

“Sweat is invisible in the rain”: Civilian Joint Task Force and counter-insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Political, ethnic and religious conflict has given rise to insurgency groups employing a variety of strategies worldwide. In Nigeria, civilians in strife-torn Borno State have formed a number of counter-insurgency (COIN) groups, among which the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) has emerged as a major player. The group began in 2009 as a simple call for volunteers, and now numbers over 26 000 men and women. While research has been conducted on other COIN groups, little is known of CJTF. Concerns have been raised about the CJTF metamorphosing into an ethnic militia, accused of human rights abuses, robbery, rape and hooliganism. Despite these reported atrocities, local people support them, regarding them as unsung heroes. The study investigates the group's potential as a useful counter insurgency measure, using David Galula's COIN theory to analyse the group's actions and to contest the dualistic understanding of conventional vs unconventional, local peacebuilding approaches. The study adopts a qualitative, ethnographic methodology, locating the research in the context of global development and security discourse. The study aims to establish the value of the CJTF COIN group, to position unconventional local COIN as a viable complementary to conventional methods and to proffer clues as to how security initiatives may more successfully combat Islamic insurgency in Nigeria. The study employed both primary and secondary data. Field work for the study was carried out for six months between 2018 and 2019 in Maiduguri Metropolis and its environs in Borno State.

Keywords:

Kato da Gora or Durza Ka, Boko Haram, insurgency, counter-insurgency, northeastern region, Nigeria

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Introduction

Insurgency and terrorism are a major source of insecurity across the globe. In the contemporary world, where inter-state wars are fading away, the majority of new wars are being waged mostly within nation-states by insurgent groups operating for social, economic, religious, political and ethnic reasons (Isichei, 1987, pp. 194–208; Adesoji, 2010, pp. 85–108; Adesoji, 2011, p. 99; Dambazau, 2014; Oyewole, 2015, pp. 428–432; Akinola, 2015, pp. 1–29). In other words, this development is borne out of intense mobilisation of social, economic, political, religious and ethnic groups for violence and insurgency (Osumah, 2013, pp. 536–560; Abdullahi, 2015, p. 59; Okeke-Uzodike and Onapajo, 2015, pp. 49–70; Onuoha, 2010, pp. 134–151; Maiangwa, 2017, p. 12). A significant aspect of the literature on such insurgency is centred on the challenges the insurgents pose to counter-insurgency efforts in many states (Nagl, 2002; Sani, 2011; Muzan, 2014, p. 217).

One of the notorious and violent insurgency groups, in the north-east, has been Boko Haram (BH), which has killed a large number of locals in Borno State. In 2009, a violent insurgency broke out within the state on issues such as the implementation of the *Salafi* doctrine in the caliphates; claims of religious supremacy; corruption among the political leaders; and the fear of religious domination (Adesoji, 2010, pp. 85–108; 2011, pp. 99–119). To counter the BH insurgency, the locals, in Borno communities, put together the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Eventually, COIN operations turned out to be a collaboration between the military forces and the CJTF across urban and rural communities; and they are armed with dynamite, sophisticated guns, spears, cutlasses and charms (Idris *et al.*, 2014, p. 1; Hassan, 2015, p. 1; International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3). Vigorous debates have ensued on the alliance between the CJTF and the state security forces, in advancing the COIN operation in Borno State. However, violent insurgency has lasted for over ten years, having a visible impact on the society with serious implications for peace building, security and development in the state and beyond.

In the face of devastating BH operations, the Borno State government formally endorsed the CJTF, though as youth vanguard programmes, which culminated in the forging of pragmatic COIN strategies (Idris *et al.*, 2014, p. 1; Hassan, 2015, p. 1; International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5). However, over the years, in spite of the joint COIN operations between the collaborators, there still exists deep-seated mutual distrust and some uneasiness in their relations (Higazi, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2014, p. 4; Kassim, 2015, pp. 173–200). They have even assumed a posture of notoriety and created COIN challenges for the communities. On several occasions, they have been fingered in acts of hooliganism, robbery, vandalism, rape and thuggery (Maiangwa, 2017, p. 15; Ganiu, 2018). Nevertheless, the CJTF has remained armed and strong, and are increasing in size. It is curious that in spite of these nefarious activities, the locals still want the CJTF around them, largely out of deep-seated suspicion of each other and fear of possible attacks. The concern of the locals is that if the CJTF is disarmed and disbanded, they would be left unprotected and therefore vulnerable to the roughshod tendencies of the Nigerian military forces.

Because of the effectiveness and activeness of the CJTF group in COIN operations, they are therefore considered as a necessity for the survival of locals in the state. To the locals in Borno State, “sweat is invisible in the rain.” The pertinent questions arising, therefore, are: how did the CJTF emerge? What accounts for the enduring presence of CJTF? What does the continued trust in the CJTF by the locals of Borno State, in spite of their antediluvian activities, say about the state? What should be the role of the CJTF in post-COIN operations? These are the questions this study seeks to answer.

Methodology and research design

In order to investigate and empirically analyse the drivers of peace and security in the north-eastern region of Nigeria, a qualitative case study-oriented research design was employed. A case study, by definition, entails rich, empirical inquiries that investigate contemporary phenomena in-depth and within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not evident (Yin, 2014; Gerring, 2016). By emphasising the study of a phenomenon, within its real-world context, the case study method favours the collection of data in natural and insurgency settings, rather than relying on “derived” data (Bromley, 1986, p. 23). From the perspective of this study, the main strengths of a single case study are at least three-fold. First, I utilise a single qualitative case study design in order to focus on detailed, in-depth data collection from multiple sources in a specific location, and for a particular group (Bryman, 2008; Robson, 2002), local actors (inhabitants) and CJTF actors (members) in the north-eastern region of Nigeria’s COIN process. A single case study approach is particularly valuable for studying the pathways to peace and security, through the use of the locals (CJTF members) in the region, as it allows for attention to the historical context, which is important for an in-depth analysis. As Gerring (2007, p. 1) explains, a single case study approach such as the one presented here can be more valuable than studies that pursue fleeting knowledge from a large number of contexts. We gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part.

Second, the decision to apply a single qualitative case study approach was also based on the fact that while the rare process of insurgency success as observed in the north-eastern region of Nigeria is not fit for statistical testing, it still holds great potential for qualitative analysis and theory development (George and Bennett, 2005) and also the research was carried out in a volatile region where the battle is still ongoing. Third, and perhaps, the overarching reason for adopting the single case study approach is that it does not run the risk of ‘conceptual stretching’ (Sartori, 1970, 1984), which is a problem often confronted by statistical and large comparative studies that subject quite dissimilar cases to “one-size-fits-all” analytical frameworks. Moreover, the single case study approach allows for high levels of internal validity because it enables the researcher to identify and analyse indicators that best capture the underlying theoretical concepts. However, the case study also suffers from some weaknesses. These include: bias in case selection, indeterminacy problems, and low external validity. In the context of this research, I address these shortcomings by a focused logic of case selection and very specific objectives in the actual case study research.

Sources of data for this research

The field work for this study was carried out in Borno State, inhabited mainly by Hausa and Kanuri people. In order to conduct the research and gather the data required for this article, several research tools were used. First, I engaged in an extensive desk study, reviewing the existing literature, and collecting secondary data on COIN from all the sectors involved in the CJTF, including their headquarters, in order to broaden my knowledge of the empirical terrain and be able to identify existing knowledge and analytical gaps. This basic research method was complemented with 12 months of fieldwork in Borno State, during which four methodological approaches were used: semi-structured interviews, archival research/process tracing, focus group discussions (FGDs), and non-participant observation. Though the four methods, in themselves, present an incomplete picture, the triangulation strategy (see Denzin, 1978, 2006), which was particularly employed made it possible to construct a comprehensive account of the dynamics of COIN in the region since 2009. First, I

conducted 120 interviews with two groups of actors, broadly defined: (1) local (i.e. the inhabitants) and (2) CJTF actors. The first group consisted of actors originating from among the inhabitants who were knowledgeable about the project or played important roles in the pre-insurgency and insurgency period. These included; five categories of locals, namely: commanders and members of CJTF sectors; members of the public, including traditional rulers, chiefs, elders, youths; government officials responsible for policy formulation to address the violent insurgency, COIN operatives, and members of non-governmental organisations working in the area. The second group consisted of state security officials, who had worked in the region and Borno since the Boko Haram insurgency began. These included members of CJTF, top leaders such as Junril Gunda, legal officer, Mohammed Jafar, the (then) overall chairman and leader of the CJTF and Adamu Buba, the deputy chairman and leader of the CJTF, operational in the Headquarters, Borno State.

In order to guard against bias and reflect diverse perspectives, the semi-structured interviews, at multiple sites in the 12 sectors (offices) of the CJTF, including their headquarters in Maiduguri Metropolis, were conducted from July 2018 to May 2019, with the aim of obtaining a wide range of perspectives. On average, the interviews typically lasted between 60 minutes and covered a broad range of issues depending on the respondent's experience or expertise. Out of 120 participants, 60 were locals (inhabitants). The remaining 60 consisted of members of the CJTF group. Apart from conducting interviews, I also collected documentary and/or archival information in Borno State. Archival resources are especially useful for the case study construction, as they are stable, broad, and exact (Yin, 2011). The bulk of this took place at the Centre for Human Resources Development, Centre for Trans-Saharan Studies (University of Maiduguri), and National Archives, Borno State. Other archival sources were the home offices of the CJTF in various areas in north-eastern Nigeria, to get materials such as security reports, memoranda, minutes of meetings and other authority reports, where I spent a few weeks reviewing thousands of valuable pages of unpublished documents. These documents provided a wealth of information on the processes and dynamics through which COIN policies were discussed, negotiated, and implemented by both local (inhabitants) and CJTF (members) actors in Borno. Finally, in addition to interviews, archival research, and process tracing, this article is also grounded in observation of non-participants and focus group discussions (FGDs). In analysing the data, transcripts of interviews with local (inhabitants) and CJTF members were coded in order to identify key themes and issues arising from the data. It became clear that the emergent analytic categories corresponded well with the three findings presented in the introduction, but I will limit my discussion, in this article, to the role of the CJTF counter-insurgency group and the broader community in COIN process. However, before diving into the discussion of the key findings, I first (briefly) provide the causes of inhabitants or CJTF intervention in COIN in Borno State as a necessary first step, in order to set the historical scene for ensuing discussions about the pathways to peace and security in Borno State.

Theoretical framework and its interpretations

The literature on the COIN approach is very rich and has attracted considerable scholarly debate and several seminal studies (Galula, 1964; Kitson, 1971; Kilcullen, 2005, p. 597; Creveld, 2006, p. 241; Shultz, 2008, p. 88; Zambarnardi, 2010, pp. 21–34; Sergio, 2012; Seegers, 1990, p. 203; Gawthorpe, 2017, pp. 839–852). These studies are generally based on tenets set down by the military forces with one main goal, which is to energise the locals to demonstrate their involvement in COIN operations in their region in line with their own perspectives and plans. Scholars like Galula (1964)

and Crevelled (2006, p. 241) suggest that the changing face of COIN operations is not hidden and it, obviously, shows that regular approaches do not succeed any longer. Therefore, this study adopts David Galula's theory of COIN. The theory identifies two approaches to COIN, direct and indirect. While the direct approach advocates strictly military tactics, the indirect approach emphasises incorporating locals in the fight. The most essential element of the idea is its advancement of the notion that a COIN operation is about local alliance or support, and that the military assumes just a single role out of many (Galula, 1964).

COIN is a holistic system-of-systems approach designed and implemented to guarantee protection within a state, ideally with an existing government. The Galula COIN approach is locals-driven, and it is suggested on the assumption that it is more critical to gain support from the locals in defeating large numbers of insurgents. Essentially, the objective is to secure genuine contribution and support at the local level for the military forces to accomplish long-lasting achievements. It is important to note that the strength of a locals-driven COIN operation lies in it being home-grown, with the natives' own quality idea and initiative. However, it should be approached from two sides. In accordance with the principle of COIN operation; maintaining the domination of military forces is vital, with a specific end-goal to produce open and lawful help. Yet, the locals can also demonstrate local initiative in the COIN operation by giving support in the areas of shortcomings (Galula, 1964).

The incorporation of intelligence and information is another quality of the COIN idea (Kilcullen, 2005, p. 597), as it prioritises the need for intelligence gathering and sharing with the end-goal of knowing the adversary. The specific purpose is to aid the process of finding, targeting and contradicting the foe, adequate intelligence is essential, and it must be accessed through a local group, e.g. the CJTF. The alliance approach of the COIN idea is hinged on the locals that are living among the insurgents, bearing in mind the end-goal of eliminating all factors that may lead to insurgency. To eliminate all forms of guerrilla fighting, it is essential to conceive COIN as a fundamental instrument for a sustained partnership of the forces in battle.

In summary, COIN is a more strategic approach for the military, as it is versatile and applicable in an extensive variety of conditions, but it requires alliance ahead of time. COIN is also valuable for facilitating similar objectives for numerous actors during an emergency, as it combines distinctive approaches to countering insurgents and unifying the purpose and focus of efforts. The idea itself enables all actors to constantly adjust the operation design according to the prevailing necessities. It is pertinent to note that activities that are associated with an effective COIN architecture go beyond the military forces to include consultations maintenance of essential services, local administration, and restoration of state authority, promotion of economic growth and encouragement of reconciliation (Galula, 1964).

To Fitzsimmons (2008, p. 337–365) and Hazelton (2017, pp. 80–113), collaboration, partnership and enrolment in local COIN groups, as well as sustenance of such groups after insurgency, are usually influenced by five fears. These include: the fear of extinction; the fear of assimilation; the fear of domination by another violent insurgent group; fear for the safety and security of lives and property, amidst aggressive activities; and the fear of being a victim once more. When these fears are laced with hatred, the end-product is mobilisation against violent insurgent group action. This is why COIN groups employ different strategies in different communities, performing many roles ranging from acting as auxiliary fighting forces to information gathering networks. These considerations are still lacking in existing relevant academic works analysing the level of partnership in

COIN operations. To all intents and purposes, the emergence and continued existence of the CJTF in communities in Borno State derive largely from the five fears enunciated by Kilcullen (2005, p. 597). This reality has created serious post-COIN security dilemmas amongst the inhabitants of all the communities in the state.

There is a way that David Galula's theory of COIN operations can be adapted to capture the essence of alliance, partnership and collaboration between military forces and the CJTF, a relationship that has led to the formation and retention of the civilian counter-insurgency group in the first place. Originally streamlined into the body of literature on international security by Hazelton (2017, pp. 80–113) to capture the peculiarities of inter-state warfare, the theory can be domesticated to capture COIN operations at the local level. The theory originally argues that nations go into alliance with the locals. It is anchored on four basic principles: power aggregation; security proximity; offensive intention; and offensive capabilities (Hazelton, 2017, pp. 80–113).

Power aggregation refers to the relative power of the perceived enemy. National security proximity means the nearness of the security forces to the locals. Only proximate locals can pose major security threats. Offensive intention indicates the nature of the insurgency threat to locals or the conveyer. Does it have an offensive nature? Is it effective? Lastly, does it have the ability to launch attacks? That is, what is its strength in terms of military power and capability? The emergence and existence of the CJTF could be likened to a group in search of peaceful coexistence and protection of the locals against BH's violent aggression. To cap it all, in the estimation of the locals in Borno State, CJTF elements are relatively aggressive, and with access to weapons, they are in a position to launch attacks on the locals after the BH insurgency.

To ward off the impending threat from the CJTF, the locals in Borno need to relatively depend on the Nigerian military forces. It is noteworthy that the theory accentuates the COIN approach and the locals' initiatives in the fight against insurgency aimed at achieving better living within their communities. This notion widens the cooperation and commitment linkages to include not just the military forces, but also the locals. The veracity of this theoretical adaptation will be explored and demonstrated in what follows.

The emergence of the CJTF

There is a growing viciousness in the violent aggressor, the '*Jama'at Ahl Al-sunnah li'l-da'wah wal-Jihad*', globally known as BH, which some also refer to as an association of people of the '*Sunna*' for proselytisation and armed struggle. While the violent insurgency evolved as BH, because of its resistance to mainstream and western influences, its activities increased after separating from Salafi/Wahhabi movements in Borno State, which had constantly challenged the *Tijaniyya* and *Qadiriyya* groups since the late 1970s (Bamidele, 2017, p. 85; Ganiu, 2018). Their religious belief system draws specifically from *Salafi* thoughts, whose adherents worship Allah, based on the standards set by the Prophet Muhammad, and its first three adherents (Maiangwa, 2018).

The founding thoughts of the *Salafiyya* in the mid-twentieth century exhibited a solid innovator streak, encouraging instructive change and the acquisition of logical and instinctive knowledge (Ganiu, 2018). It is noteworthy that the BH's belief system condemning mainstream training and any administration or common administrative work is inconsistent with the *Salafi* doctrine (Adesoji, 2010, p. 85).

The government, having captured and murdered Muhammad Yusuf, who, at that time, was the leader of BH, was aware of the group and its violent activities, and the implemen-

tation of the *Salafi* doctrine. However, it did not make any substantial attempt to put an end to their activities. Thus, BH, at the early stage, in July 2009, using unlawful means, opted for overwhelming coercive power. In that month, it murdered more than 1,000 individuals in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital (Ganiu, 2018). The insurgency intensified their activities in late 2010, with the emergence of a new leader, Abubakar Shekau.

The name BH has become a cover for more extensive criminal actions such as political thuggery and banditry, with a few political assassinations in Borno during the 2011 (Ganiu, 2018). BH is a highly undefined violent insurgency group. While it may be obvious that BH is decentralised or divided, it is certain that it has retained a level of coordination, through the *Shura Council* (Zamalak, 2018). It is obvious that the support base of BH has stretched past the ideological core that started the battle.

The death of Muhammed Yusuf signalled the commencement of a full-scale BH insurgency that has lasted for over 10 years. Within a few months, BH swept through several communities and laid to waste Chibok, Gwazo, Gamboru, Damboa, Munguno, Konduga, Ngala, and so on. This BH attack was dependent on the issues of the propagation of the *Salafi* doctrine, the implementation of Sharia law, and the establishment of caliphates in Borno State. The communities in the state became a problem, because they were housing members of BH. The main trigger of BH was the killing of the leader and the founder of the group, Muhammed Yusuf, in Maiduguri, which led to an initial protest by the BH members. The police stations got burnt and the locals concluded that it was done by BH. Their incessant attacks were therefore labelled as revenge missions (Ganiu, 2018). Although the BH transformation into a violent insurgency group came as a sudden eruption, the locals of the communities in Borno State had to brace themselves for urgent COIN action. But it was apparent that the military COIN was feeble and grossly incapable of warding off the superior BH, especially in the aspect of intelligence gathering and firepower. In other words, the locals considered the effort of the military forces to be ineffective.

The determination to fight back, and the frustration with the military forces' lack of capacity to prevent the incessant attacks, led to the setting up of what is now known as the 'CJTF'. The CJTF was at the forefront of COIN operations, even as it was not battle-tested and had no prior knowledge of violent insurgency, as a countervailing force against BH. In the face of the military's defeat in the hands of the better-armed, motivated and dreaded BH, the locals in the state decided to hurriedly set up their own volunteer group as a supplementary countervailing force. Thus, the CJTF was born as the locals' approach to counter-insurgency. Over time, the CJTF has passed through many stages as a result of changes in the modality of attacks by the BH insurgents. The group had been pushed to the wall, having to fight back, and swearing by the Holy Qur'an, to expose the Boko Haram members (Zamalak, 2018). As revealed in various interviews, the Borno State government has approved the CJTF, under a programme called, 'Borno State Youth Vanguard (BSYV).

A Child of Necessity

The CJTF came as a 'child of necessity,' as compelled by the menace of BH, given its attacks on innocent citizens of Borno State, and the incapacity of the Nigerian military forces in the early days of insurgency. It is worthy of mention that the government security men arrested and tortured innocent locals for allegedly harbouring miscreants. Thus, innocent locals were dying daily from both BH attacks and apprehension by the military forces. In order to arrest the situation, the CJTF came into existence. Its formation is legitimised by the severe consequences suffered by the locals (Haass, 2009, pp.

9–10; Ganiu, 2018). It took some processes for the group to be well established, which started with a call for volunteers by locals. The call was championed by a man called Lawan Jafar, and later, a large number of locals. One of the founders, Shehu Ganiu, who served as the chairman of the CJTF said:

Before this time, the innocent locals were at the mercy of the military forces, on the one hand, who are arbitrarily detaining and executing them, and the BH insurgents, on the other hand, who were rampantly killing them. The rate of casualties led to the shift in the local's support, reluctantly, from the military forces to CJTF in Kanuri language. We have become valued and promoted by the military forces. With this, the CJTF received the recommendation and approval of the military forces to continue with their COIN operation. That was how the initiative of local-based COIN operations of the CJTF spread to the neighbouring communities in Maiduguri, Borno. Our COIN operation, since then, has led to the apprehension of a good number of BH insurgents. We even sacrifice our current employment to protect our communities and some of us are in the university and some graduate and government workers (Ganiu, 2018).

Four major realities are evident in the foregoing. First, some of the pioneer members of the CJTF did not join as a result of idleness or unemployment. Rather, their joining was born out of deep feelings to volunteer to protect the locals from BH attacks. This situation tallies with the primordial theory of local COIN apparatus. Second, the CJTF formation in Borno State drew lots of educated locals, showing that the group was not entirely made up of the flotsam and jetsam of the urban and rural communities. Third, the formation was a decision of the locals of the communities in the state. It has therefore enjoyed maximum support from the government, politicians and sundry elites within the communities. Fourth, the CJTF was not only out for BH; it also emerged to ward off visible organised crime or threats. It is, therefore, not an anti-state group, making it quite different from insurgency groups in the country.

As more locals volunteered to join the CJTF, there was a need to properly organise and train them to engage in COIN operations. Another respondent confirmed that the CJTF is completely voluntary to join, and it is for the purpose of assisting the military forces, in spite of some ethnicity-based refusal. Before enlisting in the group, the volunteers converged and voluntarily took an oath, with the Holy Quran and the Holy Bible respectively, against any form of betrayal, mistrust, sabotage or leakage of information, and to passionately fish out the bad eggs (insurgents) who have imposed untold hardship on the communities in the name of false religious teachings. The Muslim inductees took their oath before the Shehu of Bornu, in his palace (Jafar, 2018).

When Baba Lawan Jafar, (president of the CJTF) took up the challenge, he was a trader from Maiduguri. For volunteering to lead the training, he was promptly given the military title of General Commander of the CJTF COIN operation front. A headquarters was established in Maiduguri, with 12 sectors headed by Sector Commanders to train the recruits (Jafar, 2018). The recruits were made to undergo rigorous training on the use of weapons and COIN general rules of operation. Recourse to formal military COIN training followed the inability of the first set of the CJTF operatives to curtail the advances of BH. By then, several communities, on both sides of the violent insurgency of BH, were already in ruins and thousands of locals had been displaced. The military forces' strategy proved grossly inadequate and unsuitable to stop or even mitigate the violent activities of the insurgency group (Muzan, 2014, pp. 217–243; Olanisakin, 2015). So, the people were left to organise their own defence.

The CJTF COIN operation is funded by the Borno State government (Ganiu, 2018). Over 60 vehicles were given to the CJTF, showing massive financial and logistical support.

In addition to this effort, it received donations from the locals (Mustapha, 2018). In a commitment to end the crisis of insurgency, the Borno State government placed the entire 1,857 CJTF members on a monthly allowance of N15,000 in the initial period, and later increased it to N20,000.00 monthly in 2019 (Mustapha, 2018). In addition, the CJTF receives support from different foundations and partners that believe in their COIN operation. For example, the Dangote Group provided 30 units of 2-bedroom flats to the families of the CJTF members who lost their lives in the fight against BH (Jonah, 2018).

In the same way, the Nigeria Institute of Management (NIM) has absorbed 50 members of the CJTF into its empowerment scheme and proficiency training support programme. Similarly, the International Community of Red-Cross (ICRC) trained 52 members of the CJTF in professional programmes, such as first aid acquisition, and death – body management. After the training, the personnel were engaged in community service in various departments, based on their fields of training. The United Nations Development Programme also partnered with the CJTF, providing training, skill acquisition and empowerment for about 4,000 members from 2014 to date (Hassan and Pieri, 2018; Ganiu, 2018). In a nutshell, the CJTF has received considerable support, encouragement and relief materials worth millions of Naira from the Borno State government, in addition to salaries and allowances. Among these is the allocation of 150 plots of land to the families of CJTF members who lost their lives in violent insurgency orchestrated by BH (Ganiu, 2018).

‘Kato da Gora’ or ‘Durza Ka’ identity in Borno State?

The CJTF was called ‘Durza Ka’ or ‘Kato da Gora’. This is derived from the fact that the group almost completely started their COIN operation with the use of sticks, bows and arrows, machetes, daggers, and dane-guns, among others. Therefore, the initiative for the locally-based COIN came as a mobilisation strategy, when the BH insurgency became violent in their operations. At this point, reliance on the military forces seemed not to be enough; so, they decided to create the CJTF and develop alliance with official COIN operations for protection of their communities. As captured by Haruna (2018):

CJTF is just a group of volunteers who took their sticks according to native language Kanuri (gora) in which they use in fighting the BH. Thus, what compel them to kick against the activities of BH, due to frustration and frequent attacks on people. Inspired by the zeal of CJTF government now recognize their efforts and gave them support.

The locally-driven COIN initiative contained in the foregoing statement refers to the spontaneous response out of frustration by the locals, leveraging on their familiarity with the terrain, the local people and their values in the areas under the control of BH (Atoyebi, 2014; Idris *et al.*, 2014; Kolo, 2014; Campbell, 2015; Damina, 2017; Maiganwa, 2017). Community-led groups, such as the CJTF, are symbolic and critical to the operations of the military forces. It is believed that the CJTF serves as a lower-level security interface with local communities and as a reflection of the deepening of local content and context in the war against BH. Some respondents alluded to the use of locally-made weapons and expressed support for their use. According to “Operational Commander - Logistics” B. K. Mustapha, one of the leaders of the CJTF:

CJTF has introduced local initiatives, skills and community-based COIN plan, which include knowledge of the languages and terrain and other organized effort to support military forces. On the other hand, the military forces are recruited from them, irrespective of their language or ethnicity. So, when the military forces are deployed to any of the insurgency communities, they encounter the problem of language and knowledge of the terrain, which lead to difficulty

getting secret information and intelligence, making the BH insurgents to have multiple steps ahead of them. It is evident that this problem constituted the main challenge which the military forces faced in its early operation because it made it difficult for them to distinguish the innocent locals from the insurgents (Mustapha, 2018).

In the same vein, Zamalak (2018) is of the opinion that:

The conditions that necessitated taking this oath include: avoiding betrayal of the group or person in the cause of the operation; showing honesty to God and with members of the group; shunning interpersonal hatred within the group; avoiding ethnic differences, thus, maintaining a common purpose; negating political interference; avoiding stealing and denouncing segregation, even when the member was not a member of one's family, community or relation.

The foregoing suggests a syncretic locally-based COIN initiative. Members of the CJTF swore that whatsoever was recovered from insurgency would be made public, returned, or handed over to the appropriate authorities. This was to show to the authorities that the group's COIN operation was entirely created to serve the locals, and ensure their liberation from the influx of the BH menace and attacks. This approach is necessary in gaining the trust and support of the locals, and assuring them that their paramount interest is to protect the various communities affected, and to secure all the communities in Borno.

As part of the COIN operations against BH, the local initiative CJTF combines with the military forces. Recourse to local support, in the form of locally-based COIN operation, with an overt display of its paraphernalia, has become the trend in insurgency situations in Nigeria, particularly since the emergence of BH in early 2009 (Sani, 2011; Kassim, 2015 p. 173). Studies have also linked the support provided by the locally-driven CI operations for residents' protection to violent insurgency formations and movements in places like the Sons of Iraq or the Afghan Local Police (Metz, 2007; Kiras, 2010; Miakinkoy, 2011, p. 647; Constable, 2013; Marty, 2016).

In this case, the locally-based COIN initiative was invoked as a mobilisation weapon, packaged with the promise of effective protection. In Borno State, this style of mobilisation drew (and still draws) a lot of locals into the fold of the locally-grown COIN initiative of the CJTF, since there is a promise that almost guarantees their protection. In several instances, the protection of locals breeds unwholesome COIN operation such as human rights abuse, robbery, rape and hooliganism. Nevertheless, the promises and, indeed, the presence of the locally-based COIN initiative, and the military forces, have encouraged more CJTF elements to enlist in the fight against BH in Borno State (Ibrahim and Bala, 2018; Ganiu, 2018). This has become quite a major mobilisation tool in the hands of the recruiters.

The military and the home-grown CJTF have become the major catalyst leading to the successful mobilisation for COIN operations against BH in all the communities in the state. This has had three major effects. The first is that it has brought confidence and the aura of invincibility to the CJTF, during COIN operations. Second, the locals have become convinced of the efficacy of their locally-based COIN initiative. In this regard, the reduction of BH activities is believed to have been a product of the combination of the traditional or locally-based counter-insurgency initiative by the CJTF and the military forces, with the former rating much higher than the latter. The issue here is that the locals are considered to be more effective in intelligence gathering, since they are familiar with the terrain, the residents and their values. The third effect is that it has made the CJTF heroes of the COIN against BH in the estimation of the locals of all the communities.

The sense of heroism explains why the CJTF has continued to be relevant in the on-going counter-insurgency operations. Thus, after over ten years of significant involvement in counter-insurgency against BH, the CJTF is still very visible and active in all communities. However, lately, the CJTF story has entered another phase.

Durza Ka: Productive Results 'with' and 'without' Military Forces

During the COIN operations against BH, the CJTF entered a new phase, in which the government of Borno State did not do enough to take effective control. The immediate response of the government was unprepared local support, launched by the setting up of a composite security group known as the CJTF. This strategy proved grossly inadequate. Apart from the problems of poor funding, poor intelligence coordination, corruption and ineffective leadership, the CJTF also suffered from the lack of discreet surveillance networks and whom to work for (Hamza and Sawab, 2013; Umar, 2018). They then became tools in the hands of traditional rulers, especially in some rural communities. The society started experiencing a high rate of criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, vandalism and thuggery. The situation was harmful for the communities until the Nigerian military forces started monitoring the activities of the CJTF, as part of COIN efforts. The Nigerian military forces also set up the COIN monitoring unit against community abuse. The CJTF was, therefore, hired to protect the community leaders in the Borno axis (Adamu, 2018). A similar arrangement was made for the areas recovered from BH. This partly solved the problem of what to do with the CJTF elements that were fighting the insurgency. But it had serious implications.

The first is that it made the CJTF assume the function of national guard. This is an indictment concerning the capacity of the military forces in securing the entire state. The second is that it made the CJTF quite important and popular in the society. Third, it made the CJTF a profession, as it now depended on the monthly allocations sent from the Borno State capital. However, not all the CJTF elements could be accommodated in the arrangement. This created another problem, as there were now unemployed youths that had been trained in the use of arms and fortified, by experience, in the local COIN initiative. As expected, some of the members of CJTF have been incorporated into the military forces. As argued here, evidently, the CJTF was not an anti-state group (Stratfor, 2013).

The effects of these on the society are obvious. Most of the respondents agree that Borno State has never been the same since the reduction of the activities of BH. There has been an increase in reported cases of armed robbery, kidnapping and vandalism. Everybody in the area knows that this is the handiwork of the CJTF. The CJTF became very important during the elections, in the hands of politicians, who used some of them as thugs to foment trouble and aid violence, and to rig election results. But in spite of these negative trends of the CJTF, all the respondents across communities, in the state, still want them around. Why is this so?

Extensive interviews with members of the communities and the CJTF reveal major reasons the group is still tolerated. Jonah is one of the community leaders who justifies the continued existence of the CJTF, thus:

Successes have been recorded in the COIN operations and people can go about their businesses without fear. CJTF remains alert, monitoring the movement of strangers and visitors coming into cities, towns and the rural areas so as to prevent the insurgents from taking over the states' capitals. The success recorded is attributed to the collaboration of the military forces with the CJTF (Jonah, 2018).

Another respondent in Sector 8, Umar Mohammed, who happens to be one of the “commanders” of the CJTF in the COIN, says:

I am a member of CJTF. If the military forces are left alone to fight BH alone, the insurgents cannot be easily trounced, due to their inability to differentiate between the law-abiding locals and the insurgents.’ Whatever the misgivings of the military forces about the CJTF in the urban and rural communities in Borno under study, the military forces have frequently had to fall back on the information, directions and intelligence from the CJTF. The role of the CJTF includes fighting BH, exposing them and monitoring of local’s movement, because virtually all of the areas in the urban and rural that have CJTF and as such they know who is a stranger once he/she comes into their area and many insurgents members have been arrested through this means and a good numbers of weapons has been recovered from them (Mohammed, 2018).

Going by the analysis of the local security records, compiled by CJTF sectors and units in their headquarters, along Post Office Road, Maiduguri, the interventionist role of the group has been applauded, especially in view of the incapability of the military COIN approach to deal with BH in the state. They are appreciated for their stranglehold on BH and the retrieval and recapture of arms from 2013 to 2019.

In another interview, a respondent says:

In several instances, it is apparent that the CJTF has been responsible for security and community protection in the localities where the military forces never penetrated and this network has provided significant opportunity for the locals to fully engage in their counter-insurgency activities. The peace brought by the presence of the CJTF is one important factor to be reckoned with. People are now returning to their communities that were hitherto captured by Boko Haram. Many locals are now going back to their farms and other businesses (Musa, 2018).

One of the traditional rulers of a community in the state is of the opinion that the CJTF is indispensable to the communities. He says:

What the CJTF need is for government to strengthen them more, and for the locals to continue to give their support. He emphasised that no contentions have arisen amongst CJTF and military forces during operations in their various commands as the members enjoy working with the forces. CJTF sometimes act without the support of the military forces, especially in rural communities where the military forces are not available (Traditional Ruler, 2018).

A number of issues arise from the foregoing excerpts. One is the notion of the CJTF being perceived as COIN operatives. This sweeping perception is justified by the spate of COIN operations carried out by the group within the communities. For instance, the CJTF, in joint operations with military forces, retrieved 70 motorcycles stocked with explosives and small arms and light weapons together with 430 rifles and 870 pistols from BH in Gamboru; 300 AK47s and hundreds of locally-made dane guns from the insurgents in Zabarmari (Yusuf, 2014; Mustapha, 2018). On different occasions, many BH elements have been apprehended by the CJTF, without the involvement of the military. Also, in Biu area, the CJTF, in a joint operation, captured more than 20 BH fighters and seized 245 AK47 rifles from them. At the same time, in Bundun village, the CJTF seized 650 AK47s and 80 other rifles. In Durubajuwe, Wala and Rugga Fulani, 690 dane guns and 56 AK49 rifles were confiscated (Mustapha, 2018).

In conclusion, in the popular communities of Jeje, Diba and Huyum, BH insurgents have been flushed out of their hiding places by the CJTF working with the military forces. Over 23 of their hostages have been freed, and several ammos have been confis-

cated as well. Also, in Alagarno forest, the CJTF seized 12 vehicles, nine (9) AK47 rifles, 27 motorcycles, sniper rifles, three Fabrique Nationale rifles, a fabricated rocket bomb, a solar panel and five locally-made dane guns.' Additionally, the group unearthed a belt of 7.62mm (NATO) ammunition, containing 42 rounds and two multipurpose machine guns (Mustapha, 2018). This is a classic case of the local COIN initiative, as described in the works of David Galula.

Just to reiterate, the issue is the notion of a COIN initiative by the locals. The general argument of the locals is that the CJTF is made up locals who wanted to drive away BH insurgents, so as to bring protection of life and property to the residents in the land by themselves. The question of COIN operations happens to be at the heart of the tension among the locals, the military forces and the CJTF. And it is certain from the field work that the claims of effectiveness feature prominently in the statements of the respondents from the CJTF. Again, the fact of the locals' involvement in COIN operations is one major reason the CJTF is still very much in existence. The point here is that the people have sensed that if the CJTF is still around them, in alliance with military forces, BH cannot come at any time to launch an attack. In this wise, it is noted that only the CJTF has the capacity to prevent such from happening.

The third emergent issue here is the fear of impending attacks from CJTF. This is basically at the heart of the discourse. Research findings show a lot of occurrences of acts of human rights abuse, robbery, rape and hooliganism by the CJTF. But there is normalcy of relations among the locals, military forces and the CJTF which goes beyond the surface. Deep within the locals is mutual trust, as expressed by all the respondents. This tends to align with David Galula's COIN theory as the main driving force for the continued existence of the CJTF in Borno State. The four principles upon which the theory is anchored are present in the evidence provided above. Among the locals, fear of the CJTF is rife. Also, it is a fact that the group is proximate geographically. There is fear that the CJTF has the operational capacity to launch an attack at any time; and most importantly, the overwhelming majority of the locals are aware of the group's aggressive nature with ever-present offensive intentions.

CJTF and the Nigerian State

A pungent question is: what relationship exists between the CJTF and Nigerian state? As explained earlier, the CJTF is not an anti-state group. Upon formation, they did not express any misgivings about the Nigerian state. In all their activities, there was no launching of attacks on locals and government infrastructures, neither was there any accusation of marginalisation against the state. But the formation and continued existence of the CJTF bear an imprimatur of a fundamental problem in the Nigerian state. In the first instance, the formation of the CJTF was as a result of the failure of the military forces to rise to the security challenge that occurred in Maiduguri and its environs in 2009. It took the federal and state governments a few years before enhancing the alliance between the military forces and the CJTF, in their deployment for COIN operations. Moreover, the continued existence and relevance of the CJTF also bore significantly on the festering incapacitation of the military forces to secure the territory. That the locals pinned their hopes on the CJTF is an indication that the government has abdicated its duty.

Within the context of this study, the CJTF there is deeply entrenched in COIN operations, whose impact has been much felt, even as they invariably lead to unnecessary deaths and destruction at times. Just as they tend to justify their COIN operations, on the basis of fighting BH atrocities, members of the CJTF also claim to represent and defend victims of violent insurgent activities. But the attendant deaths in their COIN operations

are perhaps why enlightened members of the public hold CJTF in disdain. But their existence is definitely good for the COIN operations, based on findings. However, within the context of the Nigerian state, they have remained relevant, notwithstanding how odious and destructive they have become. As long as the Borno State remains incapable of rising to its responsibilities, the sweat will always be invisible in the rain, though, undeniably, they still remain relevant to the communities where they operate.

Conclusion

The continued presence of CJTF in the communities of Borno State in Nigeria has helped to degrade BH and force them out of the towns and communities which they previously occupied. The CJTF COIN operations may bring to the fore the post-BH challenges to the communities, in Borno State and Nigeria, where people have faced a serious dilemma arising from the official end of hostilities. The situation is compounded by the seeming helplessness of the locals, who are forced to live with the violent activities of the CJTF who purport to defend their interest by oppressing them. This dilemma is underscored by the absence of military forces everywhere. This study has dwelt, in its analysis on the paradox of the peaceful co-existence, and simultaneously, the support for the CJTF, which is no longer the gun-wielding group it used to be at the beginning of violent insurgency. They are now saddled with the task of securing the locals. But the field work shows that the outward appearance belies the ferocious fighting machine it could become, when the need arises. In essence, it represents a group in readiness for action, particularly against the BH insurgent group. It shows that what is obtained in the communities is relative peace with the simmering insurgency ready to erupt at the slightest provocation. When such an eruption happens, the sweat will certainly not be seen again.

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