Terrorism in a Semi-Peripheral State of Africa: Boko- Haram Conflict and its Contending Perspectives in the North - Eastern Nigeria

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to anatomize the different contentious issues that instigated the outbreak of Boko-Haram conflict in the North-Eastern Nigeria. Just like any other terrorist organizations, the underlying causes of Boko-Haram conflict are highly contestable. The metamorphoses of Boko-Haram movement over the years have added different colorations to the Boko Haram conundrum in the North-Eastern Nigeria. The study intends to cast new light on the contending perspectives on Boko-Haram conflict in the region beyond common narratives. The study utilized both the secondary and primary sources of data. The primary data were generated through the utility of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and the secondary source of data were generated from textbooks, journals, newspapers and web-based materials. The data generated were analyzed using logic inductive and thematic analyses. The findings of the study were predicated on implicit and explicit factors bolstering Boko-Haram conflict . The findings in this study revealed that Boko-Haram has metamorphosed on five different occasions after the gestation period with different factors responsible for the metamorphoses. Beyond poverty and fragmented Islamic religion which are known as explicit factors, the study revealed some implicit factors that have aided Boko-Haram conflict in the North-East

Keywords: Terrorism; Peripheral State; Boko-Haram; North-East; Nigeria

Introduction

Within the frameworks of Global Terrorism Index and Armed Conflict and Event Location Data Project, Africa has often been regarded as the hotbed of terrorism. From 2015 to 2022, Global terrorism Index ranked 163 countries which cover 99.7 percent of the world population (Ukpong, 2018). Forty out of one hundred and sixty three countries ranked in 2022 are African countries, a figure that represents 40.75 percent of the entire coverage. Although terrorism is a universal syndrome and no region in the world has been spared, while Africa is one of the hardest hit regions; partly due to the challenges of development that have propelled its intensity in the

continent (Ogada, 2013, Olanrewaju, 2019). Terrorism is generally considered a recent development in Africa but the use of terror as a tactic is not new. Terrorism as a major crime is largely considered to be mystifying in the peripheral region of Africa with the 1989 Bilma Bombing which served as watershed in the annals of terrorism in the region. With the emergence of Al- Shabab in Somalia in 2004, Boko- Haram in Nigeria in 2009, Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya in 2011, Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis in Egypt in 2011 and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Africa unarguably became the flashpoint of terror.

As pointed out by Mroszczyk and Abrahms (2021), terrorism on the continent of Africa has risen sharply over the decade. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), in 2015 there were 381 attacks against the soft targets in Africa resulting in 1,394 fatalities. This number rose significantly throughout the years and by 2020 there were 7,108 attacks targeting civilians resulting in 12,519 fatalities (ACLED, 2015). The threat of terrorism has grown geometrically on the continent that by 2022 seven of the top 10 countries in the world in terms of terrorism risk are in Africa. The most notable threat of terrorism in the region emanated from Boko-Haram, in 2014 alone, Boko-Haram and ISIL were jointly responsible for 51% of all claimed global fatalities, 78% of all deaths and 57% of all attacks occurred in just five countries. Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan and Syria (GTI, 2015)

Similarly, based on the statistics released by the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Nigeria, as at 2015 and 2022, ranked as the 3rd and the 6th most terrorized country in the world because of the ever growing violence by the Boko-Haram in the North-East (Osundefenda, 2015, Global Terrorism Index, 2022). The 2015 and 2022 ranking place Nigeria and Somalia as the most terrorism wracked countries in Africa owing to the activities of Boko-Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabab in Somalia. As the activities of other terrorist organizations began to eclipse in the region, Boko-Haram became more lethal with transnational threats. The bombing of United Nations building in Abuja on the 26th August, 2011 that killed at least 21 and wounded 60 people brought the activities of Boko Haram to international spotlight coupled with the abduction of Chibok Girls on the 14th April, 2014 (Sanni, 2022). Until recently that the internal operations of Boko-Haram were bedeviled with the killing of its longtime leader by another splinter group called the Islamic State in West Africa Province, ISWAP, Boko-Haram's reign of terror was the most murderous in the recent history of Africa.

However, the primary objective of this study is to examine the peculiarities of terrorism in a semi-peripheral state of Africa, using Boko-Haram in Nigeria as a case study. The

phenomenon of Boko- Haram is a saturated subject in the literature of conflict studies. Despite the overwhelming literatures on the subject matter, the literatures on contentious perspectives surrounding the outbreak of Boko-Haram are in short supply. As a result of this, this study brings to limelight the contentious issues surrounding the outbreak of Boko-Haram beyond the common narratives.

Contextualizing Terrorism in a Semi-Peripheral State

The modern system of Terrorism is highly typological based on world location and ideological dispositions. As pointed out by the Omar and Albert (2003), there are three types of terrorism based on structural location in international system and ideological justification (Cited in Olanrewaju, 2019). Structural location varies along the three layers of world system into a core, semi periphery and a periphery. Thus, there are terrorist acts perpetrated by major or core actors against core governments. Secondly, there are terrorist acts that originate in the periphery or semi periphery and are directed either at the peripheral or semi periphery governments. Thirdly, there are terrorist acts that originate in the periphery or semi periphery and are turned against core states or at the core outposts (military bases or embassies). This type of terrorism is usually regarded as transnational terrorism (Omar and Albert,2003). While any type of terror has the tendency to adopt any of the three ideological methods, the etymology of modern terrorism has demonstrated more regular pattern, with the advent of waves of terrorist activities characterized by similar ideological themes concentrated on specific areas of the world location.

The Boko-Haram uprising in the North-Eastern Nigeria can be situated within the framework of second and third classifications. Nigeria is a prominent country in Africa, the outer periphery of the world economy and it has been classified as the semi-peripheral state in the region base on comparative economic advantage in the petroleum sector. Despite being the largest oil producer in Africa, Nigerian political system has been hobbled by the internal structure and institutional weakness since 1960. The most devastating turning point in Nigerian history was greeted with the outbreak of Boko-Haram uprising in 2009. "The terrorist movement has caused panic and fear on the Nigerian public at several times, particularly in the North-East and the Lake Chad Basin Countries (LCBC)" (Nwozor and Olanrewaju, 2020).While some of its attacks are directed towards the core state outposts as evident in 2011 Abuja United Nations bombing. In February 2013, the US State Department designated the group together with its splinter group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). The Department further affirmed that Boko -Haram appeared to have posed a significant threat to the local stability in Nigeria, the

Lake Chad Basin and to the core states. Over the years Boko-Haram has posed both the regional and global threats and despite the offensive operations against Boko-Haram under the administration of President Mohammad Buhari, Boko-Haram, Nigeria still appears among the ten most terrorized countries in the world by the GTI 2022 ranking (Bashir and Usman, 2021).

Contending Perspectives on Boko-Haram Conflict in the North-Eastern Nigeria

Different attempts to conceptualize Boko-Haram have generated contending arguments in the academic and public policy domains. Boko-Haram has always been a victim of definitional dilemma, even in Nigeria's policy and political cycles; the definition of Boko-Haram remains controversial and fluid (Olanrewaju, 2019). For many, Boko-Haram is simply an Islamic sect that believes politics in Northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims and was determined to create a pure Islamic state ruled by Sharia law (Omotola, 2014) .Several other studies label Boko- Haram simply as a radical Islamic group indulging in sectarian rebellion (Cited in Omotola, 2014).

However, Boko-Haram is a movement for the propagation and consolidation of an Islamic theocratic state through a tainted means without any Qura'nic reference. According to John Campell, a former US ambassador to Nigeria and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations expressed this sentiment when he observes that Boko-Haram connotes several things at once. "As he argues, Boko-Haram is a movement of grassroots anger among northern people at the continuing depravation and poverty in the north (Cited Omotola, 2014). Boko-Haram is a core group of Mohammed Yusuf's followers who have reconvened around Abubakar Shekau and are exacting revenge against the state. Also, there is another aspect to the group that is often ignored. The group could also be seen as a kind of personality cult, an Islamic millenarianist sect, inspired by a heretical but charismatic preacher (Olanrewaju and Letswa,2016).

Also, prominence is often accorded to the greed-grievance explanations, underscoring the politico-economic softness of the state and attendant deprivations, including rising poverty, unemployment and excruciating corruption. "This is what Salaam (2012) calls risk factors in the absence of protective factors, which make vulnerable young people turn into religious radicals or fanatics when seeking answers to the inadequacies in the polity and society at large" (Cited in Omotola,2014,Ajibola,2010). According to Samson (2013), the perfect antidote to Boko-Haram is to embark on significant governance and political reforms, geared at reversing the historic social and economic imbalance in the northern Nigeria. In a similar vein, Rafiu Mustapha

admitted the difficulty, if not impossibility of having appropriate definition of Boko-Haram (Cited in Omotola, 2014).Throughout the existence of Boko-Haram, it has constantly morphed and changed its nature as it has gone through various incarnations. This evolution has made it difficult for observers to pin the organization down and define it. Boko-Haram today is a product of evolutionary trend. The precise origin of Boko-Haram is shrouded in obscurity. Majority of local and foreign media traced its origin to 2002 (Onuoha, 2013).

Since the inception of Boko-Haram, it has metamorphosed in different ways both in terms of leadership and tactics. According to Taiwan and Olugbode (2009), Boko-Haram was established by Abubakar Lawal in 1995 as *Ahulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra* sect at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State. It flourished as nonviolent organization until Mohammed Yusuf assumed the mantle of leadership in 2002 shortly after Abubakar Lawal left to pursue further education in Saudi Arabia. It will be recalled that Boko-Haram's first violent confrontation against Nigerian state security forces took place on 24 December 2003 when the group launched attack against the police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe State (Onuoha, 2010). "The members of Boko-Haram occupied the two buildings for a number of days, hoisting the flag of Afghanistan's Taliban movement over the camps" (Nwozor and Olanrewaju, 2020). This called for the attention of the police and soldiers to dislodge them, the counter operations by the security operatives eventually led to the killing of 18 members of Boko-Haram while majority of its members were arrested (Onuoha, 2010).

"On 31 December 2003, Boko-Haram left the village and dispersed into other northern states after inscribing the word "Taliban" on a captured vehicle. In 2004 it established a base called Afghanistan in Kanamma village in northern Yobe State" (See Onuoha, 2010, Nwozor and Olanrewaju, 2020). From 2004, the activities of the sect became more worrisome when majority of students withdrew from different schools to promote the activities of Boko-Haram. Worse still, some of them went to the extent of tearing their certificates after serious brainwashing. On the 21 September, 2004, members of Boko- Haram attacked Bama and Gwoza police stations in Borno State, killing several police men and stealing arms and ammunition, the activities that eventually led to incineration of Gwoza police station (Onuoha, 2010).

"Consequently, a few weeks' later police launched a counterattack on the sect during which 24 members were killed and 22 assault rifles and large quantities of ammunition were recovered" (See Onuoha, 2010, Nwozor and Olanrewaju,2020). Boko-Haram became a popular

movement under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. Initially, it was a peaceful movement until 2003, 2004, and 2009 respectively. The 2009 face-off between Boko-Haram members and Nigeria's security agencies marked the beginning of intensified radical approach of Boko-Haram. The 2009 crisis led to the extra judicial killing of their leader which eventually threw caution to the wind by making Boko-Haram to become more radical and brutal in their various attacks.

The radicalism of Boko-Haram started after 2009 uprising, under the new leadership of Abubakar Shekau. Also, Boko Haram was known as Islamic movement at its inception under Mohammed Yusuf, but Abubakar Shekau made it to become one of the sophisticated terrorist groups in the world by pledging allegiance to some international terrorist groups in the world. It is unfortunate today that Boko-Haram has been misrepresented by different scholars and this has grossly affected the state response in this regard. The same interpretations given to Boko-Haram under the previous leaders have not been altered in the evolving literature. There was an iota of Islamism in Boko-Haram movement during the leadership of Mohamed Yusuf but the trend of Boko-Haram under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau has no indication of fighting religious course because Boko-Haram members have attacked both Christians and Muslims as he considered them as unbelievers before his controversial death. It is perplexing that Boko-Haram attacked different emirs in the North, the representatives of the most formidable institutions of Islam and Sharia in Nigeria (Omotola, 2014)

Theoretical Approaches to Boko-Haram Conflict in the North-Eastern Nigeria

Scholars have divulged different theoretical propositions with dearth theoretical generalization to illuminate the causes of Boko-Haram conundrum in the North East (Olanrewaju, 2019 and Letswa,2016, Olanrewaju, 2019). Beyond the common narratives, this work adopts state failure and frustration aggression theories as theoretical approaches to explaining the grievances that propelled Boko-Haram members to resort to terrorism.

Starting with state failure, it is definite that nation states exist to provide basic amenities as well as ensure the standard of living that will provide greater happiness for the greater number of people in line with utilitarian philosophy. It is the responsibility of states to be attentive to the legitimate concerns and demands of their citizens (Rotberg 2002). The success or failure of a state depends primarily on the living condition of the people in the country. Experiences have revealed that majority of states fail to provide basic amenities, security of life and property, heath care facilities, infrastructure, employment opportunities and legal framework for law and order. Though, Nigeria as a state has not failed but all the symptoms of failed state and its indicators are

signposted in the country. Once the state is unable to perform its primary responsibilities, it will definitely lose its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens (Rotberg, 2002). In this kind of situation, some people will naturally transfer their allegiances to more responsive authority groups while some people will put their grievances on the riot gears and go further by becoming terrorists (Benjamin, *etal* 2013, Ajibola,2019). Rotberg (2003) went further to present the comprehensive and graphic description of a failed state as a "polity that is no longer able or willing to perform the fundamental task of nation state in the modern polity".

As observed by Rotberg, nation states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer provide greater happiness for the greater number of inhabitants (Rotberg, 2003, Ajibola,2019). The rise and fall of nation states are not new phenomenon in the modern time, the idea of failed state featured predominantly in the international system after the end of the Cold War. "Basically, nation states constitute the building blocks of legitimate order while the violence and weaknesses of most African states, Asian, Oceanic and Latin American states threaten the very foundations of the system"(Ajibola,20219).

There are a number of pre-conditions for strong, weak and failed states to emerge. States succeed or fail across all or some of these conditions. But their rating varies in accordance to their performances and levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial goods and services. As Rotberg puts it:

> Strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed states. Strong states unquestionably control their territories and deliver a full range and a high quality of political goods to their citizens. They perform well according to indicator like GDP per capita, the UNDP Human Development Index, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, and Freedom of the World Report. Weak states include a broad continuum of states that are inherently weak because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic constraints; weak states are basically strong but temporarily or 'situationally' weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism, or external attacks, and a mixture of the two. Weak states typically harbor ethnic, religious and linguistic tensions. In a failed state, government troop battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals. The official authorities in a failed state face two or more insurgencies,

varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state. It is not absolute intensity of violence that identifies a failed state. Rather, it is the enduring character of that violence, as in Angola, Burundi, Sudan and Nigeria. In a failed state there is no modicum of order (Rotberg, 2003).

The above factors identified by Rotberg as the necessary pre-conditions for strong states to emerge in the international system are not evident in Nigeria. The symptoms of failed states are evident in Nigeria. No wonder, different scholars especially (Rotberg 2003, Piazza, 2008) predominantly focused on Africa in their theoretical postulations. However, scholars note that there are also many states in the international system that have some of these features mentioned by Rotberg and are therefore at risk of complete state failure, but have not quite crossed the threshold (Piazza,2008). Scholars refer to these states as "weak states" (Rotberg 2002), "quasi-states" (Lambach 2004).

Similarly, addressing the problems of failed or weak states will definitely yield humanitarian and security dividends for the international system (Piazza, 2008). United States policymakers regard failed and failing states such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Nigeria to be the festering incubators of terrorism, and lament that for too long United States foreign policy has ignored the threat that these types of states pose to international order and national security. "Post September 11th national security documents explicitly describe failed states as safe havens for terrorists" (US Department of State, 2010). The question of how to tackle the problem of state failure has become a big challenge of the 21st century.

The Failed State Index (FSI) compiled annually by the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy Magazine, ranks nations of the world from most failed to least likely failed (Benjamin, *etal*: 2012,). In line with Failed States Index, Nigeria is currently ranked the 16th most fragile state in the world with a score of 97.2 (Foreign Policy, 2011). Undoubtedly, this was as a result of incessant crises of various magnitudes in Nigeria: corruption, electoral violence, infrastructure squalor, institutional problem, political instability, among others, which have propelled the intensity of violence and terrorism in the country. As Benjamin etal, observe: "there has been a general discontent in the country from an army of unhappy, despondent, impoverished, or aggrieved citizens, some of whom are clearly and increasingly choosing a terrorist path" (Benjamin *etal,* 2012).

However, the outbreak of Boko-Haram's bomb attacks in some parts of the country is symbolic of the sustained and holistic failures of successive governments in Nigeria. Boko-Haram has taken the opportunity of these failures by recruiting the affected youths to pursue their puritanical ideology. Boko-Haram exploits the porosity of Nigerian borders to smuggle arms and sophisticated ammunition to destabilize the state (Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012).

The symptoms of failed state in Nigeria have snowballed into aggressive behaviors among Nigerian youths most especially in the North-East. In Nigerian context, the study observes that aggressiveness is a fall out of frustration owing to imprudent leadership in the country. However, this study develops a Frustration- aggression Theory as a pair to the Failed State Theory. The Frustration-aggression Theory has provided the dominant paradigm for the psychological study of aggression during the more than three decades since it was first formulated by Dollard and his co-workers (Dollard etal, 1931). As originally proposed, the theory holds that "the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Dollard et al. 1939,Van der and Dennen,2023).

However, the views of aggression that it involves seem to have become widely adopted and accepted; they have become commonplace. This popular success may have various sources. First the principal hypothesis is uncomplicated and easy to grasp. The theory is generally well structured and clearly articulated, a fact that again, facilitates comprehension. Second, the theory does not involve overly abstract concepts or elaborate procedures. It is very appealing to common sense, which seems to build on its acceptability. Finally, as Selg, (1971) observed, "the theory tends to provide a justification for behaving aggressively: 'Being frustrated made me do it." Like the aggression amnesty provided by instinct notions. At times, however, the term 'frustration' is used to refer not only to the process of blocking a person's attainment of a re-inforcer, but also to the reaction to such blocking. The expression of frustration and aggression provide ample explanation of Boko-Haram conflict in the North-East as it was evident during the reinforcement of Sharia law and its subjective implementation in twelve northern states

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study examines terrorism in a semi- peripheral state using Boko-Haram in the North- East as a standpoint. In carrying out the study, both the primary and secondary data were adopted. The primary data were generated from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The study

adopted two genres of non-probability sampling methods such as, accidental and snowball sampling techniques. Accidental or Convenience sampling technique involves collection of data based on easy accessibility and convenience, this method was adopted to select relevant interviewees that are germane to the study. Snowball sampling method was adopted to draw experts from government agencies and other notable international bodies. The Secondary data were generated through bibliographical method from baseline data obtained from reports of reputable organizations such International Organization for Migration (IOM), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Presidential Initiative in the North East (PINE), Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Global Terrorism Index (GTI).The data generated were analyzed using interpretive and thematic analyses.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants in Key Informant Interviews

Key Informant ID	Sex	Occupations/Professional Affiliations
K1-1	M	Military Officer
K1-2	M	Soldier
KI-3	M	Police Officer
KI-4	M	Senior staff of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
KI-5	M	Senior staff of International Organization for Migration(IOM)
KI-6	M	Traditional Ruler in Borno
KI-7	F	IDP(Borno State)
K1-8	M	Traditional Ruler in Adamawa
KI-9	M	Traditional Ruler in Yobe
K1-10	M	Boko-Haram member from Rehabilitation center
KI-11	M	Boko-Haram member from

		Rehabilitation center
K1-12	M	Frontline journalist
K1-13	M	Nigerian Soldier
KI-14	F	Internally Displaced Person
KI-15	M	Lecturer, University of Maiduguri

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Summary of the findings

However, the operationalization of the research instrument through a semi structured questionnaire crystallized into major findings. Therefore, the data generated were converted to different themes,

Thematic outline based on the data from the key informants

The findings of the research are thematically structured as follows

(i) Boko-Haram and the fragmentation of Islamic religion

(ii) Political dimension to Boko-Haram conflict

(iii) The connections between poverty and Boko-Haram conflict

(iv) Connecting climate Change to Boko-Haram Conflict/Eco-terrorism

(v) Nigeria's porous border and Boko-Haram Conflict

(vi) International dimensions to Boko-Haram conflict

➢ **Boko-Haram and the fragmentation of Islamic Religion**

The eruption of Boko-Haram was greeted with controversial views on what could have been responsible for the unabated conflict. Prior to this period the sect had been established on the platform of religion, with the intention of using religion as a defense to correct the abnormalities in the Nigerian political terrain, most especially the accumulated poverty, occasioned by bad governance over the years bearing in mind the full and objective implementation of Sharia law. (Olanrewaju and Letswa, 2016, Olanrewaju, 2019). It is a common doctrine among many supposedly Islamic fundamentalist groups and some moderate

Muslims in Nigeria to demand for full implementation of Sharia law. Also, since the attainment of independence in 1960, the controversial debates over the full implementation of Sharia in Nigeria have produced a number of changes and continuities (Olabanji, 2015). Similarly, the political transformation from military autocracy and absolutism to civilian governance in 1999 gave room for local politicians, mainly in the northern Nigeria, basically to campaign for votes with the manifestos that Sharia law would be fully implemented after the elections.

However, as observed by Adesoji (2010), the electioneering campaign during this period really garnered support for the local politicians because of these electoral promises. In January 2000, Zamfara in the northwest Nigeria was the first state to fulfill this campaign promise. Zamfara state gave effect to the full implementation of Sharia penal code. In a similar vein, eleven states also followed the same direction with Zamfara state by introducing Sharia law. However, it was discovered that the introduction of Sharia law in the north was greeted with much euphoria in some parts and crises in the major parts. The crises that followed the implementation of Sharia law was orchestrated by two major factors: (1) There was early assurance that Sharia law would not be applied to non-Muslims unless they consented but the reverse was the case when it was implemented (2) The enforcement of Sharia law was majorly directed against the poor and vulnerable people in the North while the elite enjoyed unwritten immunity from the enforcement latitude.

More so, in the midst of disillusionment and misgivings that trailed the implementation of Sharia law, it continued in twelve states in the north and this controversy has made some analysts to contend that the introduction of Sharia law in 2000, was more political than religious. This lacuna sent signals to Boko-Haram as a means to perpetrating all manner of evils in the name of religion. However, Boko-Haram played a big role in shaping the objective implementation of full Sharia law in Borno State in the early 2000s. Boko-Haram's involvement in the implementation of Sharia law snowballed into local politics before it detached its association with the government of the Borno State in the late 2000s.

The evolving Nation of Nigeria has many historical and political contradictions. There is a general consensus in the literature that violence, whether religious or political in the Nigerian polity, is a means of identifying deficiencies in heterogonous society as a symptom of inequality, marginalization, exploitation, internal colonialism and the misuse of majoritarian democracy and national government in a prejudicial manner. As a result, some political anarchists or demons

hide under the foregoing to fuel the various conflagrations as a means of expressing their grievances. Essentially, several indices of crises in Nigeria show the mixture of ethnicity and political grievances to interpret such disagreements as the genie of religious violence. Religion is often a transparent tactics, designed to conceal political and economic goals in Nigeria.

Another religious dimension to Boko-Haram uprising in the North East was the global dichotomy between the Shia and Sunni Islamic group that started in the 19th century. The difference between Sunni and Shia Muslims arose from a disagreement over the succession of Mohammad which subsequently acquired broader political significance, theological and juridical dimensions. The present demographic breakdown between the two dimensions is often difficult to assess in the 21st century with most approximations stating that 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and 10% of the world's Muslims are Shia. Some empirical studies have traced Boko-Haram uprising as an extension of the quest for reformation and ideological revamping of original Sunni doctrine to a new tenet of Islam that reflects salafi's ideological spectrum (Knott &Francis, 2016). Although, the Sunni-Shia rivalry is not a primary cause of Boko-Haram as majority of Muslims in the Northern Nigeria are Sunni and most followers of Mohammed Yusuf are also within the Sunni strand of Islam, but their sectarian position falls within Salafist teachings.. More often than not, any religion that is fragmented has tendency to breed high scale conflict

➤ The Political Dimension to Boko-Haram Conflict

Also, the electioneering campaign in Borno State in 2003 played a major role in the understanding the causes of Boko-Haram. "It is also on record that, in the build-up to the 2003 general elections, the Boko-Haram support enjoyed by Ali Modu Sheriff, who was then a gubernatorial aspirant was widely believed to have enhanced his victory at the 2003 election which eventually made him the executive governor of Borno State between 2003 and 2011 following his reelection for a second term of four years in 2007" (Olabanki ,2015,Nwozor and Olanrewaju,2020). He was the governor till 2011. However, Boko- Haram did not support Sheriff who was desperate to win the gubernatorial election without some agreements and promises between the two parties. It was that agreement that conditioned him to appoint Alhaji Foi as Commissioner for Religious affairs, while Mohammed Yusuf was made a member of the Borno State Sharia Board .(Olanrewaju and Letswa, 2016, Olanrewaju,2019) The strained relationship between the two parties explains the violent character of Boko-Haram in some

quarters. Similarly, some people are of the opinion that Mohammed Yusuf fell out with his local political allies because of the manner the Sharia law was implemented in the state. Adesoji (2015) observes that, partisan politics and political patronage play a major role in the sustenance of Boko-Haram in the North-East.

Obviously, the link between former Governor Sheriff and Boko-Haram most especially, during his electioneering campaign is evident in Boko-Haram uprising. The political underpinning that supported the rise of the group is impregnability in the light of its involvement in the politics of parts of Yobe, and especially Borno State in the 2000s to the extent that Sheriff sponsored some Boko-Haram members to hajj at the inception of his administration. Also, the interpretations and representation of Boko-Haram as a protest against the government of the then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, owing to his Christian and Southern backgrounds, often overlook these local political links (Olabanki ,2015). The late General Owoye Azazi, made a public declaration during a public lecture at the South- South Economic Summit in April, 2012. "According to Azazi, Boko Haram's uprising was as a result of the quest by northern political elites to rule Nigeria by all means" (Timilyin, 2019, Nwozor and Olanrewaju,2020).The declaration by Azazi is a pointer to the fact that the altering of the zoning formula of the People's Democratic Party by former President Jonathan, represents a major cause of Boko-Haram.

Thus, as plausible as this assertion by Azazi might be, it is quite simplistic and ingenuous for a plethora of reasons (1)The emergence of Boko-Haram in the early 2000s predated the ascension of President Jonathan as the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2010.Also, it was former President Yar'Adua, a northerner and Muslim, who first ordered a military crackdown on Boko Haram in 2009, following the intensity of violence occasioned by Boko-Haram, and having fallen out with its local political allies. (2) "Boko-Haram is committed to killing Muslims as it is committed to killing Christians as well".(Olabanki ,2015, Nwozor and Olanrewaju,2020) The attack against political leaders and emirs in the North, places its activities and ideologies beyond the template of religion, because of the preference and respect accorded to the institution among Nigerian Muslims. Hence, the discussion of Boko-Haram as simply a North-South/Muslim-Christian political division misrepresents the current situation to some extent. Although, the assertion of General Awoye Azazi cannot be regarded as a castoff for a major reason, in 2014, the activities of Boko Haram reached its pinnacle because of political wrapping and coloration in the core north coupled with the retrieval of political confidence on the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan by the northern elites.

➢ **Poverty and Boko-Haram Conflict in the North East**

In addendum to the above analysis, this study also finds out that poverty is another major cause of Boko-Haram. It represents a key explanatory factor in the emergence of Boko-Haram. Nigeria is a rich country with poor inhabitants because of leadership failure. Albeit, poverty is a universal phenomenon but the peculiarities of poverty in Northern Nigeria is bothersome. Despite being a major oil exporter, many Nigerians remain poor most especially people in the North West and the North-East of Nigeria. Between 2000 and 2014, Nigeria's economy experienced broad-based and sustained growth of over 7% annually on average, benefiting from favorable global conditions, and macroeconomic and first stage-stage structural reform (WBG,2023).From 2015-2022, however, growth rates decreased and GDP per capital flattened, driven by monetary and exchange rate policy distortions, increasing fiscal deficits due to lower oil production and a costly fuel subsidy program. Weakened economic fundamentals led the country's inflation to reach a 24-years high of 31.7% in February 2024, which, in combination with sluggish growth has pushed millions of Nigerians into poverty(WBG,2023).Similarly, Nigeria has consistently been ranked low in human development rankings of the United Nations Annual Human Development Reports which provide ample evidence of the state of poverty in the country. For example, the 2014 reports rank Nigeria 152 out of 187 countries covered, followed by Cameroun and Madagascar. (UNDP Report 2014).

In similar vein, National Bureau of Statistics estimated the national poverty profile to be 61.9 percent nationally, and North-Eastern Nigeria, the epic center of Boko-Haram rated higher than 70 percent as at 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).Illiteracy rate is higher in the north, life expectancy and per capital income are equally low when compared with other regions in Nigeria (Olanrewaju and Letswa, 2016, Olanrewaju, 2019) The level of unemployment in the country is frightened. In 2011, two years after the first major violent confrontation by Boko-Haram, the unemployment situation among the youth in Nigeria was 37.7 percent while the northern states were the highest when compared to their southern counterparts (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Table 1: Unemployment Rates in Nigeria, By Region as at End of 2011

Region	Unemployment
North East	31.9

North Central	22.8
North West	28.8
South East	19.6
South South	24.7
South West	11.3
Nigeria	23.9

Source: NBS Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011

Consequently, because of galloping poverty in the North, Boko-Haram was able to gather momentum in terms of membership and recruitment. The incidence of mass poverty and deprivation among the many people in the northern Nigeria coupled with the high level of corruption among the religious and political classes gave Boko-Haram an advantageous chance to continually recruit members into its fold (Cited in Olabanji, 2015). Also, the existence of unemployment and chronic poverty serve as an impetus for Boko-Haram to flourish in the North East and, there is no doubt that economic problems have worsened in Nigeria for more than a decade, and this constitutes a factor in the outbreak of Boko-Haram. Also, Maitatsine movement flourished in the 1980s because of economic woes, high prices, scarcity, retrenchment and unemployment. In 1980, the absolute poverty in the country was 29 percent and today it is estimated around 62 percent. This economic predicament driving Boko-Haram is totally undeniable. The rising profile of poverty in Nigeria served as an inspiration for all manners of violence. It has assumed a notorious dimension in the country most especially in the Northern parts of Nigeria. The North East region, as comprising Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, among others, has been ravaged by the Boko Haram terrorists group since 2009 because of the prevalence of poverty in the region. The recruitment trend by Boko Haram was decorated by the prevalence of poverty in the region and porosity of Nigerian border.

> **Connecting Climate Change to Boko-Haram Conflict**

Climate change is increasingly recognized as a strategic security threat for most states and it has exacerbated terrorism in some vulnerable states in Africa. The threat of climate change

is considered to be a significant macro-level driver of terrorism (Silke&Morrison, 2022).The changing climate is the main trigger of the high scale conflicts in the region. Nearly, 80% of people in the region earn their livelihood from agriculture (Alicia and Simpa, 2019) . The incessant irregular rainfall has been leading to harvest shortfalls and when people have nothing to eat they will be ready to take up gun to survive. The protracted problem of climate change has grossly affected the agricultural produce in the North and the countries in the Lake Chad Basin (Olanrewaju and Letswa, 2016, Olanrewaju, 2019). "The three North- Eastern states in Nigeria which are the original epicenters of Boko-Haram (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) are arid zones with serious climate variations that always threaten the survival of crops and animals on yearly basis"(Nwozor and Olanrewaju,2020)Some migrants from neighboring countries like Chad and Niger, always come to these cities in search of casual jobs and Islamic studies most especially during the dry season. Worse still, the failure of government to support irrigation in rural areas has only worsened the trend of migration in the North East. The North East Arid Zone Development Programme (NEAZDP) that was introduced in the late 1980 to help rural development in the North Eastern Nigeria has dramatically suffered from paucity of funds because of negligence on the part of government. A 2010 report prepared by the US Joint Forces Command warned of the dangers that can result when natural disasters collide with existing structural challenges like urban sprawl and civil unrest. In regions like the Lake Chad Basin, climate change has clearly exacerbated competition over increasingly scarce resources. In the language of security studies, climate change is a potential threat multiplier.

As the waters of Lake Chad recede, fish stocks are reduced, cultivatable land disappears, and other economic opportunities are also diminished. The African Union has noted that the loss of traditional livelihoods has encouraged some individuals to explore membership of armed groups as a potential alternate source of income. Northern Nigeria is currently losing an estimated 1,350 square miles roughly the equivalent of Lagos State to desertification every year (UNODC, 2022). As early as 2007, the United Nations Security Council started debating the potential impacts that climate change could have on global security, and in September 2009 the Secretary General presented the first major UN report on Climate Change and its possible Security Implications(A/64/350) to the General Assembly

The report's prediction has proved prophetic. In recent years, environmental factors have been mentioned more frequently in the Security Council deliberations, especially in relation to Africa, where approximately 250 million people in Africa are projected to suffer from water and

food insecurity during the 21st century as fallout of climate change (UNODC, 2022). In March 2017 Security Council Resolution 2349, which addressed the predations of Boko-Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, specifically recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of the region, including through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity. In February 2018 the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Countries issued the Abuja Declaration to raise global awareness of the dramatic shrinkage of Lake Chad and the likely impact that this will have on sustainable livelihoods, security, and development efforts in the region. While addressing the conference, President Buhari soberly noted "the oasis in the desert is just a desert now…. Farmers and herdsmen struggle over the little water left, Herdsmen migrate in search of greener pastures resulting in conflicts while youths are joining terrorist groups because of lack of jobs and difficult economic conditions. A further potential threat multiplier is the rise in global temperature itself. The connection between heat and aggression is well established and documented in psychological research as temperature rises so do people's tempers, and violent crime increases (UNODC, 2022)
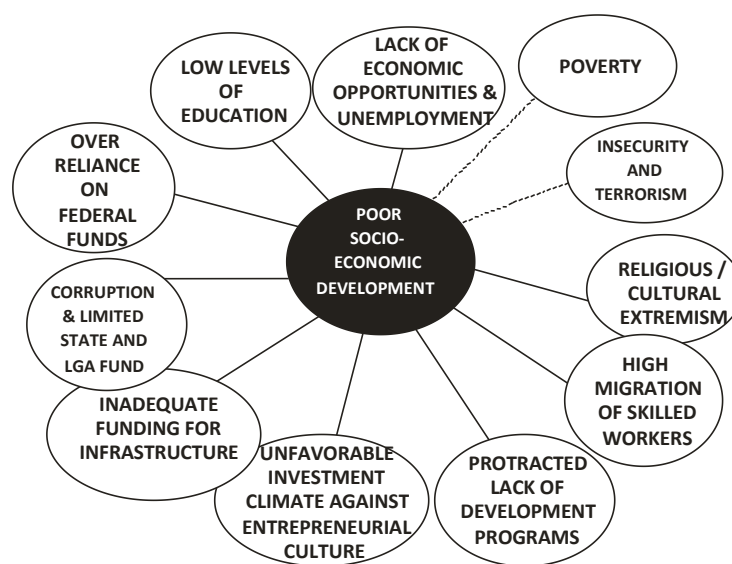

Figure 1: The Root Causes of Crisis and Drivers of Conflict in the North-East
Source: Department of Economic Intelligence, 2015.

> **Nigerian Porous Border/International Dimensions to Boko-Haram Conflict**

Nigerian porous border is another blistering factor fueling Boko-Haram conflict in the North East. The political unrest in the North African state of Libya posed a recurring security threat to the Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions of Africa, the Libyans fighters, who were radically trained for the 43 years the late Muammar Gaddafi ruled the North African country, were armed with deadly weapons and had been roaming the Sahel and Sub-Sahara sub-region with no other constructive skill for survival but to shoot and kill. Some of the former Libyan fighters who got their weapons as a result of the gross violation of arms trade treaty by the state actors had teamed up with Boko-Haram. Today, Boko-Haram has crops of foreign fighters from neighboring countries fighting its cause across the Lake Chad region. In Africa, borders are easily crossed, In West Africa, as elsewhere in Africa, borders may not only badly demarcated, but also easy to cross. Thus, there need only be unrest in one state for the repercussions particularly through the influx of refugees to be felt in other states, especially neighboring states . Unregulated movements of the people facilitate the circulation of weapons. Indeed, in the 1999 Protocol, ECOWAS draws a very clear link between cross-border crimes and arms proliferation (Antole and Ibrahima, 2005). According to research carried out in 2017, it is estimated that there are more than 1 billion small arms in circulation globally. Out of that number 87.5% or 875 million of those arms are in the hands of civilians, while law enforcement agencies around the world account for a meagre 22.5% of the total (OSIWA, 2020)

From Nigeria's perspective, the pernicious and multidimensional effects of the proliferation and misuse of SALW have also been felt through the prevalence of organized armed violence and criminality , which have become defining characteristics of the socio-political landscape. Surprisingly, no fewer than 6,154,000 firearm are in the possession of civilians in the country, the firearms , were put at 3,21 per 100 persons , while a total of 224,200 and 362,400 firearms were in the possession of the military law and other law enforcement agencies (Solomon and Abiodun, 2022). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has been attributed to the spate of insecurity in the country, despite several efforts, including the approval for the establishment of the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and light weapons by the Federal Government to curb the infiltration of firearms in the country

In addition, there are other international dimensions to Boko-Haram conflict in Nigeria. The America role during the Iranian revolution in 1980 has today made Iran a top sponsor of terrorism on the global scale which Boko-Haram has strategically benefited. Subsequently, the

international politics of Cold War coupled with the unethical behavior by the United States of America during the Soviet-Afghan war where US was providing covert aid for the Afghanistan Resistance Fighters who called themselves mujahedeen or fighters for the faith which US has today renamed as terrorists because of the 9/11 attacks. It is evident that the U.S was ignorant of possible repercussion that the training and equipping of zealous Islamic fighters could have today (Brzezinski, 1983). The replica of similar scenario also played out in Libya crisis by the United States of America when America provided logistics for rebels that were not loyal to late Muammar Gaddafi. After the conflict in Libya, some of the armed rebels migrated to different countries across the Sahel region and teamed up with different armed groups in the region.

Concluding Reflections

Contrary to the general arguments in the literature, the study has examined the Boko-Haram conflict beyond the common narratives. From the standpoints of Global Terrorism Index and armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED), Africa is undoubtedly the epic center of global terrorism. Terrorism on the continent of Africa has risen over the decade because of the various developmental issues that bedeviled the continent over the years. In 2015, there were 381 attacks against the soft target in Africa which eventually resulted in 1,394 fatalities, and by the year 2020 there were 7,108 attacks targeting civilians with 12,519 fatalities. The threat of terrorism has grown geometrically on the continent of Africa and by 2022 seven of the top 10 countries in the world in terms of terrorism threat are in Africa. The most notable threat of terrorism in the region emanated from Boko-Haram because of the different developmental crises embedded in the Lake Chad region. The study identified some explicit and implicit factors that triggered and sustained Boko-Haram conflict in the region and until all these underlying challenges are addressed in the region, Boko-Haram and its future replica will continue to flourish in the region. Apart from poverty and religion that require holistic horizontal and vertical collaborations of countries in Lake Chad Basin and proper sanitization of Islamic religion alongside Sunni's ideology as the only version of Islam that appears relatively non-violent in its dispositions, the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels is required to be the top priority of Lake Chad Basin Development Commission (LCBDC). This will enable Boko-Haram fighters to be properly reintegrated to the society with legitimate means of livelihood. Similarly, the looming danger of full-blown eco-terrorism will be averted in the Lake Chad region.The current posture of international political

system appears too militaristic with the over-bearing influence of US and its allies. A jejig and proper liberalization of international system is required. This will salvage the peripheral region of Africa from being a perennial victim of global political waves coupled with the internal restructuring of its economic architecture

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