

**NON STATE ACTORS AND INSECURITY IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA:
GAME-CHANGERS AND REGIME-CHANGERS**

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**Paper Presented at a Two Day High Level Summit on Security and Governance in
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Background

The provision of adequate security is a fundamental public good which all nations must strive to provide. Security of lives and property is the one of the fundamental aspects of social contract between the state and its citizens. So important is the provision of security that the effective delivery of other important public goods rest upon how well secured a nation is. Accordingly, it has been recognised that a capable state is one that has the attributes of not only being modern, strong, responsible and responsive but also one that is capable of effectively discharging its duties of delivering security, peace, prosperity and other essential services to its people (Ulimwengu, nd). However, the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999 coincided with rapid deterioration of the nation's internal security. Apart from the well known crimes (which are by no means less daunting) like armed robbery and burglary that characterized the major cities, newer forms of threats have began to emerge such as terrorism and kidnapping which have pervaded the entire country. While each region has its unique security challenge, it is the sum total of these security breaches that have made the country one of the most insecure nations of the world today. Scholars have advanced a number of reasons for the rising level of insecurity in Nigeria. These range from long years of military rule in the past to poor governance that has produced the large inequities between the rich and the poor that was occasioned by Nigeria's massive oil fortunes as well as religious extremism and intolerance (Ajaegbu, 2012; Adesoji, 2012; Abdu, 2013; Adams and Ogbonnaya, 2014). It is against this unfolding security scenario and fault lines created party politics in Nigeria especially since 1999 thrived on to further complicate the security situation by posing new threats. Against the backdrop of these multi-faceted causative factors, Nigeria's statutory security concerns have found it difficult to contend with the rising level of insecurity. Consequently, whether as products of poor governance or as genuine stakeholders helping to complement the efforts of the nation's security forces, non-state actors (from a variety of backgrounds) have become quite visible in the security arena of the country.

Recent trends in Nigeria suggest that crime appears to be on the increase generally. Available data for instance indicate that in 2011 only 31 percent of Nigerians reported being criminally victimized (Alemika, 2013). There is however a large spatial differentiation between the different geopolitical regions with even larger variations at the level of the states. According to the data the northeast region was the second safest region in the country (after northwest) with 27.5 percent respondents reporting personal criminal victimization. The two regions (ranking 5th and 6th respectively) were the only regions in the country with less than the national average (table 1). In the absence of

recent data on crime for comparison, the reported incidents of insurgency in the country (for which the northeast is noted) may be used as a surrogate. This when juxtaposed with other reported crime may help to explain the increase. For instance, the northeast with the highest burden of insurgency by JAS has over one million internally displaced persons

Table 1. Personal Victimization by Geopolitical Region, 2011

Region	Crime victimization (% yes)	Rank
Northeast	27.5	5 th
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Source: Adapted from Alemika (2013)

Unarguably, JAS' insurgency is probably the most significant and devastating security issue that has confronted Nigeria since after the civil war. Response to the insurgency by communities has in the short term brought relief but it appears to pose new challenges and threats to the northeast region and indeed Nigeria in the long term. The latter needs to be appropriately addressed to forestall a resurgence of the current security breach. This paper examines the phenomenon of non state actor involvement in the security of northeastern Nigeria. It is essentially a review of the role of the main players (non state actors) in the security of the region but also draws from observations and experiences of the author's living in the conflict ridden environment of northeastern part of Nigeria. The paper is divided into four main parts. A brief background to the paper is given in the first part while the second part discusses the typology of non state actors in the security of the northeast. In the third section a brief account of the nexus between poor governance and the evolution of non state actors. A case study of the Civilian JTF in Borno is contained in the final section.

Typology of Non State Actors in Security in NE Nigeria

Before examining the types of non-state actors in the northeast region it is first appropriate to make some conceptual clarifications on the use of the term itself. The growing desire for increased level of security by individuals, communities and institutions to fight organized crime has over the years resulted in the emergence of security outfits whether with government recognition or without. Non state actors are recognised as non statutory security organisations and form one of the five groups that

constitute the security sector in Nigeria (Abdu, 2013). Non state actors in security could therefore be conceptualised in this paper as organisations, groups or individuals whose activities are likely to affect the peaceful coexistence of people in communities. They may be helping to reduce crime and criminal tendencies in these communities or even aggravating it. The activities of non state actors in security matters may involve the use of weapons or some supernatural powers; they may sometimes be privately owned (private or for-profit organisations) or even working for certain vested interests such as political parties. With respect to the latter, non state actors are formed with the sole purpose of providing cover or security to party members/loyalists mostly by serving as threat to opponents in furtherance of the political ambitions of their benefactors. In terms of security, the division is often made between armed non state actors and those without arms to include the following:

- a) Rebel groups which have an expressed/stated incompatibility with the government
- b) Militia operating locally, based on support from an ethnic community or clan
- c) Warlords controlling geographical areas and populations
- d) Vigilante groups
- e) Civil defense forces, clearly operating outside state control
- f) Private companies offering security and military services (Caroline Holmqvist, quoted by Ulimwengu, nd)

Since armed non state actors can pose threats to the communities in which they operate, Adams and Ogbonnaya (2014) have suggested the term 'violent non-state actors' to refer to armed groups that are potentially dangerous so that they are clearly distinguished from those whose operations cause no harm and for which the term non violent non-state actors may be appropriate.

Given the above conceptual clarifications, the earliest non state actors in security of the northeast region of Nigeria are perhaps individuals. As in many other parts of Nigeria spiritualists including *Boka* (called *Babalawo* in the south west Nigeria), religious leaders and individuals with super natural powers¹ exist in most communities who are consulted in the identification of criminals in communities. Such spiritualists use no weapons but supernatural powers in carrying out their functions and so are dreaded by community members. While they still exist today, religious teachings especially, together with the overwhelming population in the towns and cities, as well as the organized nature of crime today have combined to render the services of spiritualists especially the *Boka* as largely irreligious and hence ineffective. This is why spiritualists

¹ For instance, Ali Kwara is believed to have supernatural power of identifying criminal elements by looking at their faces especially armed robbers. His supernatural power is believed to be not only workable but effective in crime detection and so he has even been 'hired' severally by the police to identify armed robbers in different communities not only in parts of northeast but northern Nigeria generally.

were also targeted by members of Boko Haram or *Jamaatu Ahlusunna Lidida'awati wal Jihad* (JAS), because their services were considered *haram* (forbidden). There has also been the existence of 'private security' organisations in the region. The first of such was Niger Guard Security owned by Mr W. R. Hallam, a former British colonial officer with its head office in Maiduguri. Established in the early 1970s, Niger Guard Security has offices in some parts of northeast as well as in Jos. Many other private security outfits have since sprung being found operating in all the states of the region. Private security outfits are hired by companies, banks and individuals but are more recently engaged in providing security to government organisations especially since 2004 when the federal government outsourced a number of public service jobs including watchman/guard cadre. To the extent that private security in the region do not handle firearms they can be seen to be trained watchmen hence potentially pose no real threats to the communities in which they serve.

With the increased level of insecurity especially from the 1990s saw the emergence of local vigilantes in both urban and rural areas to fight armed banditry along major highways and in cities of the northeast. While unemployed youths served as volunteers in the urban centres, hunters constitute the major recruits for local vigilantes in the rural areas; for this reason locally made guns, daggers, machetes and sticks etc. are often used as weapons for fighting crime. Local vigilantes have complemented statutory crime control and prevention agencies and therefore have received community and local government approval. Almost all local government areas in the northeast region have established local vigilantes with the youth constituting the bulk of their membership. Local vigilantes have not been operating without certain excesses. They have occasionally been found to be involved in petty thefts and related crime.

Governance and the Rise of Violent Non State Actors in the NE

Notwithstanding the involvement of local vigilantes in crime they are nevertheless perceived to be non violent by the general public. However, the most threatening are violent non state actors who owe their existence to the unfolding socio-economic and political events in the region. This includes urban based youth gangs, terrorists/insurgents and the more recent rise of 'anti-terrorist groups' that have come into existence through spontaneous transformation of many of the erstwhile youth gangs with a new resolve to fight insurgency but whose political standing and moral credentials are questionable. The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State and Adamawa State immediately come to mind here. In view of their potentials for violence attention is subsequently paid to these violent non state actors in the northeast. Based on these considerations, a list of violent non state actors is presented in table 2. It

should be noted that JAS is present in all the states of the region. More importantly, understanding the linkages between governance and the security of the region is necessary.

Table 2. Violent Non State Actors in the NE

State	Non state actor(s) in existence
Adamawa	'Yan Shinko, JAS, CJTF
Bauchi	Sara suka, JAS
Borno	ECOMOG, Civilian JTF, JAS
Gombe	'Yan kalare, JAS
Taraba	Banu Israel, JAS
Yobe	ECOMOG, JAS

Literature is replete with the linkage between poor governance and the rise of violent non state actors in the northeast. The relationship between socioeconomic conditions and crime has long been established (Galbraith, 1958, cited in Adisa, 1994). Accordingly the growing inequality between Nigerians and among the people of the northeast in particular may have been responsible for the level of insecurity in the region. Tables 3 and 4 present socioeconomic indicators of deprivation in Nigeria by region and the human development indicators for the northeast region respectively. It could be easily discerned from table 3 that the northeast region is the poorest of all the regions in the human development index in Nigeria. Among other issues, the reason for this could stem from the fact that the northeast has been regarded as the backwater of Nigerian politics being the most deprived of all the regions. In table 4 the performance of the states in the HDI are further x-rayed indicating that Bauchi and Yobe are well below the regional score in the HDI. The implications of this low ranking in the HDI are obvious with respect to insecurity. The high percentage of people (mostly children and youths) who are out of school when combined with a high unemployment rate may likely to have produced a very high number of people living in poverty. The implication is that if poverty does not directly drive people into crime and violent behavior, it fuels such outcomes. Thus even years before the emergence of JAS in the region, the Maiduguri – Potiskum and Maiduguri – Damboa – Biu road used to be notorious for armed robbery suggesting a massive circulation of small and light weapons in the region. With respect to the recent terrorism/insurgency, John Campbell opines that it may have been precipitated by weak governance and lack of appropriate channels for redressing legitimate demands, pervasive corruption and impunities of the security forces.² In part, Ulimwengu's view cited above on the rise of militia groups in the Niger Delta that 'most times the issue in contention has been the perceived exclusion of sections of the population from full enjoyment of citizenship rights, including participation in governance

² See Campbell, J. (2011) 'Mapping Violence in Nigeria', *Daily Trust* July 21

systems or access to resources' also applies in giving rise to insurgency in the northeast. Whatever reasons adduced for the emergence of violent non state actors in the northeast the fact remains that they constitutes cogs in the wheel of progress of the region and find better ways of dealing with them is urgently required especially against the backdrop of the region's current' reputation of being the most insecure in the country.

In the present realization that the statutory security agencies and all the armed non state actors in the northeast appear united to confront a common enemy JAS, fears continue to be expressed about the extent of involvement of armed non state actors and the role they play. At the moment the Civilian JTF in Borno State has the largest number of members of all the armed non state actors in the region. For this reason, the activities of the group is examined more critically in the next section

Table 3 Selected Indicators of Socioeconomic Deprivation in Nigeria

Zone	Absolute Poverty	No Schooling	Adult Literacy	Unemployment	Human Dev Index (HDI)
North-East	69.0	63.7	23.0	31.9	0.332
North-West	70.0	63.8	21.6	28.8	0.420
North-Central	59.5	36.8	47.0	28.8	0.490
South-East	58.7	14.4	81.8	19.6	0.471
South-West	49.8	17.2	79.8	11.4	0.523
South-South	55.9	10.7	77.1	24.6	0.573

Source: Meagher and Hassan (2014) and UNDP (2009)

Table 4. Development Indicators in Northeastern Nigeria by State

State	Life Expectancy at Birth	Adult Literacy	GDP Per Capita	Life Expectancy Index	Education Index	HDI Value
Adamawa	47	54.6	209	0.358	0.659	0.380
Bauchi	50	38.7	166.82	0.408	0.422	0.305
Borno	53	26.9	529.52	0.458	0.322	0.353
Gombe	49	51.7	352.35	0.400	0.483	0.365
Taraba	49	52.1	141.78	0.392	0.644	0.365
Yobe	50	24.3	261.00	0.408	0.308	0.292
Nigeria	50	64.2	1156.82	0.419	0.712	0.513

Source: UNDP, 2009

Case Study: Borno's Civilian Joint Task Force

Any discourse on the rise of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) cannot be fully understood without at least a brief reference to JAS. The emergence of JAS has been studied by various scholars, governments and interest groups for quite sometime now (See Adesoji, 2012; Monguno, 2013; Shettima, 2013; Amnesty International, 2014). What is clear is that the group emerged as an Islamic sect around 2002 and its activities have terrorized the northeast region since 2009 with Maiduguri as epicentre of the crisis. The main demand of the group has been the replacement of the present democratic rule with Islamic Sharia law, blaming the current level of inequality, corruption and mismanagement on a 'Godless' political structure and class. JAS also resents all forms of social and cultural lifestyles and worldviews that are of western origin including secular education, vowing to return Islamic practice to its pristine state. Since 2009, and from 2011 especially, JAS attempts to eliminate all persons and groups that recognise and accept western political and socio-cultural practices for which reason the sect is seen generally regarded as anti establishment. In order to achieve set targets all law enforcement officers including police and paramilitary were targeted and killed initially. But there were other victims as well later including Christians, politicians, vocal Islamic scholars who criticize them, teachers and students. Lately, the group is targeting any person who is not a member. Concomitantly, the activities of the group as at April, 2015 has produced 1,491,706 internally displaced persons and about 200,000 refugees from the six states of the northeast.³

It was in realization of the effects of JAS' terrorist activities that in the latter part of 2013 (when the crisis reached its peak in Maiduguri) a civilian counter force – a spontaneous coalition of youth groups from various parts of the city formed the Civilian Joint Task Force. The operation of CJTF is fashioned after the military Joint Task Force which consists of the army, air force, navy, police and other stakeholders in the security circle. An interesting narrative of the motivation for the formation of CJTF by youths in Maiduguri has been presented elsewhere by Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) (see Umara, Muazu, Fari et al, 2013)⁴ and other interested stakeholders.⁵ The most important reason perhaps that gave birth to CJTF was the poor handling of the insurgency by the military JTF deployed to Maiduguri. The

³ See Offiong, A.V. (2015) 'Inside Nigeria's Heartbreaking IDP Problem' Daily Trust Saturday, June 20th.

⁴ See Umara, I. Muazu, A., Fari, A., Imam, Y.B., & Bukar, Y. (2014) Study of the Activities of Civilian Joint Task Force in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government Areas, Borno State, Nigeria. Report submitted to NSRP, British Council, Abuja-Nigeria.

⁵ See also Idris H., Ibrahim Y., & Sawab, I. (2014) 'Who are Borno's Civilian JTF?' Weekly Trust 29th March.

highhandedness of the military in responding to the conflict, particularly its dragnet strategy led to the loss of thousands of innocent lives and property. Almost all the initial volunteers have been affected either through loss of family members or friends. In addition, despite the strong military presence, the insurgency did not abate and this situation made the communities helpless. But there were other contributory factors as well. Both the insurgency and the military response led to loss of livelihoods beyond tolerable limits of the youth. It was therefore not by chance that the youth counter attack that led to the formation of CJTF was first launched in Hausari ward, Maiduguri's economic nerve centre.

In retrospect, the sudden emergence of CJTF brought considerable relief to residents of Maiduguri. Members of CJTF arrested suspected JAS members and handed them to the military JTF. Road blocks were mounted by them, separate from those of the military JTF and later joint searches were conducted in areas suspected to be hideouts of JAS members. Through these efforts Maiduguri was cleared of JAS and its activities leading to their relocation to rural parts of Borno and other states of the northeast in 2014. These heroic efforts earned the CJTF tremendous support and respect from government, the general public and observers. The gallantry of the CJTF members was so encouraging that some highly placed Nigerians have recommended them for national award.⁶ It was often said that save for the sudden emergence of CJTF it may take the military more than a decade to clear JAS from Maiduguri. Consequently, about 3,000 youths were trained by the state government under the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES) and placed on a monthly allowance of N15,000. Consequently, the state Governor, Kashim Shettima referred to the CJTF as game-changers⁷ even though John Campbell has expressed reservations over the choice of such a label preferring to wait until events clearly unfold.⁸ In the several counter insurgency encounters with JAS so far CJTF lost many of its members. As a guesstimate, CJTF may have lost 300-400 members since 2013.

Despite this gallant sacrifice there are strong apprehensions on the future of CJTF given the present conditions for a number of important reasons. Principally, the composition and character of the group itself is likely to lead to such reservations. First, it is difficult to tell who a member of CJTF is considering the large pool of volunteers that partake in its operations. While the group claims that 'mobilized' volunteers are those that have

⁶ Honourable Kaka Gujubawu, House of Representative member representing Maiduguri Metropolitan suggested this in an interview with Weekly Trust. See Hassan T.A. (2013) Civilian JTF Deserves National Honours *Weekly Trust* July 23.

⁷ Umara, I., Muazu, A., Fari, A. *et al* op cit.

⁸ See blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2013/07/18/nigerias-civilian-joint-task-force/

recent data on crime for comparison, the reported incidents of insurgency in the country (for which the northeast is noted) may be used as a surrogate. This when juxtaposed with other reported crime may help to explain the increase. For instance, the northeast with the highest burden of insurgency by JAS has over one million internally displaced persons

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initially sworn with the Holy Qur'an not to hide JAS members or willfully harm others the reality is that it is difficult to distinguish between those who have taken this oath from the youths who are numerically far greater. For instance, while the age group of members of CJTF is mostly youths between 18-25 years teenage volunteers from age 10 are a common sight in Maiduguri whenever there is breach of security. A modest estimate puts the size of CJTF at 30,000 out of which only 3,000 are officially registered by government under the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES).⁹ It needs to be reconciled, therefore who is a member of CJTF. Is it the 'mobilized' youth who has willfully taken an oath by swearing with the Holy Quran, a member of BOYES or any armed youth on sentry? Second, the group is almost entirely composed of Muslim youths even though there are neighbourhoods in the town with significant Christian population. The overbearing dominance of such a large volunteer force by one religious group in a cosmopolitan city like Maiduguri should cause concern given the history of religious violence of many Nigerian cities including Maiduguri.¹⁰ Additionally, CJTF is locally armed with sticks, knives, machetes, bows and arrows etc. but quite a number of the volunteers are also in possession of locally fabricated guns which are often gallantly displayed. This portends great danger ahead if the ownership of firearms is not registered. But perhaps the most important fear may lie in the claim that some repentant members of JAS are also part of the CJTF.¹¹

It is probably the sum total of these issues that may have been responsible for the alleged excesses of the CJTF. The CJTF has also been allegedly involved in many abuses that are perpetrated by JAS some of which also characterise military operations being reported in many parts of the world. There have been reports of abuses/violations of rape, harassment, killings and robbery by some members of the group. A former commissioner in Borno State and some members of her family narrowly escaped being lynched by CJTF when she was found with a Dane gun in one of the several road blocks mounted by the group.¹² Some CJTF members in Maiduguri were also allegedly involved in harassment and raping of young girls in their areas of operation.¹³ The alleged violations and abuses by the CJTF are many but the response by both government and leaders of the group to these allegations is that these crimes are being perpetrated through mob action by youths who are not members of CJTF. The discipline of erring CJTF members, and the regulation of activities of non members (whenever CJTF operates) need to be urgently resolved since these issues continue to put the reputation of the group at stake.

⁹ Malik, S. (2015). Civilian JTF: The Making of a Human Time Bomb, *Premium Times*, May 19

¹⁰ See for instance Albert Isaac Olawale (1994) Violence in Metropolitan Kano: A Historical Perspective. In Osaghae E.E., Toure, I., Kouame, N et al. *Urban Violence in Africa*, Institut Francais de Recherche en Afrique pp. 111-136

¹¹ See Umara, I., Muazu, A., Fari, A. et al op cit.

¹² See Idris, H., Ibrahim Y., & Sawab, I. (2014). Who are Borno's Civilian JTF? *Weekly Trust*, March 29th

¹³ Malik, S. (2015) op. cit.

Background

The provision of adequate security is a fundamental public good which all nations must strive to provide. Security of lives and property is the one of the fundamental aspects of social contract between the state and its citizens. So important is the provision of security that the effective delivery of other important public goods rest upon how well secured a nation is. Accordingly, it has been recognised that a capable state is one that has the attributes of not only being modern, strong, responsible and responsive but also one that is capable of effectively discharging its duties of delivering security, peace, prosperity and other essential services to its people (Ulimwengu, nd). However, the return of democracy to Nigeria in 1999 coincided with rapid deterioration of the nation's internal security. Apart from the well known crimes (which are by no means less daunting) like armed robbery and burglary that characterized the major cities, newer forms of threats have began to emerge such as terrorism and kidnapping which have pervaded the entire country. While each region has its unique security challenge, it is the sum total of these security breaches that have made the country one of the most insecure nations of the world today. Scholars have advanced a number of reasons for the rising level of insecurity in Nigeria. These range from long years of military rule in the past to poor governance that has produced the large inequities between the rich and the poor that was occasioned by Nigeria's massive oil fortunes as well as religious extremism and intolerance (Ajaegbu, 2012; Adesoji, 2012; Abdu, 2013; Adams and Ogbonnaya, 2014). It is against this unfolding security scenario and fault lines created party politics in Nigeria especially since 1999 thrived on to further complicate the security situation by posing new threats. Against the backdrop of these multi-faceted causative factors, Nigeria's statutory security concerns have found it difficult to contend with the rising level of insecurity. Consequently, whether as products of poor governance or as genuine stakeholders helping to complement the efforts of the nation's security forces, non-state actors (from a variety of backgrounds) have become quite visible in the security arena of the country.

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But the challenges of dealing with a vibrant army of youths are certainly greater than what is presented in the preceding narrative. In realization of their gallantry in the current security challenge in Borno and elsewhere within the region, there have been several calls on both the state and federal governments to engage the CJTF in certain tasks including the military and paramilitary agencies.¹⁴ Other recommendations include their engagement in skill acquisition in agriculture, trade and industry. The immediate challenge associated with this lies in the fact that most members of CJTF are largely unschooled to be trained to take up appointments in the military and related professions. For instance, they have been described as 'an army of largely illiterate boys who have tasted the power of military might'.¹⁵ While it makes sense for those qualified to be encouraged to join the forces after passing the necessary security and fitness tests, majority of the youths in the northeast generally are not trainable even for skills other than the military due to low level of education. The coordinator of the Northeast Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Maiduguri established in response to the crisis in the northeast has stressed that 70% of youths in the northeast are not trainable.¹⁶

CJTF members, perhaps as a result of their low level of education or the lack of requisite training have also been observed to be overzealous and unruly. The group has been reported to mount roadblocks at will causing unnecessary traffic obstruction and occasionally refusing to take instructions or even attempting to impose its authority on the military JTF. They have on many occasions treated the military JTF with great suspicion contempt. In several instances, this has led to an acrimonious relationship between CJTF and JTF leading to loss of lives on both sides.¹⁷ More recently members of CJTF operating at roadblocks have also been accused of begging from motorists. The implication of this is that with time motorists may be coerced to comply with such requests since CJTF is gradually becoming a law enforcement agency in its own right. Unfortunately, the combination of gallantry and excesses of CJTF are gradually being copied by a younger generation of children who may have already been militarized to be subsequently harvested into the group.

The dire unemployment situation in the northeast and the large size of the CJTF has also led to many suggestions of engaging the members in agriculture but this is also fraught with its own problems. The members of CJTF and indeed many of such groups

¹⁴ For instance see Malik, S. (2015) *op. cit*; see also Hassan T.A. (2013) *op. cit*

¹⁵ Malik, S. (2015) *op. cit*.

¹⁶ This was disclosed in a radio interview with Peace FM Radio in Maiduguri on 23/10/2013

¹⁷ For instance, on 14th September, 2013 CJTF clashed with police during which a member of the CJTF was killed. An angry mob of CJTF members later killed the policeman. Also in February 2015 five members of CJTF were killed by soldiers when the group insisted on checking an ammunition-laden truck being escorted by the soldiers.

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in the northeast including youth gangs are urban based. This suggests that many of the youths have never been to the country side let alone having the experience of farming. While it can be conceded that urban agriculture is an industry in itself in many developed cities, the chances of it absorbing an overwhelming army of youths such as the CJTF in the northeast is slim.

Conclusion

The importance of non state actors in security management of a region as volatile and insecure as the northeast can never be overemphasized. The security situation in the northeast has produced an unexpected crop of determined and gallant youth volunteers never before experienced in any part of the country to fight insurgency. This counter force is however largely overzealous and uneducated to take up meaningful roles, or be simply complacent in a post conflict northeast when synergy is required most for reconstruction. Great care and bold policy shifts beyond rhetoric are required to deal with the expectations of youths in the zone who constitute a significant proportion of the population. Otherwise we risk the change of their status from game-changers to regime changers. For these reasons, we recommend the following:

Education: An ambitious programme of mass education of out of school youths with basic literacy, numeracy and civic education as its focus is urgently required. It is hoped that this will prepare the youths to take up better employment roles.

Engagement in Community Based Public Works: In the short term, youths who are not trainable may be engaged by communities in public works to clean the streets, drainages and filling of potholes on roads.

Traffic control: Youths may also be deployed to control traffic in towns and cities. Already a number of jobless youths, including CJTF are already providing skeletal services in this area.

Informants: The current level of insurgency is beyond conventional armed warfare. Qualified youth vigilantes could be employed in intelligence gathering to help the security forces.

Review of allowances: While the name CJTF suffers from definitional problems, what is currently paid as allowances to BOYES, the trained youth vigilantes in Borno is paltry compared to effort and sacrifice being rendered. Understandably, this is a huge burden on the state government. As a palliative the federal government needs to shoulder part of the responsibility not only in Borno but the whole of northeast.

Community policing: The excess number of youths who cannot be shouldered by the government may be engaged in policing their own communities the responsibility of which must be shouldered by such communities.