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Militia counterinsurgency: Understanding the drivers of states' engagement of militias in counterinsurgency in northeast Nigeria

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Abstract

This a qualitative study that investigate the drivers that triggered state governments in Nigeria northeast to incorporate militias into their counterinsurgency operation. The militia albeit emerged as a communal response to the violent rebellion of the insurgency, however it lately started earning tacit support from the governments in the northeast. Supports are majorly offered in kind such as patrol vans, uniforms and canvasses. They equally received monetary supports to boost operation. This study therefore investigated why the states allowed the militias in the counterinsurgency. This is even in view of the consequential threats and abuses allegedly enshrined in the militia violence. The case study was conducted at Geidam of Yobe State. The article revealed among others familiarity factors of the physical terrain, technical knowledge of the sociocultural environment and adaption to climatic factors of the insurgent communities. These attributes, the study revealed influence communal support and cooperation to the regular forces and the state. In this case, they appeared incredible tool of vital intelligence, as well as a force multiplier to the state security apparatus. However, to minimize the unruly behavior of the militias, the article recommends the state authorities to screen the participants to eliminate the bad eggs among them. Others are, providing enabling laws to guide their operation, as well as provision of incentives to combat exhorting of the member of the public.

Keywords: Militias, counterinsurgency, insurgency, security threats

Introduction

Since the year 2011, communities in the northeast states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa witnessed an unprecedented participation of people in a community militia movement to defend themselves against the brutal rebellion of Boko Haram. The Boko Haram, a colloquial literally western education is sacrilege is a radical Islamic fundamentalist that is opposed to all forms of civilization by the people including attending formal school, women education, democracy and constitutionalism. Its aim is to uproot the secular political system and constitute Islamic state that can adjudicate with the spiritual injunctions of the Qur'an and Hadith, the holy books of Islam. Although, extant literature shows that the existence of the group is ahistorical dating to the period of Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s, however, recent events suggest the eruption of the group to mid-2009, when some set of disgruntled youth raised against the state in a one week anti-government and anti-west campaign in the city of Maiduguri. The uprising left about 1000 people murdered, majority of which are the followers of the movement. Deaths includes of Mohammed Yusuf, the spiritual leader of the group alongside with Buji Foi and Baba F ugu, an executive member of the regional Borno government. Amidst concerted counterinsurgency measures, the insurgent isolated to remote community of Kanamma in civil disobedience action to practice mundane life and religion.

Government military measures to dislodge the movement further provoked the followers to full scale insurgency (Gana *et al.*, 2018) ^[21-23]. Nigeria's federal government, states governments in the Nigeria's northeast state of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) in support and collaboration of foreign governments adopted a far-reaching and multifaceted counterinsurgency measures to combat the insurgent, yet, the group ramped up its campaign of terror lynching fatal damage to social, psychological, economic and political damages to both the state and the citizenry. To date, estimates differs among observers, however, there is general consensus that about 40000 people were brutally murdered by the insurgent and state

supported counterinsurgency. Indices by the United Nations Higher Commission on Refugees indicated that nearly 5 million people are forcibly displaced within and outside the shores of Nigeria state. In 2011, Boko Haram extended the wrath of its violence to other cities and towns outside the Nigeria's northeast such as Kano, Kaduna, and Jos, including Abuja, the Nigeria's administrative capital. In June 2011, the insurgent ramped a vehicle borne improvised device to the convoy of Nigeria's police Inspector General causing severe damages to human and material assets. Barely, a month, the insurgent attacked the highly fortified United Nations Office Building killing about 18 staff.

However, concerned with the skyrocketing violence and unpreventable loss of lives and properties, the communities in the Nigeria's northeast organized and form local militias to defend their communities. The ideas started in the metropolitan town of Maiduguri, the spiritual town of the insurgent. The militias although started as a kind of neighborhood guard; a type of classical vigilante movement formed by communities to safeguard themselves against impending attacks. Arising from their unwarranted successes in clustering communities and identifying and apprehending the insurgents and their collaborators, the militias are offered tacit support from the state governments of the BAY States. Supports are often offered in both kind and cash such as patrol vans, boots, canvasses, and incentives for their upkeeps. Although, even as they use mundane arms such as bow and arrows, sticks, cutlasses, knives, sparrows etc. in some later years, the government offered them with dane guns. With the possession of guns, in most of the states, the militias are coopted by the military to fight alongside the military. The motives behind the informal cooption is a subject of different discussions, however, the Nigeria military indicated the interest of technical knowledge of the militias on physical terrain and social factors. These according them influences vital intelligences to annihilating the insurgents.

Nigeria constitution however is explicit in stating the illegitimacy of militia involvement in civil security function. In most states, even as the insurgency have considerably subsided, the militias remained the forefront of the civil security with the state governments further increasing the support base. The involvement of the militias albeit successful, however, their prolongation in the campaign have risen concern among the general public and the critical literature on the true motives of the state government. The Nigeria constitution identified security matters under the exclusive legislative list; a portion of the constitution that enabled only the federal government to adjudicate. The state government were not allowed to adjudicate on any security matter. The raising and deliberate funding of the militia activities in countering the insurgent rebellion has exaggerated suspicion about the states intention. There is widespread concern that militia can raise to disrupt the proper functioning of the state. Peic (2014) ^[26] alleged that militias once engaged in counterinsurgency operation tend to undermine peace deals, abrogate rule law, and provoke public aspersion toward constituted authorities. Report of the United State Institute Peace (USIP) described the militias in the Nigeria northeast as time bomb (USIP, 2011) ^[31].

However, in spite of the increasing concern for understanding the true motivations of states' cooption of the militias, little research was done to address this lacuna.

Existing works largely focused on the roles of militias in the counterinsurgency successes (Gana, 2019; Gana and Mali, 2021) ^[16, 13]. Others on the motivations driving the militia's participation in the counterinsurgency campaign (Agbiboba, 2015; Bamidele, 2016; Gana, 2020) ^[1, 3, 12]. In addition to the importance of abstract literature contribution, this study also serves a policy purpose. It benefits the Nigeria government, the BAY states, other states of the Nigeria federation and foreign nations facing similar militia characteristic. In addressing its objective, the article will proceed in five sections. The first section would explain the theoretical literature underpinning the study, the second section is the explanation of the methodology, section four is the analysis of historical basis of militias in Nigeria, and section five is the explanation of the implications of the militias in the counterinsurgency operation. Section six is the conclusion of the study with some recommendation for policy and further studies.

Literature review

The concept of militia is contested one. Schubeth (2015) ^[28] indicated that the term was used differently in many scholarships. Attempts in providing all informing meaning and categorization often appears short, inclusive and or over-inclusive. As such, over the year, the concept defies important analytical clarity. For instance, one particularly wide-ranging categorization forwards by Schubeth (2015) ^[28] includes no less than eight types of armed non-state actors: (1) Rebels and guerrillas; (2) militias and paramilitaries; (3) clan chiefs and big men; (4) warlords; (5) terrorists; (6) criminals, mafia and gangs; (7) mercenaries, private military companies (PMCs) and private security companies (PSCs); (8) marauders and 'sobels. In this study therefore, we consider militia as a forms of non-state armed group established outside the armpits of legal enclaves of a state but receive support from the government. In this case, their operation is mainly in support and defense of the state and the interest of the formal state.

More commonly used categorization of militia is a five-fold typology of NSAGs that roughly differentiate between criminals, warlords, terrorists, insurgents, and mercenaries. Schubeth (2015) ^[28] further stressed that most of the studies emphasizing in these broad typologies include cases as varied as the Islamist militant movements such as the Hezbollah group in Lebanon, the transnational criminal gang Mara Salvatrucha in Japan, the Irish Republican Army and the Private Military Company in South Africa. Arising from these conflictual analytical parameters, militias defies simplistic definition both in the public and the critical literature.

Reasons for government engagement of militias into security function

The involvement of militias into security function has been the forefront of states agenda on providing internal security of many countries. With zero exception, the idea of the militias has reflected both in the security agenda of weak and strong state. The recent account of militias was observed with the involvement of the Sunni Awakening by the United State in the war of Iraq, others are the Russia war with Ukraine in 2014. Although, involvement of militias into the formal security is against the monopolistic rule of the state. Marx Weber, the ancient sociologist proposed that the state is the only legitimate authority that can possess the

monopoly of violence within its sovereign territory. The execution of such violence is within the ambit of the formal security apparatus.

Consequently, whereas militias have been a focus of the security agenda of many states, the reasons and the motivations of the states for engaging irregular forces has been a subject of various debate. In most of less developed countries, the literature identified the reasons of weak state institutions, multifaceted and complex security situations, and low number of the operatives as well as poorly equipped security personnel as the major drivers. The Kenyan and South Sudanese cases provide textbook examples of the emergence of vigilantism in the context of state fragility. Militias in this respect as indicated Oren and Mukherjee (2018) serves a force multiplier role. In either the developing or the developed countries, militias are coopted as a tool of credible and timely intelligence. Since militias are often recruited from among the members of the community where they are aimed to securitize, by virtue of their social connectivity including linguistic and religion ties, militia can easily penetrate the crevices of the population to gather information about the insurgents' movements, hideout and the activities of their collaborators.

Furthermore, some authors have connected the incessant raising and engagement of militia to complex security situation. A kind of security situation that emanated within the population and fought internally. Complex security situation promotes by the principle of globalization which made national borders thin. Schubert (2015) [28] referred to this type of security situation as 4th Generation War (4GW). In most respect, there is general consensus among observers that 4GW was promoted by political, economic, social and technical changes of the world. 4GW characterized by what Krause termed 'hybrid violence', a kind of security crisis that makes it increasingly difficult to distinguish between combatants and civilians, between criminal and political motives, and between conflict, post-conflict, and non-conflict armed violence. The combined factors of these therefore ignite the drive for militias as a reinforcement for the regular forces. Militia therefore equipped with their technical knowledge of the war terrain including all the knowledge of the water creeks, hills, forest and mountain coupled with their sociocultural networking appear successful despite their light weapons and ill-trainings. Evidences in many countries showed militias hold the frontline in field operation.

Although, while the quantum of the literature shows militia is a deliberate creation of the state, some emerging evidences however shows militias emerged locally in response to a security threat to civilians. They are created locally as a self-defense against violent threats at a moment. These groups albeit independence however enjoys some tacit supports of the government (Peic, 2014) [26], because their presences can often improve counter-insurgency effectiveness in their localities. The literature referred to these category of locally established militias as community self-defense group. Therefore, in most instances, the militias in the Nigeria's northeast fighting the Islamist Boko Haram succinctly fallen into this category. Instead of self-defense group, the study conceptualizes the movement as militia. It is a subtype of the broader category of Non State Armed Groups (NSAGs). One distinctive characteristic of militia in this study from NSAGs is that, the militia are regularly sponsored or enjoy support from the state actors, but usually

not formally established or regulated by law. As Schubert (2015) [28] succinctly put it, this single characteristic distinguished militia from Private Military Company (PMC). While both the NSAGs and the PMC can extend operation outside their originating state, the militia as conceptualized in this study is often eponymous embedded within the community in which they emerge.

Methodology

This work is approached on qualitative case study. The case study was conducted at Yobe State of the Nigeria's northeast. The Yobe State is one of the three worst affected by the insurgent rebellion of Boko Haram. It is also the home state for the notorious founders of the insurgent such Mohammed Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and Bello Damagum. Yusuf who held from Jakusko local area of Yobe State was the original founder and the pioneer leader of the insurgency in Maiduguri town. With his death during 2009 military crackdown, he was succeeded by Shekau, notoriously radical preacher from Tarmuwa area of Yobe State. Moreover, majorly attributed to the presences of the superior leaders, the first violent impetus of the insurgent was observed at Kanamma town, a border settlement along the Nigeria and Niger Republic border in Yobe state in the year 2003. The scholarly literature connected the groups' earlier access to weapons to the looting of police armory at Kanamma.

In most respect, arising from the exigency of the insurgent violence, since 2013, there is massive presence of militias in most parts of the state affected by the insurgency. Much like in other places, the militias provides a communal defense. Colloquially termed as 'Yan Banka' they are largely lightly armed with bow and arrows, machetes, sticks, cutlasses and knives. They operate as night vigilantism by guarding streets and other sensitive public infrastructures. During the day hours, in rare occasions, they provide security to public gatherings such as marriages, naming ceremonies and congregation prayers. Their activities are locally financed through communal contributions. However, in 2014 the local authorities in collaboration with the Yobe state government started offering incentives to boost operation. Since then, militias reportedly enjoyed monetary and logistics support from Yobe State government. Nongovernmental organization (NGOs) occasionally offer support to the group. Most of the support from the NGOs is characterized in kind. To ease control and boost operations, the militias in Yobe State are clustered into different forum such as peace group, Sarkin Baka and vigilante movement. Regardless of their cluster, the modus operandi, the nature of weapons use, their relations with civilians and regular securities, as well as the incentivizations remained the same. The present case study therefore focused on the vigilantes at Geidam town. This selection was purposive, however, was strengthened by the sizeable composition of the vigilante over and above the other groups. This is reinforced by the vulnerability of their area of operation. Evidence shows, Geidam is one of the worst affected areas by the insurgents in Yobe state. In addition to blatant destructions of public and private goods, the entire population in the town were once displaced leaving the town deserted for over six months before returning in 2015. There is widespread believe that the restoration of the relative peace is influenced by the presence of the vigilantes and their active engagement in the counterinsurgency operation. In

summary, there are about 80 vigilantes members at Geidam actively engaged in patrolling streets, manning roadblocks at the entry and exit points of the town, as well as participating in stop and check operations.

A total of eight vigilante members cutting across all cadres of the operation were engaged in this study. The selection is purposive informed majorly by factors of knowledge ability and willingness to voluntarily participate to disseminate information. In addition to the vigilante, three community leaders were engaged in the study. Of the three, one is a religious leader, one is communal leader and the other is local political observer. Others engaged in the study are five principal state and local authorities' leaders. Whereas the three is from the state ministry in charge of internal affairs, two is from local authority council of Geidam. Data was collected through face to face interview. Interviews were conducted in a designated place with time and venues often selected by the informants. Each interview on the average lasted for an hour or after the request of the participant to terminate on saturation of the information. In all, strict ethical practices guiding the conduct of qualitative study including but not limited to confidentiality and anonymity was ensured. To avoid disclosure of the informants' identities, three pseudonyms A, B and C were used. Pseudonyms A1 to A8 refer to the vigilante members, B1 to B5 refers to state and local authorities, and C1-C3 refers to community leaders. The analysis of the data was executed thematically using the three coding criteria of open, selective and axial coding.

The drivers of militia engagement in northeast Nigeria

Much as it publicizes in the literature, the data showed an incredible shortage of regular security forces promoting security in Yobe state as one of the potential driver of the militia cooption. In this case participants indicate the enlisting of the militia in the state provide force multiplier function as revealed informant B2 explained: The security forces deployed to this state comprising the police, custom, civil defense, immigration and members of Nigeria's drug law force is totaling less than 500. Whereas the population of the state according to the recent estimate is approximately three million people. This put the ratio of the securities to the population is considerable inadequate. This shortage has been undermining the peace and security of the state.

This assertion corroborates the findings of many studies (Idubor, Aihie & Igjebo, 2015) [24]. Most of these authors stressed the shortage of security workforce as the major hindrances of the Nigeria government in fighting the insurgency of the Boko Haram group. Reflecting on this perspective, Oyewole (2013) [25] put the ratio of the Nigeria police force to the population to one police officer to 8800 people. The number of soldier to the population is estimates at one to 480 people. With an estimated population of 12-million spreads in 67 local government areas covering approximated 153,317 km² of a territorial land mass, it was indicated that the security operatives could not ensure timely response to impending threat across time and space.

Coupled with the shortage of security, evidences show Nigeria security operatives do not have the adequate training, arms and communication gazettes to ensure protection of the teeming population of the country. One assessment of the performance of the Nigeria police force observed that the police in Nigeria did not have the prerequisite skills and equipment to challenges prevailing

security issues posted on the country. Regarding the combating of the Boko Haram, this development has largely to the poor performance of security operative in the war front. In most occasions, the troops took excuse of poor quality and out dated caliber of arms, delay in supplies of ammunition as a reason to desert the battle-front. Literature shows lack of effective combating training, substandard recruitments criteria, poor remuneration, and a history of pervasive corruption are some of the challenges hindering the efficiency of the Nigeria police force. The police according to Galula, (1964) [11] are the stabilizing force in post-insurgency era. United State Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 2-34) stressed that properly organized police force is instrumental for accessing vital human intelligence suitable for fostering stability.

While there is no definite size of the security force required for a particular counterinsurgency operation, yet, Sir Robert Thompson; British Military officer indicates 20-counterinsurgent force is required per 1000 population.

In most respect, therefore, the interest of the Yobe state government of incorporating the militias was triggered by the force multiplier factor promoted by Carey and Mitchell (2011) [5] and supported by Barter (2013) [4]. Most of these authors indicated that during counterinsurgency warfare, regular forces appeared stretched and frustrated due to lacks technical knowledge of the social environments of culture, religion and norms, as well as the physical terrains of rivers and streams, hills, forests, mountains as well as climatic factors of varying weather conditions. Therefore, the engagement of the militia should offer operational flexibility and swift responses to threats. Militia is also pointed out be cost effective means of security. Since they are independent of the state, they would not be enlisted for any standing salary. The state can only offer indeterminate incentives to facilitate operation. They equally require less rigorous training of the regular security apparatus.

In addition to the shortage of law enforcements in the state, finding shows the regular securities are majorly concentrated in the capital cities and major towns. The consequences of this according to the informants constrained effective enforcement of law and order in most of the rural areas.

Informant C3 explained

There is an acute shortage of the police force and the military. If you leave Geidam here and move down to the Lake Chad basin more than 200 km, you will be surprised to see that there is no single police formation, then how can you expect security. People only live at the mercy of God. God is saving us.

Informant C2 explained

Neither the police nor the military are living in the town leaving the rural population unprotected. The implication of this has left the rural areas as the home of the fleeing insurgent. If the government incorporates the members of the militia, they can address this challenge.

Informant B1 posited;

Mostly, when villagers and people in the rural areas seek protection from the police or the armies, they neither arrive in time. In most occasions, they arrive in and through the wrong ways. To be sincere, the government's security forces, in short, did not enjoy the monopoly of violence among the rural population.

Extant literature pointed out that the overconcentration of security operatives in urban centers is among the major challenges hindering the operational successes of the government. The concentration of security operatives in the urban centers resulted in poor monitoring of the rural areas thus enable Boko Haram leaders to exploit the vacuum to recruit and indoctrinate people. Therefore, the participant indicated that the desire to bridge this vacuum prompted the cooption of the militia force.

Informant B3;

Yes, the incorporation of the militia can help fill the gap of our conventional securities in the rural areas. The non-presence of the security often allows criminals gangs to use the areas as the hiding place and in the process recruit people. However, with the militia as local agent, they would be the custodian of the security of their people. They can be an informant for the government.

Many observers have acknowledged the fact that the sizes of Nigeria security operatives are inadequate to securitize the entire country. In respect to the police, Salaam (2012) [27] argued that the Nigerian Police Force is both too small and too inefficient to provide security effectively. Among other factors attributed for inefficiency are poor training, appalling shortage of equipment and non-familiarities of operational environments. The poor training and logistics according to Solomon (2012) [30] is the fundamental factor that crippled the counterinsurgency operation by undermining access to timely and credible intelligence. Moreover, in addition to the inadequate size of the security operatives in the country, evidences showed most of the operatives are concentrated in the urban and capital cities. The consequence thus left the rural settlements unprotected. Therefore, partly attributed to the inability of the security operatives to provide security at the rural areas, it provided fertile ground for the Boko Haram and other criminal groups to recruit and sustain their violence with impunity.

Furthermore, while security operatives are significantly inadequate in Nigeria, their methods of operations accused of highhandedness as they majorly focus on the aggression doctrine. The Nigeria security operatives are notorious for series of summary execution of suspects, killing innocent citizens and torching civilian properties. Since the eruption of the Boko Haram, numerous national and international human right groups have condemned the arbitrary of the security operatives such as extrajudicial killings, mass arrest without trial, the disappearance of suspect etc. Whereas this has been alleged to have contributed for the sustenance of the insurgency, the brutality of the police force for extrajudicial killings Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf allegedly laid the impetus of conversion of Boko Haram into the full-scale insurgency in the north (Gana, *et al.*, 2019; Solomon, 2012) [16, 30]. The continued aggression and indiscriminate arrest brewed distrust thus influence the existentialism of the Boko Haram.

Besides the constraining challenges of shortage of the security workforce, there are also issues of technical knowledge of the physical landscape and adaptability to the constantly changing climate of the state by regular securities in Yobe state. This factor according to the informants instigated the interest of incorporating CJTF. Agbiboa (2018) [2] have pointed out that member of regular security forces in Nigeria are deployed to localities where they are not familiar therefor undermine their efficiency. This factor generally believed to be hindering the efficiency of the

security forces. It was due to this challenge; the respondents indicated it triggered the interest to coopt the militias

Informant B3:

This state is very wide, the population is sparsely distributed, and we are sharing one of the longest international boundaries, which is very porous. Therefore, it is very difficult for the conventional force to protect the security of everywhere.

The informant contention is consistent with the contention of Carey and Mitchell (2011) [5] who shows if the terrain is difficult and marked with barriers of mountains, hills and water locks, the government should co-opt local force to monitor the security situation of ungoverned terrains. The incorporation according to the experts will benefit state to ensure control of its territory, as well as promote timely response to emerging threats in the local areas. Reflecting on this contention, informant B3 explained:

They are sons of the soil, they know everybody, and they have a better experience of all the water creeks, mountains, hill, and forest where criminals hide to disturb people. Their incorporation will assist the conventional securities in accessing first-hand information about the security situation of the localities before the situation will go out of control. In addition, the state is not in control of the conventional forces so we would know the security situation through them.

The informant's assertion confirmed to Cassidy (2006) [8] that contended local militias are instruments of actionable intelligence. This can be made possible by their influential power of technical knowledge of topography, culture, and languages of the population in the insurgent areas. Some authors have argued that militia is a force multiplier, as well as cost-effective force (Stanton, 2015) [28]. Unlike the regular force, members of irregular force require little training while requiring minimal stipends in providing security in their respective communities.

Conclusion

This article revealed that the cooption of militias into the ongoing counterinsurgency by state governments cropped out of necessity to annihilate the insurgency. Although, the Nigeria law is explicit about the exclusiveness of security functions to the armpit of the federal government, however, attributed to the indiscriminate and interminable violence of the insurgency, the finding revealed that the militia acted as a force multiplying force incredibly perfect for increasing the size of the regular forces. Friedman (2011) [10] indicated that assembling larger forces would assist in abating indiscriminate attack in the area of operation. Since the regular force are alien to the communities they are deployed to securitize with virtually sharing no attributes of religion, language and culture, deep penetration to create rapport with the local population, a cardinal tool of counterinsurgency is extremely difficult. Therefore, the militias should serve as a mediating role. Their engagement stimulated support and cooperation of the locals toward the counterinsurgency. They appeared helpful for connecting the local population to the state. Thus appetite the state governments for their further reengagement. This strategy is in line with the operation principle stipulated by David Galula, a notorious counterinsurgency expert. In defeating an insurgency, Galula (1964) [11] proposed the need for detaching sufficient troops in liberated areas to aid in entrenching confidence on the people as well as to get access to first-hand intelligence. These factors probably explain the reasons behind the

degradation of the insurgency since the involvement of the militia into counterinsurgency operation in the Nigeria's northeast.

Although, whereas the involvement and successes of the militias are incredible in the Nigeria's northeast, however, their continued participation was alleged to have adverse consequences on the peaceful existence of the communities and the state. Militia were alleged to be stampeding on the extant laws of the state. They act rudely, abuse and suppressed human rights and liberties. Arising from the blatant abuses of people's right, the United Nations Human Right Commission have serially accused the militias of right violations including recruitment of child soldiers. Observers have indicated unless rightful step has been taken, the militias can jeopardize the proper functioning of the state. Therefore, as a panacea to combat the militia militarism, the article recommends the following;

1. The Nigeria federal government, state governments and local authority councils should provide enabling laws that can regulate operations of the militias.
2. Government should ensure aggressive measure to screen the militias with the objectives of disengaging the bad eggs among them.
3. Special paramilitary training should be offered to the militias on civil right, arms handling, maneuver and counter-maneuvers in the counterinsurgency operation.
4. Participants should educate on the dangers of child soldiering and be informed with the relevant international laws and treaties guiding such practice.
5. To avoid inherent abuses of corruption and public extortion, special salary package should be assign to the militias to ease their living.

Conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study

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