

The Effect of Military Internal Operations in Plateau State, Nigeria: Militating or Gravitating Insecurity?

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Abstract

This paper examines the responsibility of a state for the protection of its citizens against external aggression and internal violence and disturbances. Conventionally, the latter is normally the duty of the police. This is the situation in Plateau State, Nigeria, where the military is used for military internal security operations. Since violence broke out between Christians and Muslims in Jos, several studies have indicated support for the use of the military as a 'necessary evil' to enforce ceasefires and ensure the return to peace. However, this study finds that using the military evokes several challenges that undermine both the legitimacy of the military mission and its professional image. To understand the problem, the study reviewed the separation, integration, agency, and concordance theories and argued that they are limited in scope and application. The aim of the study was to understand whether the Nigerian state is exercising adequate civil control over the military to ensure that it does not become a threat to the citizenry and exacerbate insecurity. 55 one-on-one interviews with civilians across different social categories were conducted in six local government areas in Plateau State to understand this. The study found that the military acts unprofessionally and that soldiers abuse of civilians is a recurring phenomenon; hence, civilians are dissatisfied with the military.

Keywords: *Military, Internal Security, Civil Military Relations, Conflict Resolution*

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Background to the Study

The military is an important organization in the modern state. Its contribution to nation-building cannot be overemphasized or waved aside. Despite the fundamental role of the armed forces, their relationships with civilians have been a major concern. The military has been noted in the past for the use of violence in dealing with civilians and their desire to topple civilian governments at the slightest mistake. The military has used this access to the instruments of violence to control the government not only in Nigeria but in other African countries. In Nigeria, during the various military regimes, civil-military relations were marred by violations of human rights and consequent strains in the relationship. Civil-military relations refer to the totality of relations and interactions between military personnel and civilians in any political system. With the current democratic system of the fourth republic, it seems there is a new dimension to the relationship between the civilians and the military (Ajiteru, 2019). It is therefore in the context of this fourth republic that this study will examine the symbiotic relations between civilians and military personnel. This study aims at the examination of civil-military relations in the fourth republic. It is apparently important to examine the symbiotic relationships that involve the effective control of the military by the civilian government.

Rationale for the Study

Using the military in an internal role to suppress violence and enforce law and order has been the subject of much debate among scholars, given the consequences it holds for the state and its citizens. While the literature shows that the problems often recur, few studies have examined how civilians experience the use of coercive force by the military (Ajiteru, 2019). This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the use of the military in ISOPs, the effect on civil-military relations, and the security of citizens, with a focus on Plateau State, an ethnically heterogeneous society in Nigeria (Abalaka, 2020). Few studies have examined the interaction of the military and civilians in military ISOPs from a CMR perspective, and this study argues that it presents a shortcoming in the CMR literature. The field suffers from theoretical weaknesses and inadequacies on several fronts, especially in the 'civil' (social) sphere.

Studies in the field have focused extensively on preventing the military from intervening in politics, while important aspects, such as how the 'civilian' (social) sphere affects the relationship, have received little attention. In fact, scholars have made little attempt to integrate the citizenry and civil society as actors in CMR whose agency influences the relationship between. This also means that it is difficult to know if the internal use of the military for security enforcement is productive or counter-effective, potentially worsening the security situation after a ceasefire (Ajiteru, 2019). Hence, this study tries to bridge the gap by advancing the theoretical debate beyond the traditional focus on preventing domestic military intervention in politics. This can increase our understanding of the interaction between the military institution and citizens, especially when it acts in an internal role for which it is neither trained nor specialized. This is important because it provides a means to examine how the interaction affects the professional stature of the military (Abalaka, 2020).

Research Questions

1. Does using the military improve or aggravate the security situation of the citizenry?
2. Does the Nigerian state exercise adequate civil control over the armed forces to ensure that they do not become a threat to the citizenry and exacerbate insecurity?

Research objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Understand the nature and type of threats armed groups pose to states, how this impact the ability of the state to protect its citizens, and the subsequent use of the military in an internal role.
2. Explore the current threats posed by armed groups in Nigeria and the conditions that have necessitated the use of the military in an internal role, with specific reference to Plateau State.
3. Examine the nature of civil control over the armed forces and how Nigeria regulates and controls the military.
4. Explore the perceptions and experiences of civilians in Plateau State to determine whether they believe the military is improving or undermining their security.

History of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

The first republic witnessed a resentful military in Nigeria. According to Ademoyega (2021), the military was not happy with the political class and the fact that the British deliberately created a tripartite political situation in the country. The Nigerian military at that time had some revolutionaries who were ideological. In essence, there was no synergy between the military and the civilian leaders, as most of the soldiers that participated in the coup claimed that they were oblivious to the political situation of the country. That was the reason the military claimed they executed the coup to save Nigeria from collapse and disintegration. They even considered themselves nationalists carrying out nationalistic roles. The second republic was truncated after merely four years of democratic rule. It might not be out of place to say that the military during the second republic was in a hurry to return to power. The military officers at this time perceived the civilian leaders as corrupt individuals who could not steer the nation's ship to its desired destination. This implies that the military still had reservations toward the civilian rule. During the third republic, the military retained its hegemony despite the transition to democratic rule at the state level. The then military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, rather than handing power over to the acclaimed winner of the June 12 presidential election, handed power over to an interim administrator. The system of government in the third republic could be described as diarchy," in which civil and military rules were run concurrently. The third republic therefore witnessed the military control of the civil rule.

Civil-Military Relations in the Fourth Republic

The civil-military relations in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic have taken a favorable pattern. The interest in civil-military relations stemmed from the peculiar features of the military. At the onset of the fourth republic, the executive had positioned itself to dominate the military. The reason could not be far-fetched considering the military background of the first

president of the fourth republic. In his speech at the National War College in Abuja on July 24, 1999, he laid out his plans to reform the military by establishing civilian supremacy. The paradox is that an institution set up to protect the state can at the same time turn around and brutalize civilians and overthrow a legitimate and democratically elected government. Obviously, military rule constitutes an aberration in every state since they are not trained to rule but rather to defend. After a series of military regimes in Nigeria that spanned almost 30 years since the country gained independence, the transition to democratic rule gave a new dimension to the relationships between civilians and the armed forces. The observed patterns or dimensions of civil-military relations suggest a position of subordination (Abalaka, 2020). Therefore, President Obasanjo changed the nature of civil-military relations because his administration proved to be under the control of the military. This was made easier by the fact that the Nigerian Army was centrally administered and in no way subjected to regional control. Even military court-martial judgments have been subjected to Supreme Court review. Obasanjo's administration, however, was noted for the brutality of the civilian population in a way that marred the civil-military relations from the perspective of the civilian populace. In November 1999, there was a massacre of civilians by the military personnel in Odi, as well as the October 2001 attacks in Zaki Biam. Throughout his tenure, Obasanjo exerted his control over the military and effectively dominated the armed forces.

The civil-military relationship under the late President Yar'Adua was not quite different from that under Obasanjo. Yar'Adua also continued with the same pattern of appointing the service chiefs without recourse to the National Assembly's approval. The health challenge of the late President Yar'Adua, which eventually resulted in his death, did not make it possible for him to make a substantial contribution to civil-military relations. Though his death did not create any lacuna in civil-military relations or governance, his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, was able to step in and maintain his grip on the military. President Jonathan, as a successor to the office of President, in order to consolidate his political achievements, quickly retired some members of the military's top hierarchy. Like his predecessor, he saw the need to remove the military officers who were likely to plot a coup against him. However, his own retirement did not go without a challenge from the military, asking the court to nullify the compulsory retirement meted out to the top military hierarchy. In a judgment delivered by the Federal High Court, the compulsory retirement of military officers was declared illegal and therefore null and void. The judgment was since legislative approval was not granted before Abalaka's retirement. President Buhari was sworn in as the new democratically elected president on May 29, 2015. His government inherited the Boko Haram crisis from the Goodluck Jonathan administration. Buhari's government has deployed the armed forces to the areas under the terrorists' control. The civil-military relationship under Buhari has not taken on any different dimensions from past administrations. The civilians still retained their control over the military. Though there are few skirmishes between the civilians on the street and the members of the armed forces, there are cases of military intimidation of civilians on slight provocation. The presence of the military at some checkpoints, with serious dehumanization of any civilian who mistakenly violates any of their self-proclaimed rules, has made many civilians dread the military personnel.

Terrorists

Much like armed groups, terrorism is difficult to define given the many different forms of terrorist groups that exist (Fletcher, 2016). These range from single or lone actors to loose cells and organized groups having defined chains of command and authority through which to further their cause. The working definition by the United Nations International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999), which was adopted by Security Council Resolution 1566 (2014), defines terrorism as follows:

Terrorism is any other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population or to compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act.

Thus, terrorists seek to achieve political goals such as overthrowing or replacing a government, forcing policy changes, or influencing political decisions. The political motive could be ideological, such as the desire to influence or change a government or its policies, and not necessarily to seize and control territory, as with insurgents (Thompson, 2016). In other instances, terrorists advocate for the inclusion and granting of better access to minority or politically marginalized groups in society. Where this is the case, they mobilize along identity lines, such as ethnic, racial, interest, or religious affiliation (Shultz *et al.*, 2016). However, several contemporary terrorist groups advocate for a form of religious or mystical goal that is interwoven with the political aim of establishing a religious state or replacing the secular laws of a state with religious laws. A few examples include Al Qaeda operating in the Middle East, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Islamic State (IS), which is active in about 28 countries.

In Africa, the Al Shabab terrorist group operates in Somalia and Kenya, and Boko Haram operates in Nigeria and its neighboring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). Targets of terrorist attacks are usually civilian groups that are neither related to their interest group nor supporting their cause. Other non-human targets, such as critical state infrastructure (airports, train stations, water sources, etc.) that could cause serious disruption, fear, or panic among the population, are also attacked. Unlike insurgents, terrorists rarely engage in any form of warfare with state forces unless directly confronted and seeking to escape. For this reason, terrorists mostly direct their attacks at civilian targets and critical state infrastructure (soft targets). Thus, given that the primary targets of terrorists are non-combatant civilians, civilian casualties from their attacks are usually high. Attacking soft targets also helps terrorists create fear and panic, which they advance through media propaganda aimed at eroding the legitimacy of the state by presenting it as incapable of defending its population.

Unlike insurgents, terrorists often lack a popular support base and do not enjoy the same material and financial support from civilian populations as insurgents. Typically, terrorists' finances come from predatory and criminal activities, and they often prey on the livelihood of civilians in their strongholds through the imposition of levies and taxes. Others attack and rob

banks, and some engage in high-profile kidnappings for ransom collection. Another source of funding is from other foreign groups that share similar aims. For example, in "the 1990s, al Qaeda created an elaborate set of connections with... likeminded terrorist groups in as many as 60 countries. It also developed a sophisticated financial network for collecting and transferring money for the organization and its operations" (Shultz *et al.*, 2016). Through this means, they elicit financial assistance from individuals sympathetic to their cause and from groups with which they have established linkages. While this provides us with an insight into the transformation and sophistication of terrorism, critics argue that the features of the 'new' terrorism do not differ from what was previously known and should rather be seen as new waves of terrorism. However, terrorists and insurgents are not the only armed groups whose activities require attention. Other armed groups, such as militias, equally pose significant threats and security challenges that could destabilize a state and undermine the provision of public goods and services, hence the need to understand the militia-armed group.

Conflict resolution and third-party intervention

Conflict resolution refers to different techniques for managing, settling, negotiating, mediating, or ending various forms and types of conflict situations. The aim of conflict resolution is to provide alternatives to violence and to end the use of violence by armed groups or hostile belligerents. Several scholars, analysts, policymakers, and mediators have proposed models and frameworks for managing and resolving conflicts of interpersonal, group, or interstate nature, depending on the context in which they manifest (Kriesberg, 2019). This made Hansen (2008) describe the field as a "pluralistic discipline requiring a number of conceptions and methods to address different kinds of conflict." However, one framework that provides important insight for understanding the resolution of new wars using military might, such as the Plateau incidence in this study, is third-party intervention, a common approach in contemporary conflict resolution (Abalaka, 2020). Third-party intervention involves an external actor acting in various capacities such as conciliation, mediation, arbitration, or as a peacekeeper (Ajiteru, 2019). In recent times, "there has been a shift from seeing third-party intervention as the primary responsibility of external agencies towards appreciating the role of internal 'third parties' or indigenous peacemakers". Often, this includes the use of the military to suppress violence and force a return to peace.

Contemporary counter insurgency, counter terrorism, and the fight against criminal and transnational armed groups are militarized and executed by the armed forces with little support from the police and other intelligence agents (Abalaka, 2020). From the discussion, we see that using the military in society for peace enforcement operations as third-party interveners could serve as a useful strategy, particularly when hostility overwhelms the police, but its activities require close monitoring. This is because the military has 'destructive' power, which can be abused when they support a particular ethnic or religious group. Instead of promoting peace and the smooth resolution of conflict, this can generate further insecurities and threaten the already fragile situation, Sulaiman (2021), conclude that "hard power has always been important in violent conflict, but soft power may be more important in conflict *management*." Given this, it is important to understand the ambiguity that arises when the military is used internally to suppress and contain the threats they pose.

Boko Haram Terrorism

Another form of armed conflict has arisen in North-East Nigeria: the Boko Haram terrorist group, as a microcosm of the Maitatsine terrorist group, which existed in the 1980s in Kano State, North-West Nigeria. Unlike the former, Boko Haram (which literally translates as 'Western education is sacrilegious') has been more resilient and powerful in its dogma and military capability. The group has a contested origin. One account holds that it began in 2002 after a meeting between Mohammed Yusuf (an Islamic cleric) and some dropouts from the University of Maiduguri, where he claimed that 'Western' education is sinful (Gusau, 2019). Yusuf developed this ideology, asking followers to destroy their school certificates because they were in contradiction with Islamic culture due to their association with 'Western' (infidel) culture (Abalaka, 2020). This led to its popularity as Boko Haram, although it emerged as "the Prophet's teachings and Jihad. From the name, the intention is made clear, although it did not begin waging "jihad" until the execution of Mohammed Yusuf in state custody in 2009. This led to the resurgence of the group under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, who made true the threat to wage war on Nigeria, particularly on 'infidels' and those sympathetic to or aiding them.

Since he assumed leadership of the group, Shekau has waged war on Nigeria, posing a serious existential threat to the political stability of Nigeria (Onapajo & Usman, 2015). In its 2015 report, the Global Terrorism Index named Boko Haram the deadliest terrorist group in the world (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015: 2). Its sinister campaign of violence has plunged the country and its neighboring states into a humanitarian crisis, displacing over 1.5 million people across Chad, the Niger Republic, and Cameroon. Since 2009, it has launched several insurgent attacks against the military and bombed or destroyed several critical infrastructures and international agencies, including the UN office in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city. The death toll from its attacks in Nigeria is between 13,000 and 17,000 people, inclusive of security forces. The group is also responsible for the infamous kidnapping of the 276 Chibok girls from their school dormitory on April 14, 2014. Although the Nigerian government has negotiated the release of some of the Chibok schoolgirls, as of today (1 August 2018), 112 of the girls are still missing or in captivity. Not only this, but the group has also shown it is a serious force with the ability to gain and exert control over territory. Between 2014 and 2015, it seized control of about 14 local government areas (approximately 20,000 square meters of land) in three states in north-east Nigeria and declared this an Islamic Republic (Blair, 2015). It took the efforts of a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (a group of hunters, vigilante members, and volunteers familiar with the terrain) and the multinational joint task collaboration of Nigeria, the Niger Republic, Chad, and Cameroon before these areas were liberated from Boko Haram in 2016.

Funding is secured through several illegitimate means, as is typical in the new war thesis. Some have argued that Boko Haram has acted as a militia for desperate politicians seeking political power, who in turn fund it before they lose control. Along with this, the group uses extortion, ransom/prisoner swaps, and high-profile bank raids and robberies. By December 2011, it had raided about 30 commercial banks and stolen millions (Onu & Muhammed, 2021). Some funding originates from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Saudi Arabia, and the

United Kingdom. However, the counterterrorist measures of the Nigerian government have weakened Boko Haram's coercive capacity, regained control of captured territories from the group, and negotiated the release of some of the kidnapped schoolgirls. Due to his weak and ineffective approach, former President Goodluck Jonathan significantly contributed to the group's capacity to wage sustained warfare against the state. To date, Boko Haram continues to unleash terror and sporadic attacks in several parts of Borno State and North-East Nigeria, killing many civilians, causing a humanitarian crisis, and disrupting social and political stability in this region of Nigeria.

Methodology

This study examines the lived experiences of Nigerians who interact with military personnel conducting ISOPs in a society that has been subject to violent conflict. As this study examines the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of people, it uses a qualitative approach. This is because understanding how the citizenry experiences the internal use of the military requires an approach that allows the participants to narrate their individual accounts of incidents.

A quantitative research design would have been limited to quantification and generalization rather than exploring the issues in depth. As there is little research on the interaction of the military with civilians, this was the best approach for this study. Interviews were conducted with a total of 55 participants. The interviews were conducted with people from diverse walks of life until saturation was reached. The interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis with the help of Atlas computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). In line with the precepts of inductive studies, themes emerged from the fieldwork data following the phases of thematic analysis.

Research Strategy

This research was designed as an exploratory study due to its focus on understanding the experiences of civilians with respect to military operations in Plateau State. In line with the above-mentioned philosophical assumptions, the qualitative research strategy was used to guide this research. For conceptual clarity, a research strategy is the fundamental framework which guides the overall conduct and process of social research (Bryman, 2017). The qualitative research strategy places emphasis on understanding rather than measuring, quantifying, and generalizing from the data derived or used for the study. It focuses on giving thick and detailed descriptions of human experiences through observation and interaction with those involved to understand the meaning they attach to their experiences. Several reasons informed the choice of the qualitative research strategy for this study. One was the need to produce a thick textual description of citizens' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes regarding the military operations in their communities. This is important because few studies have examined this in Plateau State, Nigeria. In addition, while several studies have examined the conflict in Plateau State, a thorough literature search across databases and local publications reveals that few have examined it from the perspective of the interaction and experiences of civilians with the military (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2016).

A quantitative study would have required knowing what indicators to use to measure the effect the military has on the security situation in the State, which was not known. However, with qualitative research, themes, ideas and theories are derived from findings made from the data collected in the field. Furthermore, using qualitative strategies generates the primary data to fill the gap in existing theories of CMR to fully explain the phenomenon in Plateau State. Several scholars indicate that this is the most appropriate and suitable research method to elicit the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of people.

Site of the Study

The study site for this research was Plateau State, north-central Nigeria. As indicated in the previous chapter, several other states face recurrent and intermittent violence in Nigeria. These include the Niger-Delta oil-producing region and several states in the Northeast, such as Borno, Adamawa, and Gombe, affected by severe threats and violence from Boko Haram and military coercion. While these states could have been used, Plateau State has been adopted for several reasons. One is that I am more knowledgeable about the terrain, geographical landscape, and conflict situation in Plateau State as I have been a resident here for over 20 years. This insider knowledge was important because it enabled me to navigate the conflict zones with great care and caution to ensure my own safety and security and that of my participants.

Another key factor was my understanding and ability to speak, read, and write the Hausa language, which is spoken as a second language in some localities in Plateau State. This meant language and communication pitfalls were minimized, and participants could speak about their experiences and express their opinions comfortably without having to use an interpreter. The last, and possibly the most important, reason for using Plateau State is the ongoing violence and continuous use of the military to curb the conflict. Despite the military's presence and excessive use of force, they have been unable to stabilize this once-peaceful state in Nigeria. On the contrary, the military has been engaged in extrajudicial killings and genocide, with one of the most recent attacks on civilians on May 2, 2015, in Tarok communities. The actions of the military have affected its relationship with civilians, who are no longer willing to interact with or cooperate with them. The citizenry feels that the military has brought little relief and has rather become part of the security problem (Crisis Group, 2017). This made Plateau State relevant in terms of the aims and goals of this study.

Plateau State has 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs). Of these, six LGAs were used as sites from which participants were selected for this study. These LGAs included:

- i. Jos North LGA
- ii. Jos South LGA
- iii. Riyom LGA
- iv. Barkin Ladi LGA
- v. Mangu LGA
- vi. Bokkos LGA

After a preliminary investigation, several reasons informed the decision to use these LGAs as the sites of the study. These include the fact that military operations in these LGAs were still

very active and that the presence of military personnel in several parts of each of the LGAs was visible and pervasive. Along with this, these LGAs have continued to face violence that involved the military and the local population, and the recentness of the violence meant participants could more readily recollect, narrate, and discuss the issues as they were topical and fresh in their minds.

Selection of Participants

Given that the study aimed to investigate the experiences of civilians during military operations in Plateau State, only civilians were recruited as participants for this study. A criterion was that they must have been residents of any of the LGAs for at least the past five years. They should also not have traveled or stayed away from the state for more than two months within the past five years. These measures were put in place to ensure that every person selected to participate in the study had some level of experience with the conflict and the use of the military. The assumption was that when individuals reside in an environment for a long period of time, they can observe the changes in the environment, develop coping strategies, and adapt to the changing environment. Thus, only participants with the required lived experiences were included in the study. Another criterion was that they were to be over 20 years of age in order to avoid the challenges associated with researching minors, as they may not possess adequate first-hand experience and a good grasp of the origin of the violence.

To elicit a broad spectrum of views and perspectives, participants were sampled from different social categories across the six LGAs. These categories included students of tertiary institutions; traders and artisans; public and private sector employees; employers of labor; unemployed persons; elected representatives; and community leaders, as detailed below.

1. Students of tertiary institutions: In each of the mapped LGAs, there is at least one tertiary learning institution, and these institutions were the point of locating and recruiting participants. These educational institutions were the University of Jos, the Jos Campus of Plateau State Polytechnic, the Barkin Ladi Campus of Plateau State Polytechnic, the College of Nursing and Midwifery Vom, the College of Education Gindiri, and Plateau State University Bokokos.
2. Traders and artisans: Sampling for this category took place at their respective places of work or trade. For traders, markets and shops in each of the sites were used as venues for recruitment. Artisans, such as vehicle mechanics, blacksmiths, tailors, and barbers, were reached by visiting their workshops, garages, stores, or shops.
3. Public and private sector employees: Recruitment for this category came from the respective secretariats, private sector offices, and government offices in each of the LGAs.
4. Employers of labor: A visit to private sector organizations was made to seek the consent of entrepreneurs who employ labor in each of the six LGAs.
5. Unemployed persons: Community and youth leaders in each of the LGAs served as leads for recruiting this category of participants, given the vast knowledge they have of members of their communities.
6. Elected representatives: Snowball sampling was used here to contact and arrange meetings with individuals in this category due to the difficulties faced in accessing them.

7. Community leaders: Most community members easily know their community leaders, and oral inquiry was used to contact and locate them.

Criteria-purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques were used because they offered flexibility in selecting participants who met the objectives of the research (Holstein & Gubrium, 2015; Patton, 2022). Using criterion-purposive sampling ensured that participants met the stated requirements, and I assumed that civilians who fulfilled the criteria must have had some form of interaction with the military. The benefit was that it presented the opportunity to elicit both good and unpleasant experiences with the military, providing a more balanced view. In addition to the broad social categories of participants, I also considered ethnic and religious affiliation when sampling participants to ensure that I included all spectrums in the sampled population. This was important as it included individuals from diverse backgrounds, affiliations, and orientations who had interacted with the military, which enabled me to capture diverse views.

Data Collection

As this study aimed to investigate the views, perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of people in relation to the military, participant observation and one-on-one qualitative interviews were used for data collection. Participant observation was helpful because it provided the opportunity to observe and encounter the role of the military in terms of how they act and behave when interacting with civilians. This was important because it aligned my experience of the military as a researcher (within the period of data collection) with that of participants. It also facilitated a deeper understanding of the experiences of civilians without presenting the challenge of behavior alteration and inaccurate description during interviews. The qualitative interviewing method was selected because it supports the use of open, unstructured conversations with participants and counters the limitations of using a structured interview guide or a standardized questionnaire for all participants. Rather, it requires the use of an aide memoire or broad questions to elicit in-depth responses from participants and to gain 'first-hand experience' with the phenomenon of study (Kvale, 2016). This approach provided the conversational space to comprehensively explore the experiences of participants, the meaning they attached to them, and the opportunity to investigate 'unanticipated' areas of inquiry.

A total of 55 interviews were conducted for the study. This number was decided upon due to the recommendation of conducting not less than 15 interviews for research using qualitative strategies (Bertaux, 2021; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2016). The view is corroborated by many scholars because it is expected that saturation of categories would be achieved from this number of interviews. However, as I wanted to capture diverse views, interviews were continued until a point of saturation was reached. Table 5.1 below presents a breakdown of participants and the sites at which they were sampled.

Table 1: Breakdown of Interviews by LGAs and Social Categories of Participants

<i>S. No</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Traders/Artisans</i>	<i>Public/Private Employees</i>	<i>Employers of Labour</i>	<i>Unemployed Persons</i>	<i>Elected Reps.</i>	<i>Community Leaders</i>	<i>LGAs</i>
1.	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	Jos North
2.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Jos South
3.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Riyom
4.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	B/Ladi
5.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Mangu
6.	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	Bokkos
<i>Sum</i>	12	6	12	7	6	6	6	55

Source: Fieldwork Notes

Although the table does not present other characteristics, such as religious affiliation and ethnicity, careful consideration of these characteristics was made in the sampling process. Another characteristic not covered in the table but that needs emphasizing is the gender of my participants. Of the 55 participants interviewed, 36 were men and 19 were women. Some participants had less interaction with the military than others, irrespective of gender. Interaction with the military was not a criterion used in selecting participants, and the reasons for this are discussed later on in this paper

Data Analysis

Although there are several qualitative data analysis techniques, thematic analysis was used for this study. This choice arose from the exploratory nature of this study and its desire to investigate complex human experiences. It was considered adequate given that it focuses on identifying and describing both obvious and hidden truths within the data. As an analytical tool, thematic analysis is considered the most adequate and useful tool for investigating "complexities of meaning within a textual data set". Braun and Clarke (2016) indicate that it is a vital analytical tool for describing and examining the meanings and experiences individuals have about a given phenomenon. This shows the approach was suitable for this study, which sought to understand the lived experiences of people. The analysis was conducted with the aid of Atlas.ti 8 computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). It followed a six-phase approach, which involved getting familiarized with the data, coding the data, generating themes, reviewing the themes, defining, and naming the themes, and producing the report by way of analysis. As this was an inductive study, themes were derived from the fieldwork and not from existing literature or my prior knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has examined the experiences of civilians with the military ISOPs in Plateau State, Nigeria. The aim was to understand whether the state exercises adequate civil control over the armed forces to ensure that they do not become a threat to the citizenry and exacerbate insecurity. To understand the issues, the study argues that there is a relationship between

authority and conflict; hence, a conflict theory explanation was used to explain why conflicts occur in society. It notes that dissatisfaction with marginalization or the deprivation of certain sections of society tends to compel the desire for social change, including using violence where non-violent alternatives fail. Typically, where the problems are not addressed promptly, it results in insecurity that threatens both the political and social stability of the state.

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