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NON-STATE ACTORS' COLLABORATION AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN KOGI STATE, 2015-2023

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State, Nigeria, from 2015 to 2023. It investigates how vigilante groups, traditional institutions, community development associations, faith-based organisations, youth groups, and civil society organisations collectively contributed to addressing kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, and cult-related violence. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were obtained through questionnaires and key informant interviews, while secondary data were sourced from scholarly publications, government documents, policy reports, and security agency records. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic content analysis. The study is anchored on Collaborative Governance Theory, which emphasises shared responsibility and collective action in addressing complex security challenges. The findings indicate that collaboration among non-state actors improved community surveillance, intelligence sharing, early warning, conflict resolution, and crime prevention. However, inadequate funding, weak coordination, leadership rivalry, limited institutional capacity, and the absence of formal operational frameworks reduced the effectiveness of these efforts. The study concludes that stronger institutional collaboration, improved funding, capacity building, and formal coordination mechanisms are essential for sustainable community-based security management in Kogi State.

Keywords: Vigilante Groups, Collaborative Governance, Community Policing.

Introduction

Security is a fundamental responsibility of the state and a prerequisite for sustainable development, political stability, economic growth, and social cohesion. Traditionally, the state has been regarded as the sole legitimate provider of security through institutions such as the military, police, and intelligence agencies, consistent with Weber's (1946) conception of the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. However, the evolving nature of security threats including terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, communal conflicts, and cybercrime has exposed the limitations of state security institutions, particularly in developing countries. This has encouraged more inclusive approaches that incorporate the contributions of non-state actors in security management (Buzan, *et al.,* 1998). Across the world, security governance has increasingly shifted from an exclusively state-centred approach to collaborative arrangements involving state and non-state actors. Vigilante groups, traditional institutions, community development associations, faith-based organisations, youth groups, and civil society organisations now play important roles in intelligence gathering, crime prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and community mobilisation. Their proximity to local communities enables them to respond quickly to emerging threats and complement the efforts of formal security agencies (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011; Aning & Edu-Afful, 2013).

This shift reflects the principles of collaborative governance, which emphasise shared responsibility, cooperation, and collective decision-making in addressing complex public challenges. According to Ansell and Gash (2008), collaboration among government and non-state stakeholders enhances the formulation and implementation of effective public policies. In the security sector, such partnerships strengthen intelligence sharing, early warning systems, conflict mediation, and community participation, thereby improving local capacity to prevent and respond to insecurity. Nigeria has experienced persistent security challenges since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, communal violence, armed robbery, and separatist agitations have continued to threaten lives, property, and socio-economic development while eroding public confidence in formal security institutions (International Crisis Group, 2020). These challenges have increased reliance on community-based initiatives and strengthened the role of non-state actors in supporting security management.

Kogi State presents a particularly important case because of its strategic location, sharing boundaries with ten states and the Federal Capital Territory. Its position as a major transportation and commercial corridor has also made it vulnerable to kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, cult-related violence, and farmer-herder clashes. Between 2015 and 2023, these threats disrupted economic activities, agriculture, transportation, and the safety of residents. In response, vigilante groups, traditional rulers, community development associations, religious organisations, youth groups, and civil society organisations collaborated through community surveillance, intelligence sharing, conflict mediation, and public awareness campaigns to enhance local security (Ilelah *et al.,* 2022). Despite these efforts, collaboration among non-state actors has been hindered by inadequate funding, weak coordination, limited institutional capacity, poor logistics, leadership rivalries, and the absence of formal operational frameworks. These constraints have reduced the effectiveness and sustainability of community-based security initiatives. Against this background, this study examines collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023. It analyses the forms of collaboration, evaluates their contributions to security management, and identifies the challenges limiting their effectiveness. The study also provides policy recommendations for strengthening collaborative security governance and enhancing sustainable peace and security in Kogi State.

Objective of the study

i. To identify the forms of collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023.
ii. To examine the contributions of collaboration among non-state actors to security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023.
iii. To identify the challenges affecting collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023.
iv. To recommend strategies for strengthening collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State.

Research Questions

i. What are the major forms of collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023?
ii. How has collaboration among non-state actors contributed to security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023?
iii. What challenges hinder effective collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023?
iv. What strategies can strengthen collaboration among non-state actors for effective security management in Kogi State?

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Non-State Actors

Non-state actors are individuals, groups, or organisations that operate independently of government establishments but contribute meaningfully to security, social, political, or economic, activities within a given state. In the context of security governance, non-state actors include community policing committees, civil society organisations, hunters' associations, vigilante groups, neighborhood watch groups, and private security companies (Yusuf, 2025). The emergence of non-state security actors in Nigeria is directly linked closely to the inability of state security agencies to adequately address growing insecurity. In many communities settlement, particularly rural areas, non-state actors provide surveillance, intelligence gathering, crime prevention, and rapid response services where the presence of state security agencies is limited or ineffective (Nwodo, *et al.,* 2025).

Non-state actors have become imperative stakeholders in local or communities security management. Vigilante groups and local hunters often assist formal security agencies by monitoring suspicious activities, identifying criminal hideouts, and protecting communities from attacks. Their deep understanding of local terrain and social networks makes them effective in grassroots intelligence gathering. However, concerns have also been raised regarding lack of professional training, human rights abuses, political manipulation, and absence of proper legal regulation surrounding the activities of these groups (Andrew *et al.,* 2024).

Collaboration of Non-State Actors

Collaboration among non-state actors has become an important feature of contemporary security governance, particularly where state security institutions face operational and capacity limitations. In Nigeria, persistent insecurity has encouraged cooperation among vigilante groups, hunters' associations, civil society organisations (CSOs), traditional institutions, faith-based organisations, and private security companies in supporting local security initiatives (Ajayi, 2025; Lord-Mallam, 2024; Obasa, 2023). These actors work together through intelligence sharing, joint patrols, conflict mediation, community mobilisation, and crime prevention activities. Their strong

community presence enables them to identify emerging threats, provide early warning, and support timely responses to crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal violence. This cooperation enhances local resilience and strengthens community security (Miller, 2025; Odion, *et al.,* 2024). The roots of this collaboration can be traced to traditional self-help systems in which hunters, community vigilantes, and traditional rulers maintained law and order before the emergence of modern policing. Although formal security institutions later assumed primary responsibility for public safety, the resurgence of violent crime has renewed the importance of these community-based arrangements. Between 2015 and 2023, increasing incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, and communal conflicts in Kogi State encouraged closer cooperation among non-state actors and formal security agencies through intelligence sharing, consultative security meetings, community policing, and joint surveillance operations (Lord-Mallam, 2024; Miller, 2025).

Collaboration may take either formal or informal forms. Formal arrangements include registered vigilante organisations, community policing structures, and organised intelligence-sharing mechanisms. Informal collaboration relies on voluntary cooperation among traditional leaders, religious organisations, community associations, and residents without established legal or institutional frameworks (Ajayi, 2025; Odion, *et al.,* 2024). Despite its value, collaboration among non-state actors is constrained by weak legal frameworks, inadequate funding, limited training, poor coordination, logistical challenges, political interference, and the absence of standard operating procedures. Concerns about accountability and human rights abuses have also affected public confidence in some community security initiatives (Obasa, 2023; Lord-Mallam, 2024; Miller, 2025). Even with these limitations, collaboration among non-state actors remains central to community-based security management in Nigeria, as it promotes information sharing, coordinated action, conflict prevention, and active community participation while complementing the efforts of formal security institutions.

Security Management

Security management is a multidimensional concept that refers to the systematic planning, coordination, and implementation of measures designed to prevent, control, and respond to threats against individuals, organizations, communities, and the state. At its core, security management seeks to protect lives, property, values, and institutional stability from both internal and external dangers. Traditionally associated with military defense and law enforcement, the concept has expanded over time to encompass broader social, economic, political, and human dimensions of security. Security management entails the systematic coordination of policies, strategies, and practices to address threats to societal safety and stability. It spans preventive, reactive, and remedial measures implemented by both state and non-state entities (Oshita *el. al.,* 2019).

Oshita *el. al.,* (2019), characterise security management as multi-faceted, encompassing military, political, economic, and environmental dimensions. However, the proliferation of actors in security management often leads to overlapping responsibilities, operational inefficiencies, and complexities in achieving conflict resolution, as Sennewald and Baillie (2020) critically observe. According to Oshita *et. al.,* (2019), Kautilya stated in Arthashastra that a state may face four distinct kinds of dangers. Internal threats, external threats, externally assisted internal threats, and internally assisted external threats are the different categories of dangers. He asserts that of these four categories of dangers, domestic threats need to be dealt with right away. This is because they are far more harmful than external threats, much like the fear of a snake lurking around the corner. The internal enemy poses the greatest threat.

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Empirical Review

Ajayi (2025) conducted a study titled "Non-State Actors and Security Management in Kogi State, Nigeria." The study examined the contributions of non-state actors to security management in Kogi State using both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were generated through interviews and questionnaire, while documentary evidence complemented the analysis. The study found that vigilante groups, hunters, community associations, and private security organisations have become indispensable partners in maintaining peace and supporting formal security institutions. However, constitutional limitations, inadequate logistics, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient government support constrained their effectiveness. The study recommended comprehensive security sector reforms and stronger cooperation among stakeholders. Although Ajayi's study focused broadly on the role of non-state actors in security management, it did not specifically examine collaboration among non-state actors themselves. Rather, emphasis was placed on the relationship between non-state actors and formal security institutions. The present study differs by specifically investigating the forms, contributions, and challenges of collaboration among non-state actors in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023.

Agbiboa (2021), in his study "The Precariousness of Protection: Civilian Defense Groups Countering Boko Haram in Northeastern Nigeria," employed a qualitative case study approach to examine the activities of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in counterinsurgency operations. The study found that community-based security groups significantly enhanced intelligence gathering and military operations against Boko Haram. However, concerns relating to human rights violations, accountability, and post-conflict reintegration remained major challenges. Although the study provides valuable insights into collaboration between community groups and formal security agencies, it is geographically limited to North-Eastern Nigeria and focuses primarily on insurgency. The present study differs by examining collaboration among diverse non-state actors in addressing multiple forms of insecurity in Kogi State.

Iloh and Nwokedi (2019) investigated "Non-State Actors and Internal Security Management in Nigeria: The Case of Vigilante Groups." The study relied on documentary analysis to assess the contribution of vigilante groups to internal security management. The findings showed that vigilante groups' filled important security gaps by supporting crime prevention, intelligence gathering, and community policing where state security agencies were overstretched. The authors argued for legal reforms to regulate vigilante operations and improve collaboration with state institutions. The study concentrated primarily on vigilante groups as a single category of non-state actors and did not investigate collaboration among different non-state organisations. It also lacked empirical field data. The present study fills this gap by adopting a mixed-methods approach and examining collaboration among multiple non-state actors in Kogi State.

Usman *et al.,* (2023) conducted a study titled "Assessing the Impact of Vigilante Patrolling and Community Engagement on Crime Prevention in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria." The study employed survey research and examined crime prevention strategies adopted by vigilante groups. Findings indicated that vigilante patrols and community participation significantly reduced crime and improved local security despite challenges such as inadequate logistics, poor remuneration, and insufficient government support. The study focused on a single local government area and only examined vigilante operations. It neither analysed collaboration among various categories of non-state actors nor covered the entire state. The present study extends the geographical scope to Kogi State and examines collaborative relationships among multiple non-state actors between 2015 and 2023.

Gap in Literature

The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that non-state actors contribute significantly to security management through intelligence gathering, crime prevention, community policing, conflict mediation, and peacebuilding. Existing research has also examined the roles of vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, and other community-based security actors, including studies conducted in Kogi State. For example, Ajayi (2025) examined the contributions of non-state actors to security management in Kogi State, highlighting their complementary roles in supporting formal security institutions. However, the study did not specifically investigate the nature, forms, effectiveness, and challenges of collaboration among different categories of non-state actors themselves, such as vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, faith-based organisations, youth organisations, civil society organisations, and community development associations. Similarly, many other studies have focused either on individual categories of non-state actors or on collaboration between state and non-state actors, with limited attention to inter-organisational collaboration among non-state actors. This study addresses that gap by empirically examining the forms, effectiveness, and challenges of collaboration among diverse non-state actors in security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on collaborative governance theory, developed by Chris Ansell and Alison Gash (2008). The theory explains how governments and non-state stakeholders jointly address complex public problems that cannot be effectively managed by a single institution. Introduced in their seminal article, *Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice*, the theory was developed from a meta-analysis of 137 collaborative governance cases, through which the authors identified the conditions, processes, and institutional arrangements necessary for successful collaboration between public agencies and non-state stakeholders. Ansell and Gash (2008) describe collaborative governance as a formal and inclusive decision-making arrangement in which public institutions engage non-state stakeholders to formulate or implement public policies and programmes through dialogue, consensus, and shared responsibility. The theory emerged from the recognition that contemporary challenges such as insecurity, poverty, environmental degradation, public health emergencies, and social conflict require coordinated action involving government agencies, civil society organisations, traditional institutions, private organisations, and community groups.

The theory identifies four interrelated components that determine the success of collaborative governance: starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and the collaborative process. Starting conditions refer to existing relationships, levels of trust, incentives for participation, and the balance of power among stakeholders before collaboration begins. Institutional design focuses on clear operational rules, transparency, accountability, and broad stakeholder participation. Facilitative leadership promotes dialogue, manages disagreements, builds consensus, and sustains commitment to shared objectives. The collaborative process involves continuous communication, mutual trust, shared understanding, joint decision-making, and collective action. The theory is particularly relevant to security governance because contemporary security threats require coordinated responses from multiple stakeholders. In Nigeria, formal security institutions increasingly interact with vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, community development associations, faith-based organisations, youth groups, civil society organisations, and private security providers to improve intelligence gathering, community surveillance, conflict mediation, crime prevention, and public awareness. These partnerships

reflect an evolving approach to security governance based on shared responsibility rather than exclusive state control.

Collaborative Governance Theory provides a suitable framework for this study because it explains how different categories of non-state actors cooperate in managing insecurity in Kogi State. It also provides a basis for examining how trust, leadership, communication, institutional arrangements, coordination, and resource mobilisation influence collaborative security efforts. However, the theory has limitations. It assumes that stakeholders are willing to cooperate and reach consensus, yet collaboration is often constrained by conflicting interests, mistrust, political interference, unequal power relations, inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and limited legal support. Furthermore, consensus-building may delay decision-making during security emergencies, while poor coordination and weak accountability mechanisms can undermine the effectiveness of collaborative security initiatives.

The findings of this study strongly support the propositions of Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The first element, starting conditions, was evident in the widespread insecurity experienced in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023. The increasing incidence of kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, farmer-herder clashes, and cult-related violence created a common need for collective action among vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, community development associations, faith-based organisations, youth groups, and civil society organisations. These shared security challenges provided the motivation for collaboration. The second element, institutional design, was reflected in the organisational arrangements through which non-state actors coordinated their activities. The findings show that collaboration was largely community-driven, relying on local security committees, traditional institutions, community meetings, and informal communication channels. However, the absence of formal operational guidelines, weak coordination mechanisms, and inadequate institutional support limited the effectiveness and sustainability of these collaborative efforts.

The third element, facilitative leadership, was demonstrated through the coordinating roles played by traditional rulers, community leaders, religious leaders, and leaders of vigilante and hunters' groups. These leaders mobilised community members, promoted dialogue, resolved disputes among participating groups, coordinated joint security activities, and strengthened cooperation in responding to emerging security threats. The fourth element, the collaborative process, was reflected in the continuous interaction among non-state actors through intelligence sharing, joint patrols, community surveillance, conflict mediation, public sensitisation, and information exchange. These collaborative activities improved early warning, strengthened crime prevention, and enhanced local security management. Nevertheless, inadequate funding, poor logistics, leadership rivalry, limited institutional capacity, and weak accountability reduced the effectiveness of collaboration.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining primary and secondary data to examine collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023. The approach enabled the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence, providing a comprehensive understanding of the forms, contributions, and challenges of collaboration. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to respondents across the three senatorial districts of Kogi State and key informant interviews with representatives of vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, community development associations, faith-based organisations, youth organisations, civil society organisations, and community leaders. Questionnaire responses were analysed using descriptive

statistics (frequencies and percentages), while interview data were analysed thematically. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government publications, policy documents, security agency reports, conference papers, newspapers, and publications of organisations such as the International Crisis Group (ICG), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). These sources provided contextual and historical information on non-state actors, collaborative security initiatives, and security management in Kogi State.

The documentary review followed a systematic search strategy. Relevant literature published mainly between 2008 and 2024 was retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, etc. Approximately 100 publications were initially identified, with about **70** meeting the inclusion criteria for detailed review. Qualitative data from documents and interviews were coded according to the study objectives and organised into themes on forms of collaboration, contributions to security management, and challenges affecting collaboration. Similar codes were merged into broader themes and compared across data sources to ensure consistency. Quantitative findings complemented the qualitative evidence through triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results. Despite the strengths of the mixed-methods approach, the study has some limitations. Documentary sources differed in coverage and quality, while questionnaire and interview responses were subject to participants' perceptions and recall. However, the use of multiple data sources and triangulation improved the reliability and validity of the findings.

Evolution of Non-State Actors in Nigeria

The evolution of non-state actors in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial era when traditional rulers, hunters, age-grade associations, and community vigilantes were responsible for maintaining law and order and protecting their communities. During the colonial period, the introduction of formal policing reduced their prominence, although indigenous security structures continued to operate, particularly in rural areas (Tamuno, 1970). Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, security became largely the responsibility of formal state institutions such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Armed Forces. However, increasing crime, communal conflicts, insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, and other security challenges exposed the limitations of state security agencies, leading to the resurgence of non-state actors. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, organisations such as vigilante groups, hunter associations, civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, traditional institutions, neighbourhood watch groups, and private security firms have increasingly complemented government efforts through intelligence gathering, community policing, conflict mediation, and crime prevention (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011).

Notable developments include the emergence of the Bakassi Boys in 1998, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in 2013, and the Western Nigeria Security Network (Amotekun Corps) in 2020. These initiatives demonstrate the growing institutionalisation of non-state actors in Nigeria's security architecture. Despite challenges such as inadequate funding, weak coordination, poor legal frameworks, and political interference, non-state actors have become indispensable partners in contemporary security governance, reflecting a shift from an exclusively state-centred approach to collaborative security management (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011).

The Rise of Non-State Actors in Kogi State, Nigeria

The emergence of non-state actors as key participants in security management in Kogi State is largely a response to the increasing incidence of insecurity and the limited capacity of formal security agencies to provide adequate protection for lives and property. Although traditional rulers, hunters, and community vigilante groups have long performed informal security functions,

their roles became more pronounced as kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, cult-related violence, and farmer-herder clashes intensified across the state (Baker, 2008). These security challenges highlighted the need for greater community involvement in crime prevention and intelligence gathering, particularly in rural areas where the presence of government security institutions remains limited (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004). Kogi State's strategic location has also influenced the expansion of non-state security initiatives. Situated at the confluence of northern and southern Nigeria and sharing boundaries with ten states and the Federal Capital Territory, the state serves as a major transportation and commercial corridor (Kogi State Government, 2023). While this geographical position enhances trade and mobility, it also creates opportunities for the movement of criminal networks engaged in kidnapping, arms trafficking, banditry, and other organised crimes (SBM Intelligence, 2021). Consequently, many communities established local security structures to support formal agencies through neighbourhood patrols, intelligence sharing, and conflict mediation (CLEEN Foundation, 2016).

The restoration of democratic rule in 1999 coincided with a gradual increase in security threats across Nigeria, encouraging wider community participation in local security governance (International Crisis Group, 2020). Socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and weak law enforcement further encouraged the formation and expansion of vigilante groups, hunter associations, community development associations, youth organisations, and neighbourhood watch committees (Onuoha, 2017). These groups assumed complementary roles by monitoring suspicious activities, providing local intelligence, preventing crime, and supporting law enforcement agencies in maintaining public order (Baker, 2008). The growing prevalence of kidnapping, highway robbery, communal violence, and farmer-herder conflicts increased the relevance of non-state actors in Kogi State (Nigeria Watch, 2023; ACLED, 2023). Vigilante organisations and hunters intensified surveillance and patrol activities, while traditional institutions, religious organisations, and civil society groups facilitated dialogue, peacebuilding, public awareness campaigns, and conflict resolution. Community-based security committees also strengthened information exchange between residents and formal security agencies, contributing to more coordinated responses to emerging threats (OECD, 2016; UNDP, 2021).

Government intervention further enhanced the participation of non-state actors through the establishment of the Kogi State Vigilante Service, which provided a legal framework for organised community security and strengthened collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, the Department of State Services, and the military (Kogi State Vigilante Service Law, 2024). This institutional arrangement improved coordination in intelligence gathering, joint patrols, and emergency response, thereby enhancing local security efforts (Nigeria Police Force, 2022). Today, non-state actors constitute an integral part of Kogi State's security architecture. Through community policing, early warning mechanisms, mediation, public sensitisation, and crime prevention, they complement the efforts of formal security institutions and contribute to maintaining peace and public safety (UNDP, 2021). Their increasing involvement reflects the broader shift from an exclusively state-centred approach to a collaborative model of security governance that recognises the shared responsibility of government and local communities (Abrahams, 1998; Baker, 2010). Despite persistent constraints, including inadequate funding, logistical deficiencies, weak coordination, and regulatory limitations, non-state actors remain important partners in strengthening security management and enhancing community resilience in Kogi State (International Crisis Group, 2020; Onuoha, 2017).

Relationship between Non-State Actors

The relationship among non-state actors in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023 was characterised by cooperation, mutual support, coordination, and shared responsibility in addressing the state's growing security challenges. Faced with increasing incidents of kidnapping, armed robbery, cult-related violence, communal conflicts, and farmer-herder clashes, various non-state actors recognised that no single organisation possessed the capacity to respond effectively to the evolving security environment. Consequently, vigilante groups, hunter associations, traditional institutions, faith-based organisations, community development associations, youth organisations, neighbourhood watch groups, women's organisations, and civil society organisations developed collaborative relationships aimed at strengthening community security and complementing one another's efforts (Ajayi, 2025; Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011).

A major feature of this relationship was the establishment of formal and informal communication networks. Non-state actors maintained regular contact through community security meetings, consultations, traditional council gatherings, religious forums, and local security committees. These platforms enabled them to exchange information, discuss emerging threats, coordinate security activities, and collectively develop strategies for preventing crime and maintaining public order. Such interactions strengthened trust, improved coordination, and reduced duplication of responsibilities among the various organisations (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The relationship among non-state actors was also evident in intelligence sharing. Community leaders, traditional rulers, vigilante groups, hunters, youth organisations, and neighbourhood watch groups routinely exchanged information concerning suspicious individuals, criminal hideouts, kidnapping syndicates, and other security threats. Traditional rulers often acted as coordinators by receiving intelligence from community members and disseminating verified information to other non-state actors for appropriate action. This collaborative intelligence network enhanced situational awareness and strengthened local security responses (Usman *et al.,* 2023; Ajayi, 2025).

Another important dimension of their relationship was operational cooperation during security activities. Vigilante groups frequently collaborated with hunter associations during community patrols because hunters possessed extensive knowledge of forests, footpaths, and difficult terrains often used by criminals. Youth organisations and community volunteers also supported surveillance activities, while community development associations provided logistical assistance. Through these joint operations, non-state actors improved crime prevention, increased security presence within communities, and enhanced public confidence in local security initiatives (Iloh & Nwokedi, 2019). Traditional institutions maintained close relationships with other non-state actors by providing leadership, mediation, and legitimacy to community security arrangements. Traditional rulers coordinated community responses to insecurity, resolved disputes among security groups, mobilised local support, and encouraged cooperation among different organisations. Their moral authority and knowledge of local customs strengthened unity and facilitated peaceful collaboration among diverse community actors (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2004).

Faith-based organisations complemented these relationships by promoting peace, tolerance, and social cohesion. Religious leaders collaborated with traditional institutions, civil society organisations, and community associations to organise peace campaigns, interfaith dialogues, conflict mediation programmes, and public awareness initiatives. Through these activities, they encouraged community members to support local security efforts and reject violence, criminality, and social divisions (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2011). Civil society

organisations maintained productive relationships with other non-state actors by providing advocacy, peacebuilding support, human rights education, capacity building, and public sensitisation. They organised training programmes on conflict resolution, community policing, and civic responsibility while also promoting accountability and respect for the rule of law among community security actors. Their involvement strengthened institutional capacity and encouraged more structured collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Community development associations served as important coordinating bodies by mobilising financial, material, and human resources to support local security initiatives. They collaborated with vigilante groups, hunters, youth associations, religious organisations, and traditional institutions to provide patrol equipment, communication facilities, motorcycles, fuel, uniforms, and other operational resources necessary for effective security operations. Their support enhanced the sustainability of community-based security initiatives (Usman *et al.,* 2023). Despite these positive relationships, collaboration among non-state actors was not without challenges. Differences in organisational mandates, leadership rivalries, and competition for limited resources, communication gaps, and occasional mistrust sometimes affected the effectiveness of collective action. In some communities, inadequate coordination mechanisms and the absence of clearly defined operational procedures created overlaps in responsibilities and reduced operational efficiency. Nevertheless, these challenges rarely undermined the overall commitment of non-state actors to safeguarding their communities (Aina, 2024; Iloh & Nwokedi, 2019).

Table 1, Collaboration among Non-State Actors in Security Management in Kogi State (2015–2023)

Actor	Partner Actor	Type of Collaboration	Illustrative Example (Location/Year)
Vigilante groups	Hunters' associations	Joint patrols, forest surveillance, intelligence sharing	Joint patrols along forest routes in Ankpa LGA (2022) to curb kidnapping activities.
Traditional institutions	Vigilante groups	Intelligence coordination, community mobilisation, dispute resolution	Traditional rulers convened security meetings in Idah LGA (2021) following rising kidnapping incidents.
Faith-based organisations	Traditional institutions	Peace campaigns, interfaith dialogue, conflict mediation	Religious and traditional leaders organised peace meetings in Lokoja LGA (2020) after communal tensions.
Community Development Associations	Vigilante groups and hunters	Provision of logistics, fundraising, patrol support	Community associations provided motorcycles and fuel for local patrols in Kabba/Bunu LGA (2022).
Civil Society Organisations	Faith-based organisations and community groups	Capacity building, peacebuilding, civic education	Civil society groups organised peace and civic education programmes in Lokoja (2021).

Source: *Fieldwork 2026*

Table 1, shows that collaboration among non-state actors in Kogi State was based on complementary roles rather than organisational independence. Vigilante groups and hunters

worked together during patrols and intelligence gathering, while traditional institutions coordinated information exchange and community mobilisation. Faith-based organisations promoted peacebuilding and conflict mediation, community development associations mobilised financial and logistical resources, youth organisations strengthened surveillance and neighbourhood watch activities, and civil society organisations provided advocacy, training, and civic education. These complementary roles enhanced local security by improving intelligence sharing, crime prevention, and community participation. Despite these achievements, collaboration was constrained by inadequate funding, limited logistics, leadership rivalry, communication gaps, and the absence of formal operational frameworks. These challenges occasionally reduced coordination and operational effectiveness but did not prevent non-state actors from working together in response to insecurity across the study area.

Findings

The documentary analysis identified four major themes relating to collaboration among non-state actors in security management in Kogi State between 2015 and 2023. The themes emerged through systematic coding of the reviewed documents based on the study objectives.

Table 11: Summary of Themes Identified from Documentary Analysis

Theme	Supporting Sources	Evidence from the Documents
Nature of insecurity	International Crisis Group (2020); Ilelah *et al.* (2022); Aina (2024)	The reviewed documents consistently identified kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, farmer-herder clashes, cult-related violence, and related crimes as the dominant security threats in Kogi State.
Forms of collaboration	Ajayi (2025); Abrahamsen & Williams (2011); Usman *et al.* (2023)	The documents showed that non-state actors collaborated through intelligence sharing, joint patrols, community policing, conflict mediation, early warning mechanisms, public sensitisation, and resource mobilisation.
Contributions to security management	Iloh & Nwokedi (2019); Usman *et al.* (2023); Ajayi (2025)	The reviewed literature indicated that collaboration improved intelligence gathering, strengthened surveillance, enhanced crime prevention, increased community participation, and complemented formal security agencies.
Challenges affecting collaboration	Aina (2024); International Crisis Group (2020); Ajayi (2025)	The documents identified inadequate funding, weak coordination, poor logistics, limited institutional capacity, political interference, leadership rivalry, communication gaps, and weak legal frameworks as major constraints on effective collaboration.

Source: *Fieldwork, 2026*

Table 11. The thematic analysis shows that insecurity in Kogi State created the need for closer cooperation among vigilante groups, hunters, traditional institutions, faith-based organisations, youth organisations, civil society organisations, neighbourhood watch groups, and community development associations. Across the reviewed documents, collaboration was consistently associated with intelligence sharing, joint patrols, conflict mediation, public awareness campaigns,

and community surveillance. Although these collaborative efforts strengthened local security management, their effectiveness was constrained by institutional, financial, and organisational challenges.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that collaboration among non-state actors has become an important component of security management in Kogi State. The prevalence of kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, cult-related violence, and farmer-herder clashes created conditions that encouraged collective action among community-based organisations. This finding supports Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008), which argues that complex public problems are better addressed through cooperation, shared responsibility, and coordinated action among multiple stakeholders.

The identified forms of collaboration including intelligence sharing, joint patrols, conflict mediation, early warning systems, public sensitisation, and resource mobilisation are consistent with the findings of Abrahamsen and Williams (2011), Iloh and Nwokedi (2019), and Usman et al. (2023), who similarly found that community-based security actors complement formal security institutions by providing local knowledge, improving surveillance, and strengthening crime prevention.

The findings also show that the effectiveness of collaboration depends on institutional support. Inadequate funding, weak coordination, poor logistics, leadership rivalry, communication gaps, and limited legal frameworks reduced operational efficiency and constrained the sustainability of collaborative initiatives. These constraints correspond with the institutional design and facilitative leadership components of Collaborative Governance Theory, which emphasise the importance of clear operational arrangements, effective leadership, and sustained stakeholder engagement for successful collaboration.

Conclusion

This study examined non-state actors' collaboration and security management in Kogi State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2023. The findings revealed that increasing insecurity, particularly kidnapping, armed robbery, communal conflicts, and cult-related violence, necessitated greater collaboration among non-state actors such as vigilante groups, hunter associations, traditional institutions, faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, youth groups, and community development associations. Their collaboration in intelligence sharing, joint patrols, conflict mediation, community policing, public sensitisation, and resource mobilisation significantly complemented the efforts of formal security agencies and enhanced community security. However, the study also found that inadequate funding, weak coordination, poor logistics, insufficient training, and the absence of clear legal and institutional frameworks limited the effectiveness of these collaborative efforts. The study therefore concludes that non-state actors have become indispensable partners in security management in Kogi State, but their contributions can only be sustained through stronger institutional support, improved coordination, capacity building, and appropriate policy and legal frameworks that promote effective collaborative security governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. The Kogi State Government should establish a comprehensive institutional framework that promotes collaboration among non-state actors and between non-state actors and formal security agencies. The framework should provide clearly defined operational guidelines,

regular joint security meetings, standard communication channels, coordinated intelligence-sharing mechanisms, and clearly assigned responsibilities for each category of non-state actor. This will improve coordination, reduce duplication of responsibilities, strengthen accountability, and enhance community-based security management.

ii. The Federal and Kogi State Governments, in partnership with development agencies and civil society organisations, should invest in continuous capacity-building programmes. Training should cover intelligence gathering, community policing, conflict mediation, human rights, emergency response, leadership, and the use of modern communication technologies. In addition, patrol vehicles, motorcycles, communication equipment, uniforms, protective gear, and operational funding should be provided to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of non-state security actors.

iii. Governments should develop legislation and policies that clearly define the legal status, operational responsibilities, oversight mechanisms, and accountability standards of community-based security organisations. Such reforms should also provide safeguards against abuse of power, protect human rights, and strengthen collaboration with formal security agencies.

iv. Traditional rulers, religious institutions, community development associations, youth groups, women's organisations, and civil society organisations should continue to mobilise residents to participate actively in crime prevention, intelligence sharing, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. Government should also encourage community-based funding initiatives and public-private partnerships to strengthen local ownership and sustain collaborative security programmes.

v. Governments should therefore implement policies that reduce youth unemployment, poverty, social exclusion, drug abuse, and illiteracy through employment generation, vocational training, entrepreneurship development, improved educational opportunities, and rural development programmes. Addressing these root causes will complement community-based security initiatives and contribute to more sustainable peace and security in Kogi State.

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