy for protection from violence (Jose and Meide 2015, p. 515). Therefore, to a great extent, the level of abstraction is high because I have to depend on these theoretical strands for answers to my research questions. All resources are recent, well-documented and of a high quality due to the nature of the prevalence of the case study itself. In the end, the data collection used within this study were selected based on their credibility, their independence, transparency of their origin and most importantly, their relevance to the topic at hand within this study whereby because of crucial attentions were paid to their source, a great deal of information biases was eliminated through this approach.

### **3. 4 Method of Analysis and Strategy of Triangulation**

Congruence analysis proves to be best method for analysis because it allows the researcher to engage with the case study without unpacking each part of as a continuous causal mechanism linking X and Y together just as process tracing method demands. Rather, congruence analysis allows the utility of theories as a form of ‘modus operandi’ and as a method of analysis in order to provide an interpretation of the research question without even formulating a full-fledged theorized casual process or casual mechanism hypotheses (Beach and Pedersen 2016, p.287; George and Bennet 2005 p.136). As already mentioned within the research question, two competing theoretical strands will be employed to explain why this particular civilian security movement formed by civilians in northeastern Nigeria was successful without ruling out any of theoretical strands of the explanatory research propositions provided in chapter two. In this way, the strategy of triangulation is based on these theoretical strands stemming from theoretical triangulation. By theoretical triangulation, I mean an approach of interpreting empirical evidence based on a particular unit of analysis from different or competing theoretical strands (Abdalla et al. 2017 p. 72; Denzin 1978).

Moreover, as there is no counterfactual or deterministic regularity that can be tested, congruence analysis helps to compare the strength of preexisting evidence in the case with the different strands of the theories in order to provide an explanation of an outcome. Thereby, as Blatter and Blume reiterate, congruence analysis is most suitable for drawing inferences from

non-deterministic observations, with predictions deduced from the theories. For the researcher to be able to make inferences about the relevance of such observations, it is necessary for the researcher to rely on the theoretical strands of the theory. In the end, complementary testing or theoretical explanations is made between two competing theories whereby the evidence for the correctness of one theory and the evidence for the incorrectness of another theory is generated in order to derive evidence on which theory best explains the outcome of such observations (Ibid, p. 15). In the end, congruence analysis as a method of analysis usually employed within a qualitative case study has two types. The first type uses a comparative observation where a co-variance or variance is checked between the independent and dependent variables in order to understand their values on each other as pertaining to the topic at hand. While the second type uses observation within the case itself, whereby case that exhibit an extreme relationship between the independent and dependent variable is chosen in order to use the proposed theories to make an explanation for such extreme relationship (Van Evera 1997, p. 60). Hence, because of such extreme relationship, a stronger observation can be deduced from the case study in consonant to the proposed theories' explaining the research puzzle under study. The second type of the congruence analysis as a method of analysis is the one, this study employed adopts.

Furthermore, as the value of using a single case is often subject to methodological controversies where the question of validity and trustworthiness of the study comes into question. Hence, this study hopes that triangulating between the sources of different existing empirical evidence as it outlined within the section of data collection and approaches(above) which was further proceeded and strengthen with a comparative qualitative approach based on two different strands of the competing theories. These aforementioned issues pertaining to the use of a single case without a controlled comparison can be resolved whereby making the internal validity of the study accurate however, without achieving generalization. In the end, the method of congruence analysis is most suitable for a single case for which the outcome of the phenomenon is socially and theoretically important to study.

Furthermore, because the use of congruence analysis as a single method of analysis can led to inconclusive or overgeneralization of an explanatory power of a theory to the case study, where the investigator falls into the temptation of attributing explanatory power to such theories thus leading into a common bias associated with this method. (Van Evera 1997, p. 65). This line of arguments which is usually the major weakness of congruence method of analysis in a single case can be mitigated through two strategies. The first strategy is when the researcher employs



a process tracing to augment and limit these pitfalls or secondly, the researcher can take into the accounts the theoretical reasons why such explanatory power between the theories and the case study exist. (George and Bennet 2005 p.137) Thereby, by explicitly providing supporting theoretical reasoning why relationship exist, a congruent expectation between the independent and dependent variable can be justified. In the end, through this medium, the initial issues or limitations associated with congruence method of analysis in a single case study can be addressed especially if such study relies greatly on the latter approaches where process tracing was not employed to augment or limits such pitfalls.

It is important to restate this point, in order for this study to mitigate the issues of research bias questions. This is because, of the nature of the deductive approach used in deriving the strand of the theories utilized within this study. Therefore, to overcome these challenges, study adopts a research aim, and approach which is not geared towards testing and measure the rate of variance between the explanatory (research) propositions in consonant with the case study of CJTF under study. But rather, the study aims to deliberate in detail on the explanatory powers of the theories in consonant with the case study in order to strives to achieve a consistency over each operationalization variables (see chapter 2) in accordance with the theoretical strands of both mentioned above. Thereby, the more concrete these existing empirical evidence from the case study can be explanatory with each strand of these competing plausible explanatory theoretical strands, the more confidence the relationship between them become thereby tentative conclusion can be drawn from it.

In end, although this study tentatively tested some existing theoretical framework within the case study of the CJTF, the envisioned implication from the research approaches and aims was generally aimed at an empirical discussion that can contribute towards the possibility of a new general theory to study the rise of civilian-based defense movement and successful impacts in armed conflict. Specifically, their successful impacts as a communal approach for physical protection from violence for their local communities.

## Chapter Four

### 4.1 The Boko Haram Insurgency: an overview

Since 2009, the existential threat against the civilian population posed by the insurgent group Boko Haram from where they operate has dominated the major security narratives around all the states within Nigeria (Oyewole 2017, p.1). This narrative is more vivid for the local population living within the affected areas where this insurgent group is more active (Aghedo and Osumah 2012, p. 854).

The insurgent armed group officially known as Boko Haram operates and exists predominately within northeastern Nigeria. Boko Haram is equally known as *Jama' aAhl as-Sunna Lida' wa-al Jihad*, which is literally translated into English as 'the people committed to the teaching and the spread of the teaching of the Prophet Mohammed and jihad'<sup>22</sup>. It is a radical and extremist Islam group established as early as 2002-2003<sup>23</sup>. Under the leadership of its founder Sheik Yusuf Muhammed (Onuhoa 2011), the insurgent armed group strongly advocates against Westernization and continued education, thus 'the idea of the continuation of administrating the current state-based education modelled after the western style is strongly forbidden by Boko Haram' (Pieri and Zenn 2016, p.70).

Boko Haram is geared towards establishing and fostering a society based on the firm interpretation, stricter implementation and adherence to the Islamic law, specifically in northeastern Nigeria where they are predominately based (Bintube 2015, p. 40). Inevitably, as a radical and extremist armed group which strongly opposes Western education, they equally stand against the ideas of European civilization including its political, economic and socio-cultural ways of life. By European civilization, it simply means that the freedom of choice about how one might live and conduct their activities is strongly resisted by this group (Ibid, p. 50). Therefore, informed with these ideologies, Boko Haram employs coercive military violence with the objective to overthrow the existing state's political system in order to establish a new governance and socio-economic system that adheres to a stricter compliance

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<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International (2015) 'Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill' <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4413602015ENGLISH.PDF> retrieved on March 30, 2021.pp. p 2-91.

<sup>23</sup> The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015) the summary on *Jama' aAhl as-Sunna Lida' wa-al Jihad* <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/1051> retrieved on 2 April 2021

of Islamic doctrine (Agbiboa 2015, p.10). However, existing as a new and emerging armed group with relatively low military capacity, the style they employ is based on tactical guerrilla warfare especially in local terrains consisting of the civilian community in order to employ a reign of terror as a strategy of warfare against the state.

At present there is no accurate and updated data, as it varies considerably among several accounts<sup>24,25</sup>, but as from 2009 to date there have been detailed reports published by the International Crisis Group and Amnesty International on Boko Haram, stating that the group is responsible for a mass amount of deliberate civilian-targeted conflict, strategic indiscriminate violence (in the form of assassination of a selected group of people) including abduction of school children and selective targeting of government facilities and rural communities within north-eastern Nigeria and beyond the border, reaching Chad and Cameroon (Amnesty International 2015, p.10). Recent reports from UNHCR and IOM equally state that the activities and the style of the military warfare employed within local communities in north-eastern Nigeria by Boko Haram in an effort to target Nigeria's state resulted in direct confrontation between the warring parties (that is, Boko Haram and the Nigerian state) rather than colossal damage in term of human casualties and other losses, whereby as early as 2013, about 50,000 people had been selectively abducted, primarily school students. The reports further went ahead to state that about 3 million people had had to flee their homes because of the reign of terror under Boko Haram and because their means of livelihood had been destroyed as a result of the armed conflict.<sup>26,27</sup> Hence, there are no clear and vivid words to describe and explains how the activities of this insurgent armed group; Boko Haram threatens the safety of the civilian population and equally the ideas of human security within this region (Gana, Samsu Ku Binti & Ismail Bin 2018, p. 1).

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<sup>24</sup> The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2015): summary on Jama' aAhl as-Sunna Lida' wa-al Jihad' <https://ucdp.uu.se/actor/1051> retrieved on 2 April 2021.

<sup>25</sup> ACLED (2015) 'Boko Haram' <https://acleddata.com/?s=bOKO+HARAM> retrieved on 4 April 2021.

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR (2017). 'Supplementary Appeal; Nigeria Situation; January – December', <http://www.unhcr.org/597704b87.pdf> retrieved on 4 April 2021.

<sup>27</sup> International Organization for Migration (2015) 'Boko Haram May Have Displaced Over a Million in Nigeria: IOM' <https://www.iom.int/news/boko-haram-may-have-displaced-over-million-nigeria-iom> retrieved on March 31, 2021.

In its early period, the Boko Haram armed group primarily utilized periodic skirmishes as a form of coercive military engagement targeted at the state's apparatus and security institutions. However, after major military clashes between the group and Nigeria's state security forces in 2009 which resulted in the death of its group leader, Yusuf Mohammed, Boko Haram further radicalized, with a series of revenge attacks and brutality rule (Nigerian Institute of International Affairs report 2009).

Boko Haram reprisals involved the selective and brutal use of force as an offensive tactic to gain a strategic advantage especially against civilians (Yahaya 2020, p.36). From early 2013, by systemically raiding and destroying towns and villages, and bombing civilian targets across the northern part of the region, Boko Haram consolidated and fostered its territorial objectives by seizing nearly over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of physical land of Nigeria. According to an empirical study by Bintube (2015) the total territorial land size seized by Boko Haram can be equated to the whole of Belgium. Hence, the territorial control of this physical land enabled Boko Haram to consolidate and express its autonomy on the residing population within this territory whereby corporal punishment was applied to anyone who did not publicly support them, and they considered an unbeliever. Tens of thousands of civilians were coercively subjected and subordinated under Boko Haram's repressive and brutal control. Through a military campaign of daily terror, Boko Haram continued to rapidly grow, and thousands of ordinary people had nowhere to flee and had to live and cope under this brutal reign.

#### **4.2 The Nigerian state's counterinsurgency efforts in north-eastern Nigeria**

In a state response to Boko Haram violence, Nigeria's government adopted a massive deployment of its security forces: military personnel tasked with countering the attacks coming from Boko Haram, thereby providing human security for the local population within north-eastern Nigeria and equally terminating Boko Haram insurgency (Aghedo & Osumah 2014, p.62). All these efforts were aimed at restoring the state's security within this region.

The state's response through the massive deployment of troops to tackle the situation in north-eastern Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. It can be tied to Weberian ideas of state sovereignty (Weber 1984, 80), being one of the core responsibilities of a sovereign state (Slomp 2008, p. 38). However, the conflict dynamic within the region intensified whereby this style of response aimed at terminating the threats from Boko Haram instead contributed to and exacerbated the already highly insecure situations in north-eastern Nigeria. The security forces contributed to

endangering the lives of the local population, whereby the lack of knowledge of the local terrains and familiarity with the contextual surroundings of this region resulted in an armed conflict in which the military employed a massive coercive military force in pursuit of members of Boko Haram. In short, the military force was ineffective in managing the threats against the civilians or improving the conflict dynamic with Boko Haram (Oyewole 2017, p.6).

The overriding lack of the state's efforts to restore human security and deal with Boko Haram security issues led to the external assistance in support of the state, popularly known as the multinational joint effort (MNJTF), comprised of the members of the Lake Chad regional economic block, i.e., Chad, Cameroon, Niger and the Benin Republic, in early 2014 and 2015 (Oyewole 2017, p.7). This effort saw the deployment of about 8700 troops as regional assistance to combat the continued threats posed by Boko Haram, especially as threats of spill over effects from this conflict into these countries' territory were greatly looming. However, according to many credible sources and empirical studies, this multinational joint effort was relatively short-lived and efforts towards reconquering many towns and villages under the siege of Boko Haram was politicalized. (Gana, Samsu Ku Binti & Ismail Bin 2018, p. 4) By politicization, according to many accounts on this factor, the ideas of adopting the MNJTF in tackling the Boko Haram's security threats did not have any substantial and long-lasting impact because the member-states to this joint-initiative were more considered on how to tackle such threats from their domestic level rather than from genuinely committing to tackling the issues through this communal approach. (Yahaya 2020, p. 40). Hence, the communal approach of the MNJTF was short-lived. Thereby, failing to substantially assist the Nigerian government in augmenting its efforts. Thus, the violent impunity from Boko Haram continued where a state of emergency had to be declared because of the relative lack of state monopoly of security within this region (Amnesty International 2015, 10).

The significance of these aforementioned situations was depicted vividly by a report from Amnesty International which stated

“that the defensive approach and tactics employed by Nigeria's military forces deployed to tackle the insecurity threats within north-eastern Nigeria posed by Boko Haram did not only endanger the lives of the local residents but also enhanced the nature of the guerrilla tactics used by Boko Haram, whereby most of the times, the military bases of these military personnel were constantly raided by Boko Haram, which manifests in loss of logistics and arms

equipment. In turn, this contributed to empowering Boko Haram military's capacity furthermore and changed the conflict dynamic more into targeted violence where the local population were increasingly caught between the crossfire between these two warring factions, and hence became the centrepiece of violent attacks from the armed conflict.” (2015, p.10)

Hence, in conclusion, this quote described insecurity circumstances, in which the local communities had to come to term with. Thereby, despite the heavy deployment of military troop in the north-eastern, region including with communal approach of assistance under the MNJTF. The ever- intensifying, insecurity threats within north-eastern Nigeria repeatedly resulted into a repressive circumstance where protection from physical violence were inexistent. Thereby, giving rise to the formation of civilian-based defences movements as a violent strategy in search for physical protection from violence.

## **Chapter Five**

In this chapter, I seek to provide empirical evidence from existing literature to explain the success of ‘Kato da Gora’ — the civilian- based defences movement in the armed conflict within north-eastern Nigeria. The aims behind this approach are to provide answers for the research question under study. Therefore, this chapter begins with an overview of the rise and success of this group and then proceed on discussion on the empirical evidence found from the variety of data sources in context of case study in order to deliberate more on the theoretical strands of the research proposition, with the aim of answering the study's central research question.

### **5.1 The rise and success of the ‘Kato da Gora’ civilian security movement in north-eastern Nigeria: an overview.**

The lack of an effective state response which resulted in strengthening the violent impunity of the activities of Boko Haram, thereby endangering the lives of the local populations residing within north-eastern Nigeria, gave rise to an increasing level of violence both warring sides. As a consequence of such, in June 2003, a group of local residents mostly comprising young men mobilized themselves into a civilian-based defence movement known as ‘Kato da gora’

(youth with sticks) or the CJTF<sup>28</sup>, with the objectives of flushing the members of the Boko Haram insurgents out of their communities, mitigating the level of the state’s ineffective response to the violent impunity of Boko Haram and equally aiming to reducing the level of the state’s excess of military force, contributing to the rate of violence within this region.

The rise and emergence of ‘Kato da gora’ (youth with sticks) or the CJTF which were prevalent in the most region of Borno, Maiduguri and Yobe where the territorial control of Boko Haram was prevalent. Its emergence effectively resulted into ameliorating the ineffective state response within these regions because of the excessive use of the state’s military force within their local communities. Therefore, serving as a local security provider for most local communities where it was active. (Christensen & Albrecht 2020, p.391) On the map attached below, it depicts the territorial landscape where the CJTF role was most needed.

**Figure 1: A Map depicting the territorial landscape of North-eastern, Nigeria.**



Source: Amnesty International (2015) ‘Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill’  
<https://www.amnestv.org/download/Documents/AFR4413602015ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>28</sup> Agbibo, D, E (2018) ‘Eyes on the street: Civilian Joint Task Force and the surveillance of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria’ *Intelligence and National Security*, vol 33 (7), pp. 1022–1039.

Today, ‘Kato da gora’, now known as CJTF, have an estimated total of over 30,000 members specifically operates in the 27-local government of Borno where the military stronghold of the armed conflict between the two sides is now prevalent. Hence, they now, operate as a pro-government military group. In this sense, it cannot be considered as an independent civilian movement; instead, it is now a pro-government militia<sup>29</sup> loosely affiliated to Nigeria’s military.

## **5.2 Conceptualizing the success the CJTF (Civilian-based defences movement) within the explanatory factors of its strategic presence or the possession of vital resources<sup>30</sup>**

Empirically, most existing variety of data focused on the success of CJTF (Civilian-based defences movement) in north-eastern, Nigeria demonstrated to a large extent that, the act of delivering vital resources by the CJTF influenced the level of the violence within the region. In this case, these sources of data illustrated to a great length that, the major reason for the success of the CJTF on the armed conflict from both sides can be linked to its possession of vital resources. Thereby by utilising and leveraging on them, the maintenance of strategic presence of their active role in some parts of their local terrains were augmented towards success. These lines of arguments conceptualising such vital resources to practical actions of intelligence gathering about Boko Haram and its members within their local communities, where the primacy of these acts, which are uniformly referred to as ‘the information-centric approach of CJTF’ (Gana, 2020, p. 353), was the fundamental channel through which the CJTF was able to reduce the rate of the Nigerian’s state excess use of military force, and equally the rate of indiscriminate violence by the state in pursuit of members of Boko Haram, which was posing a major security problem for the local population. (Agbibo 2015, p. 32).

For example, a descriptive (empirical) quantitative study conducted by Omenna and Hendricks which compared the level of violence before and after the intervention of CJTF concluded that, the information-centric approach adopted by the civilian communities were one of the most

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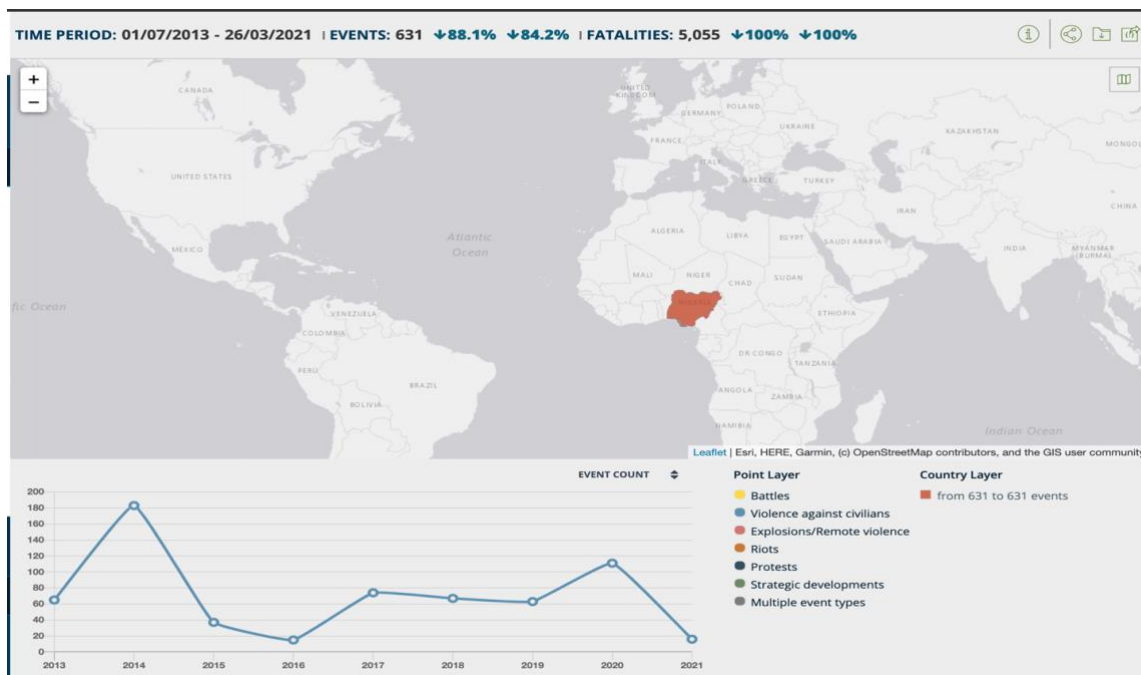
<sup>29</sup> Clayton, G., & Thomson, A. (2016). ‘Civilianizing civil conflict: Civilian defense militias and the logic of violence in intrastate conflict’. *International Studies Quarterly*, vol 60(3), pp. 499–510.

<sup>30</sup> Please see the theoretical framework within chapter 2 for a detailed recap on these propositions and how it was operationalized.



significant contributing factors to the decline of military violence and civilian casualties. Thereby, by statistically measuring the monthly frequency and the rate of civilian casualties. This concluded that and civilian casualties were lowered 11.83 to 5.33 because of the various actions related to its intelligence gathering. (2018, p. 775) These trends of approaches were equally argued to have achieved a significant reduction on the level of collateral damages emanating from the armed conflict. This was empirically reconfirmed by a graph obtained from the ACLED's website. The trend of events which was specifically focused on civilian violence from both sides. The graph (below) which depicts the event of the civilian violence, its rise and fall from 2013-2021. It illustrates a relative decline of civilian violence as from 2015's to 2107. On the graph, it equally demonstrated a gradual decline of civilian violence from 2015 was stood at its peak from 2013-2014. Although, the cause for the trajectory of event were not clearly stated but it empirically shown a decline of civilian violence and casualties.

**Figure 2: ACLED's graph on the decline of civilian violence in the armed conflict.**



Source: Armed Conflict Location Events Dataset (ACLED)  
<https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard> retrieved on 27 April 2021

Closely following these trajectories of arguments, existing well-documented transcripts from Nigerian Institute of Security Studies properly buttressed the cause for such significant change

of event. This source state “that by the acts of timely delivering of privileged information by CJTF to the military force assisted in a more effective state’s military operation whereby most of the military activities between the Nigeria’s state forces and Boko Haram were influenced with minimal collateral damages on the lives of local residents.” (Nigerian Institute of Security Studies, 2014, p. 9)<sup>31</sup>

Against this backdrop, these empirical sources argue that, the combination of the information-centric approach was the main evidence for the success of CJTF. This was more evident within the various actions undertaken by them within their local communities independently. Such actions were vividly described in other qualitative accounts which comports to these arguments here. For example, an empirical evidence acquired through a qualitative approach based on interview<sup>32</sup> in most regions such as Borno, Maiduguri and Yobe, uniformly reported that, armed with rudimentary weaponry such as matches, bows and arrows, the CJTF which was dominantly consisting of mobilized youth engaged in daily active action of street patrol and house-house searches in pursuit of ‘first-hand information.’ By such daily activities, a decline of military violence and civilian casualties were witnessed. (Agbibo 2017, p. 281; Bamidele 2016, p. 125; Gana, 2020, p. 353)

Thereby, as a result of their superior and high familiarity with the context of the local terrains of most parts of north-eastern Nigeria, their strongest weapon in combatting the state’s violence and equally those from the insurgents was their ability to detect members of the insurgents linked to their information-centric activities. This was further handled to the state’s securities forces where through this medium, the influence of the CJTF was imperative on the armed conflict. (Nwokeoma, Okpara and Osadeba 2020, p.444; Gana 2019, p. 460)

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<sup>31</sup> Nigerian Institute of Security Studies (2014) ‘DHQ: Over 1,000 Boko Haram Members captured and killed in Three Months; commentary efforts by the Civilian (JTF)’ Press Library Clipping, p 1-40.

<sup>32</sup> Such accounts interviewed leaders and members of the CJTF with the aim of understanding what made them successful. Example of such accounts are Center for Civilian in Conflict (2017) ‘Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria’ Conflict <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021, Agbibo, D, E (2017) ‘National Heroes or Coming anarchy? Vigilante youth and the war on terror in Nigeria’ Critical Studies on Terrorism, pp. 9–35, etc.

In the end, the success of the CJTF was buttressed alongside the line of its ability in identifying and fishing out persons which were aliens to their localities. The active action of various activities linked to intelligence gathering made it difficult for members of Boko Haram to further infiltrate within their local communities without being detected. Hence, operating as a civilian-based defence movement equipped with limited weaponry. Their approaches towards information-gathering assisted these activities carried out by the CJTF into a success where the rate of state's excess military force was eliminated and the members of the insurgents were easily isolated from their localities<sup>33</sup> (Dan-Azumi and Azeez 2018, p. 42; Yahaya 2020, p. 43; Agbiboa 2019, p. 17)

Furthermore, on the other hand, the primacy of the strategic presence of CJTF were considered as an instrumental effect in isolating the insurgents link to the areas such Borno, Maiduguri and Yobe. Where, the further dependence on most rural communities in these regions were disrupted. This was witnessed in various crucial role played by CJTF which countered the Boko Haram's hideouts and exposing the insurgent's military plans before they were actualized (Nigerian Institute of Security Studies, 2015, P. 3)<sup>34</sup> Thereby through their intense engagement in most regions such as Borno, Maiduguri and Yobe which was considered as the military stronghold of Boko Haram witnessed the further isolation of the insurgents. These lines of evidence demonstrated the instrumental role of the strategic presence of the CJTF forced the insurgents to decamp into the countryside whereby disrupting the insurgent's dependence on the rural communities such in Maiduguri (Ogene 2014)<sup>35</sup>

Such role was attributed to their integrated approach on maintaining various administrative checkpoints in local areas under the Boko Haram's military control. Thereby, such approach observed a significant impact on pushing Boko Haram out of the Maiduguri and other rural

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<sup>33</sup> Center for Civilian in Conflict (2017) 'Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria' Conflict <https://civiliansinconflict.org/> Accessed on 7 March 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Nigerian Institute of Security Studies (2015) 'Terror war: Civilian engagement stop the establishment of new camps, kill 3 terrorists, rescue 95 hostages; commentary efforts by the Civilian (JTF)' Press Library Clipping, pp 1-3.

<sup>35</sup> Ogene A (2014) 'Nigerian Vigilantes aim to rout Boko Haram' Aljazeera New. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2014/5/31/nigerian-vigilantes-aim-to-rout-boko-haram> retrieved on 20 May 2021.

centres specifically starting from mid-2013. (Amnesty International 2015, p. 12) These are major controlled territory from where the insurgents depend on for mobilization and human resources supplies. (Agbibo 2020, p. 364)

However, by disrupting the Boko Haram's military dependence in its control territory such as Maiduguri. This resulted into the resurface of Boko Haram in other interior side of the countryside such in Borno state from where the insurgent re-strategize its military attacks especially against many local communities as a widespread revenge tactics as a result of the strategic presence of CJTF in such region. (Hassan and Pieri 2018, p. 81)

To conclude, the information-centric approaches by the CJTF within the context of the theoretical strands of the possession of vital resources led to its success in significantly reducing the level of state violence within its communities. The existing empirical evidence points that the theoretical strands of the possession of vital resources by the CJTF and the strategic presence of this group within the armed conflict complemented their influences towards success. However, the latter strands on the strategic presence of CJTF saw an effect in mixed outcomes<sup>36</sup>. Thereby, by engaging in acts of gathering local information on the whereabouts of Boko Haram insurgents because of its possession of vital resources, CJTF successfully defended their local communities from the repressive attacks from the insurgents. Furthermore, by handling such vital information to the state's security forces assisted them in lowering the level of the state's indiscriminate violence to a minimal level. Where it effectively utilising their strategic presence, specifically in their local areas where the violence from both sides were prevalent towards ensuring physical protection from violence for most of their local communities in such areas.

Therefore, based on these accounts, the study concludes that both strands seem plausible because they both theoretically explain how the possession of vital resources such as high familiarity with the conflict context assisted the CJTF in leveraging their strategic presence (that is in terms of the maintenance of a defensive role) to combat the level of violence from

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<sup>36</sup> By mixed outcomes, I mean that the empirical evidence demonstrated that with the active involvement and the continued strategic presence of the CJTF, there were such defensive tactics within some local areas where the insurgents were active. To a great extent, this isolated and eliminated them from inside from their local communities. However, it equally increased the level of reprisal attacks.

both sides. Although the maintenance of a defensive role and strategic presence can equally increase the tendency of reprisal attacks from the insurgents as revenge tactics in long run. However, because of the vital resources possessed by the CJTF, it was able to utilize such possession of vital resources to their advantage. In this sense, leveraging on such resources assisted them in isolating the insurgents and their local links out of their communities and conversely, assisting in channelling the state's military force more effectively towards flushing out the insurgents out of their local communities.

Thereby, by leveraging on these two theoretical strands interchangeably, the CJTF utilizes these options towards success. Hence, implying that both theoretical strands complement each other. This was particularly the case within the CJTF where the combination of the information-centric approach adopted by it (Gana, 2020, p. 353; Gana 2019, p. 460), through the understanding of knowledge of its localities and high familiarity within the local terrains, assisted them in maintaining an effective civilian- based defence movement which was successfully able to identify, combat and isolate the insurgents from their local populations. Conversely, provided the state with the necessary information in order to curb the rate of use of state's indiscriminate military forces (Bamidele 2016, p. 125), which resulted into successfully curbing down the rate of physical violence from the warring activities of both sides against their local communities.

## **Chapter Six**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

In its simplest summary, this study focuses on explaining the success of a particular civilian-based defence movement mobilized for physical protection from violence during the armed conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram insurgents in north-eastern Nigeria. By forming civilian security movements, local communities were able to leverage their intrinsic values. By intrinsic values, I mean that the formation of the civilian- based defence movement can be utilized as a communal approach to reshape and recondition the interactions between the major warring parties in their own favour, whereby by positioning themselves strategically and utilizing the vital resources within their possession, the local population has the option of

using such civilian- based defence movement to a great extent to successfully protect and defend their local population from violence. However, these lines of argument have its own critics because armed conflict settings are very unlikely to be the same. Hence, an extreme armed conflict setting with highly fragmented interaction among multiple actors might give way to intense situations where the use of local armed groups such as the formation of civilian security movements is unlikely to be successful in defending and protecting the local population from violence. Hence, although the civilian- based defence movement mobilized for physical protection from violence during the armed conflict can be successful, examining other contextual factors such as the one raised above which can contribute towards a success or failure for such mobilization remains an open area for future research.

## **6.2 The implication and Limitation of the study**

This study focused on explaining the success of a particular civilian- based defence movement mobilized for physical protection from violence during the armed conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram insurgent in north-eastern Nigeria. The implications stemming from the entire body of the study aimed at an attempt towards contributing to discussions on existing theoretical framework focused on the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency literatures, with the aim of dissecting these literatures empirically and analytically in order to seek ‘what explains the success of civilian- based defence movement. In this study, the key focus was on the CJTF in north-eastern Nigeria. Although this particular case study under the lens here remains essential owing to the fact that such civilian security movements prove to be effective and necessary for most local populations in armed conflicts where state internal security assistance remains fragile or ineffective and external assistance is also ineffective. Thus, success of the CJTF in providing physical protection for most of the civilian communities within the armed conflict between Boko Haram and Nigeria’s government contributes to shading more lights on the existing understanding on civilian- based defenses movement in general. Hence, existing as a proactive local initiative driven by a citizenry-communal response towards ensuring their own safety which invariably alters our understanding on security provision as a unitary effort done solely by the state or an external form done by the international communities especially for civilians population in armed conflict. In a nutshell, this case study has twofold policy implication. Firstly, it broadens our understanding on civilian- based defenses movement in general and the different dichotomies surrounding their existence. Secondly, it shows how the security initiative horned by local communities can effectively tackle insecurity threats and proves to be a vital channel of protection from violence.

Although, there is still yet to be a uniform theory explaining such trajectories of events raised above academically.

Hence, like any other opaque concept that is often misconstrued as a state's initiative, providing a ground-breaking theory explaining their success will remain critical in order to understand their essential role towards filling in the gaps where the internal state is fragile or external assistance is ineffective. In end, although this study tentatively tested some existing theoretical framework within the case study of the CJTF, the envisioned implication from the research approaches and aims was generally aimed at an empirical discussion that can contribute towards the possibility of a new general theory to study the rise of civilian-based defense movement and successful impacts in armed conflict. Specifically, their successful impacts as a communal approach for physical protection from violence for their local communities.

However, by focusing on explaining the success of a single case study without a solid comparison to another similar case studies, the explanatory discussions emanating from this case study cannot be generalized beyond this particular case study. Hence, this is a limitation of this study.

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