BOKO HARAM

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

EDITED BY

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PREFACE

The insurgency in the Northeast has, up till now, lasted for more than 15 years. In spite of the military successes, the insurgents are neither subdued nor have shown signs of fatigue and giving up. What is increasingly becoming clear is that while military might would continue to record successes by killing more Boko Haram combatants, there is no guarantee that lasting peace could be established through such military action alone. There is even the paradox that in tandem with the number of Boko Haram combatants killed, more appear and are ready to replace them. In other words, without undercutting their reservoir of recruitment, there would always be more people joining the battle lines on behalf of the insurgents.

There is increasing realisation that the only way lasting peace could be achieved is to combine military action with non-kinetic engagements such as dialogue and negotiation. However, dialogue and negotiation with people who have killed thousands of other people, displaced millions and committed atrocious crimes is not an easy undertaking. For instance, it requires convincing families of victims to think that dialogue and negotiation with the insurgents is not legitimising the crimes the insurgents have committed. Secondly, and which also relates to the first, is that negotiation would require that the government pardons some of the insurgents, including some of their leaders. Thirdly, what guarantees are there

that those coming to the negotiating table are sincere and that they are not seeking for some leverage to strengthen their position? Finally, there is the question of justice: what do you do to people who have committed crimes and how do you integrate them into the wider society that they terrorised?

Difficult as these questions are, there is no alternative to engagement in dialogue for peacebuilding. History has shown that no case of insurgency has been conclusively resolved only through military engagements. Inevitably, some form of dialogue and negotiations has provided the frameworks for settlement. What is important is not whether dialogue and negotiation are possible, but how to address various issues and acts that are implicated in the conflict and how to set the satisfactory and mutually-acceptable pre-condition for negotiation.

This book, which is a collection of contributions that started as a quick survey to explore the questions of negotiation and dialogue, conducted with various stakeholders to find their various perspectives of what negotiation and dialogue mean in the context of Boko Haram insurgency, explores the following concerns: the viable conditions of negotiations; what actors are the best to promote dialogue and reconciliation; how the insurgents can be approached for dialogue and resolution; how to approach other actors who can promote dialogue; what should be in place for dialogue to be an option and how to create the preconditions for the parties involved to come to a discussion table; and what key challenges and risks are there in engaging in negotiation with Boko Haram in dialogue and how to manage these risks.

As we progressed with the conversation, we realised that among key stakeholders there is a certain measure of acceptance of the need for dialogue and negotiation to end the conflict. People are already tired of living in an emergency situation that is being normalised without an apparent sign of how long it could last. While the inevitability of

negotiation is clear, the most difficult aspect for which there is no consensus are what should be the terms and the pre-conditions for negotiation, who should be at the negotiation table, and the question of how the justice is to be handled during pre- and post-negotiation. There is also the not-too-easy issue of convincing the wider public on both sides of the conflict to accept that negotiation and dialogue are important and critical to ending the conflict.

We believe that the contributions in this volume provide pathways to further the conversation of a non-kinetic approach in restoring lasting peace in Northeast Nigeria.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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INTRODUCTION

KAWU ABUBAKAR MONGUNO

In the last thirteen years, Northern Nigeria has experienced a rebellion that the region never witnessed before, both in terms of magnitude and organisation. The Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (people committed to the Prophet's teachings and Jihad), popularly referred to as Boko Haram, emerged from a local religious movement in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria, dissatisfied with the nation's establishment, to become a ragtag army, and later a regional terrorist organisation. Though initially localised to Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states (BAY) of the Northeast, Boko Haram's ideology[1] and its effects have evolved to affect the entire Lake Chad Basin region, while also having links outside the region, going by the group's avowed allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Thus, "what began as an isolated sect has grown into the perpetrator of death and destruction that today is undermining the social fabric of Nigeria, and exploiting ethnic kinship in neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroon to extend its reach, spreading insecurity and precipitating a humanitarian crisis among already desperately poor local populations" (Comolli, 2015, p. 5). Without a doubt, the mobilisation of members and their subsequent radicalisation to fight a "holy war" against the Nigerian state by its founder, Mohammad Yusuf, was achieved most effectively and coherently in

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[1] The fractionalisation of Boko Haram into two groups i.e. Boko Haram and ISWAP is discussed in greater detail in chapter one.

a way that was, perhaps, not previously witnessed by any ideological movement in Nigeria. In spite of the government's battle to win hearts and minds and dissuade people from enlisting, Boko Haram has continued to motivate people into its fold and informed the group's continued existence to date and to wreak havoc on both public facilities and the local population of the region. It is not surprising that the survival and mutation of this group appear to have become a fascinating field of research across many academic disciplines. It is also not a coincidence, therefore, that Boko Haram and issues associated with its insurrection have become the subject of great academic, political and policy discourse since the first major rebellion in July, 2009 (see Monguno and Umara, 2020; Thurston, 2018; Comolli, 2015). Lately, an updated account bordering on several issues was succinctly documented by Bukarti (2021). It is not the focus of this book to revisit these issues by repeating them but to chart a way out of the rising socio-political and economic costs of the insurgency. Even though these academic endeavours may still be far from being sufficiently exhaustive, only a little attempt is made to describe them in this book for the primary purpose of providing a contextual background to the focus of this book. Doing so is intended to highlight the peculiarities experienced by each of the affected states. Charting a way out of this protracted conflict, therefore, requires a review of not only the evolution but also the effects, even if briefly, to underscore why the conflict must be foreclosed.

Twelve years of the insurgency has left the Northeast region, apparently, the backwater of Nigerian politics further impoverished and developmentally relegated. The human cost of the insurgency is simply unimaginable. As at the end of July, 2021, the 12th anniversary of the insurgency, a total of 40,989 fatalities were directly ascribed to Boko Haram in the BAY states.[2] Indirectly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that a total of 314,000 cumulative indirect deaths were recorded by

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[2]https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

2020 as a result of the conflict in the BAY states.[3] Projections made in terms of casualty in the three states by the UNDP are disturbing. Without abatement, there will be 48,000 direct cumulative conflict-related deaths and 674,000 cumulative indirect deaths (more than twice the figure in 2020) by 2025. The projected cumulative figures for 2030 are further expected to rise to 61,200 and 1,110,800 deaths respectively.[4] Table 1 shows additional information on projections for BAY states in other indices of development depicting conflict and no conflict scenarios. For all the indicators, indices are projected to worsen if the conflict continues at current rates.

Table 1: Scenario-based Human Development Indicator Projections for BAY States 2020 – 2030

	Scenario	2020	2025	2030
Direct conflict death (cumulative)		35,000	48,000	61,200
Indirect conflict death (cumulative)		314,000	67,400	1,110,800
GDP (PPP) 1,000 USD	No conflict	2.4	2.9	3.4
	Conflict	2.0	2.1	2.3
Extreme poverty (% pop)	No conflict	49.9	47.9	43.5
	Conflict	59.5	59.1	56.4
Infant mortality (deaths per 1,000)	No conflict	80.7	69.5	58.7
	Conflict	122.5	111.1	97.9
Average education years (pop 15+)	No conflict	5.3	5.4	5.8
	Conflict	5.0	4.9	4.8

Source: Adapted from United Nations Development Programme, 2021

But the cost of the insurgency is not only based on projections or future trends in terms of the human element; the material cost

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[3] https://www.ng.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/library/human_development/assessing-the-impact-of-conflict-on-development-in-north-east-ni.html
[4] Ibid.

which has also been determined in concrete terms is vital. At the heat of the insurgency in 2016, an assessment of reconstruction and peacebuilding requirements was carried out by the World Bank for the Northeast. A total of USD 9.2 billion was estimated to be the cost of damage to infrastructure in the region with Borno State (being the epicentre of the conflict) bearing a disproportionate amount of this cost requiring USD 3.9 billion to fix.[5] The additional accumulated output losses were put at USD 8.3 billion by the World Bank for the region. These losses are those arising from the collapse of the region's vital economic sector – agriculture especially, but also in other areas including fishing and livestock trade. Since 2015 when large-scale internal displacement started, normalcy has yet to be restored in many areas of the BAY states in what has now become a complex emergency. A toxic combination of conflict, displacement, and lately COVID-19, explain the spiralling insecurity, thus further complicating the region's humanitarian situation. A recent Displacement Tracking Matrix report published by the International Office for Migration (IOM) in May, 2021 shows that there were 2,184,254 internally displaced persons in the Northeast, many of them living in camps and camp-like settings.[6] Despite frantic efforts at resettlement by the BAY state governments (especially Borno where the displacement is highest), internally displaced persons continue to live in dire humanitarian situations. The World Food Programme (WFP) estimated in June 2021 that 3.4 million people in Northeast Nigeria were facing acute hunger including 300,000 children suffering from acute malnutrition.[7] This dire humanitarian situation has been made worse by an apparent lack of agricultural production as several farmers have been targeted or killed while engaging in farm operations in various

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[5] https://olc.worldbank.org/system/files/110424-v1-WP-NorthEastNigeriaRecoveryandPeaceBuildingAssessmentVolumeIweb-PUBLIC-Volume-1.pdf

[6] https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/northeast-nigeria-displacement-report-36-may-2021

[7] https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/nigeria-emergency

parts of the state, resulting in a significant decline in local food production. An infamous massacre, which was a major headline across the country, was the killing of 43 rice farmers in Zabarmari, Jere LGA of Borno State in November, 2020. In a bid to encourage and protect farmers threatened by Boko Haram fighters, the Borno State Government has launched and deployed Agro Rangers[8] in 2019 to provide security to farmers, especially along accessible routes. Led by the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Agro Rangers is a joint operation between the latter and local vigilantes consisting of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and hunters. In the aftermath of the return of IDPs back to their localities and to further boost crop production, Borno State Government recently recruited 1,000 hunters to provide additional protection to farmers against insurgents during farm operations.[9]

The effects of the insurgency are by no means only humanitarian but multidimensional, affecting nearly all aspects of life. Social services including education, transportation, business/commercial activities, communication, power supply, etc. have all been negatively affected in a manner that significantly paralysed a region that now remains a shadow of its former self. It will be difficult to review how the insurgency impacted on Northeast in an introduction to a book of this nature but perhaps what is helpful is to visualise the effects from the cost of the reconstruction as given by the World Bank[10], a summary of which is given in Table 2. Two things are very clear from the Table. The BAY states disproportionately bear the cost of the insurgency in the Northeast, while housing and agriculture are the two worst affected sectors

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[8] Agro Rangers scheme is a combination formal and informal security patrol teams working to ensure safety of farmers while afield. Led by Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) the teams comprise of two vigilante groups hunters and members of Civilian Joint Task Force

[9] https://humanitarian-times.com/news/boko-haram-1000-more-hunters-deployed-to-protect-farmers-in-borno/

[10] The World Bank (2016). North-East Nigeria Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment, vol. II Component Report

accounting for over 70 percent of the cost of damage in the BAY states and the entire Northeast. More importantly, even though these assessments represent the most comprehensive costs made so far, they represent only data as at 2016; additional costs arising from the damages by Boko Haram insurgents have not been updated despite the plan for its update. Nevertheless, apart from planning, the utility of the document lies in the important snapshot, baseline information it provides from which the effect of the insurgency can be visualised.

Table 2: Cost of the Insurgency in the Northeast by Sector

Sector	Adamawa	Borno	Yobe	BAY Total (US$ million)	Northeast Total* (US$ million)
Energy	31.9	16.0	4.3	52.2	188.7
Environment	1.2	2.9	0.6	4.7	5.7
ICT	-	-	-	-	25.1
Transport	73.8	306.1	116.9	496.8	525.8
Education	58	143.8	47.3	249.1	273
Health/nutrition	21.1	59.0	32.9	113	147.7
Housing	25.8	3,179.0	118.3	3,323.1	3,329.9
Public buildings	2.3	15.3	14.5	32.1	35.5
Water & sanitation	7.3	35	3.6	45.9	46
Agriculture	457.9	2,377.7	868.7	3,704.3	3,729.7
Private enterprises	149.8	763.6	<0.1	913.5	915.4
Total	828.9	6,898.5	1,207.2	8,934.6	9,221.5

Source: The World Bank (2016)   **Includes Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba States*

The overall import of reviewing the cost of the insurgency in both material and human effects is to put into perspective the losses incurred in the region, which is unfortunately still ongoing despite several efforts. On the one hand, while the conflict appears to have been protracted (for over twelve years), there is a concomitant effect of conflict fatigue (on the part of the citizens) and donor fatigue (on the part of development concerns evidenced by budget cuts). More

importantly, on the other hand, new strategies have continued to evolve from the insurgents whose adaptation to the conflict dynamics seems to outdo military efforts and strategies to end the conflict. The most disturbing aspect of the insurgents' adaptation within the region is the protection now provided by ISWAP to locals against attacks by Shekau's Boko Haram, provision of infrastructure and even dispute resolution (functions of a typical state to citizens). ISWAP in some locations has issued "work permits" to farmers, fisher folks and grazers (in return for taxes/levies they collect)[11] for those in desperate need to earn a living but caught up in a seemingly unending conflict between Boko Haram/ISWAP and government forces. In areas around Dikwa, Marte and Kukawa in Borno State, ISWAP has lifted the ban it imposed on farming and fishing and collects up to N5,000 levy from farmers and traders while fisher folks pay N2,000 per carton of fish transported.[12] Many farmers and fisher folks have therefore been attracted by this well-thought-out strategy and have returned to carry on with their livelihoods. It is feared that this non-kinetic ISWAP strategy would fill the governance voids created in the mosaic of ungoverned spaces within the region (and possibly expand) by winning the hearts and minds of ordinary community members at the expense of the Nigerian government. It is exactly to stem this expansion, and perhaps end the cycle of violent conflict between insurgents and government in the Northeast that a non-kinetic approach by government is interrogated from the perspectives of those affected by the conflict in this book. But how legitimate and popular is soft power in resolving conflicts, or at least reducing its effects around the world, and are there good practices to learn from? We now turn briefly to a review of how soft power or

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[11] See Bulama Bukarti (2021). Violent Extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons from the Rise of Boko Haram available at https://institute.global/policy/violent-extremism-sub-saharan-africa-lessons-rise-boko-haram

[12] http://saharareporters.com/2021/07/08/borno-residents-share-how-much-taxes-levies-farmers-fishermen-others-now-pay-boko-haram

non-kinetic approach is used in conflicts around the world before providing a summary of the chapters of this book.

Across the world, soft power is used to get around difficult conflict situations, often for the mutual benefit of conflicting parties in the long run. Soft power could take many forms but its most overt form is negotiation or mediation where a third party is involved. Very often, political (diplomatic) channels are deployed to broker peace. Only recently, the American military was forced to withdraw from its 20-year-old occupation of Afghanistan with a proclamation that the Afghan conflict requires a political solution. This is after the 20-year-long war on terror had cost the American government about 824 billion dollars and 2,312 soldiers with a casualty figure of 20,066.[13] The civilian cost of the war in terms of casualty is estimated at 35,000 – 40,000 people.[14] Instructively, before the final withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan and eventual takeover by the Taliban, there were several high-level talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban brokered by the Qatari government. Even though unresolved, the dialogues represented the use of soft power by the Afghan government.

While the use of soft power is recognised as important, the caveat for many Western nations remains terrorism. American forces withdrew partly because America is averse to negotiations with terrorist organisations. The rule of thumb in the use of soft power is that Western governments often exclude negotiations with terrorist organisations. Negotiations with terrorist organisations would mean giving support to such organisations so that by refusing to negotiate, Western nations help also to fight terrorism. A similar position appears to be at play in the case of Nigeria. Despite the ravaging conflict in the Northeast, the Nigerian government (like Britain and the United States) has made it clear that it will not

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[13] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/04/us-military-veterans-troops-afghanistan
[14] Ibid

negotiate with terrorists as doing so would amount to weakness according to the National Security Adviser.[15] But such a position has been faulted by Neumann (2007) with evidence from three Western nations. According to Neumann[16], the claim that Western governments do not negotiate with terrorists is incorrect and misleading. Drawing examples from Britain, Spain and Israel, Neumann demonstrated that negotiations were achieved through the backdoor even when these countries in principle did not officially approve negotiation with terror groups. For instance, despite the attack on the office of the British Prime Minister by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1991, the British government held talks with the separatist terror group.

The above description of the use of soft power to resolve conflicts, including terrorism, calls for an examination of how state power is used as a national strategy. With the fast spread and transformation of information around the world (leading to interconnections between parties in conflict), the idea of direct military confrontation (lethal means) has become not only uneconomical but unnecessarily destructive. For these reasons, many state-based conflict parties today opt for non-lethal (non-kinetic) options to minimise or resolve conflicts. One such option – Diplomacy, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) strategy of state power is often used to achieve the desired state interests out of conflicts (Zeb et al, 2012). Instrument of state/national power here "refers to the tools a country uses to influence other countries, international organizations or even non-state actors" (Wade, 2021 p.1). In the DIME strategy, in addition to military force, states need to adeptly balance diplomatic channels (treaties, policies, negotiations etc.), information resources (military information, communication resources, international forums, etc.) and

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[15]https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-says-no-negotiations-with-boko-haram-terrorists/2173243

[16] See Peter R. Neumann, 2007. Dilzrty Deals. Available at
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2007-01-01/negotiating-terrorists

economic sanctions (embargoes, tariffs, trade policies, etc.) to achieve and promote national objectives without being confrontational (Fig. 1). Therefore, state power is by no means the use of brute force through military campaigns even though this has been recognised as legitimate and a key part of DIME. But Jeff Farlin also reminds us of how nations should use state power more dexterously. According to Farlin (2014), despite the military and economic state power deployed by the British against the Americans in the American Revolution (1778 – 1782), the American rebels protracted the war, leveraging on diplomatic and informational state powers to become victorious, and this gave rise to an independent American nation in the end.[17] No doubt, this demonstrates that conscious deployment of state power is important in overcoming or worsening conflicts. Exactly how the Nigerian state utilised its soft power in the Boko Haram conflict is necessary at this point. To make this point clearer, the few attempts used to bring Boko Haram to the negotiation table by individuals and groups is briefly reviewed in the following paragraphs.

When the Boko Haram rebellion climaxed into open confrontation with government forces in July 2009, it was clear from the directive of the late President and Commander-in-Chief, Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua, that the military option of crushing the insurgents was the default option of the Nigerian government. The President's comment was very clear on this: "They [Boko Haram] will be dealt with squarely and forthwith."[18] Since this pronouncement, the Nigerian government's position on tackling the insurgency by placing the brute military option over other options has not changed much, even though diplomatic, information and economic options were also deployed at the early stage of the conflict. In consonance with the focus of this book, some reflections on the use of diplomacy as a non-kinetic means to end the insurgency by the government of Nigeria would be necessary.

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[17] https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/87.pdf
[18] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/7/29/nigeria-hunts-islamist-fighters

Perhaps, the earliest attempt at the deployment of diplomatic resources to end Boko Haram insurgency dates back to 2011 when former President Olusegun Obasanjo attempted to meet with the brother-in-law of the late Boko Haram leader, Babakura Fugu. It was clear Obasanjo's meeting with Babakura Fugu in Maiduguri over the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf and his father-in-law was an attempt to pacify the family's sect members. This was evident from the remarks of the former president when he said:

> "This is a personal initiative. I urge you to forgive and forget the past. I plead with you, give me the chance to mediate between the family and government."[19]

This meeting was later to result in Babakura's assassination, allegedly by family members who were also ideologically inclined to Boko Haram which abruptly terminated the dialogue option at an early stage. There were also attempts by some Muslim groups to mediate between the government and the insurgents. Dr Datti Ahmed, the Chairman of Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria, was to lead a government-backed committee to interface with Boko Haram in March 2012. After initial consultations, however, the mediation could not take place. The Chairman and members of the SCSN backed out of the government constituted committee because it accused the government of lack of confidentiality.[20]

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[19] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/boko-haram-visit-obasanjos-host-shot-dead/
[20] http://saharareporters.com/2012/03/18/why-we-withdrew-boko-haramfg-talks-dr-ibrahim-datti-ahmad

Instruments of National Power

D Diplomatic	**I** Informational	**M** Military	**E** Economic
▪ Embassies/ Ambassadors ▪ Recognition ▪ Negotiations ▪ Treaties ▪ Policies ▪ International forums	▪ Military information ▪ Public diplomacy ▪ Public affairs ▪ Communications resources ▪ International forums ▪ Spokespersons, timing, media and venues for announcements	▪ Military operations ▪ Engagement, Security Coop, Deterrence ▪ Show of force ▪ Military technology ▪ Size, composition of force	▪ Trade policies ▪ Fiscal and monetary policies ▪ Embargoes ▪ Tariffs ▪ Assistance

Figure 1. Instruments of National Power   *Source: Wade, 2021*

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, in response to pressure from Northern Nigeria politicians also contemplated amnesty for Boko Haram in April 2013 (similar to the one granted to Niger Delta militants) so that dialogue between the two conflict parties could commence. But this offer was rejected by Boko Haram even before it was announced by the government, thereby stalling the government's move along that line. The group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, argued that the federal government's offer of amnesty did not apply to them since the group had not committed any crime against the Nigerian state; rather it was Boko Haram that needed to pardon the Nigerian government for the atrocities and violations it meted on their members.[21] It was not until October, 2016 that a semblance of negotiation with Boko Haram was achieved when some of the abducted Chibok school girls were released. In the release mediated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Swiss Government, a total of 21 girls were handed over to the government in exchange for top Boko Haram

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[21] Nigeria's Boko Haram rejects Jonathan's amnesty idea https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22105476

commanders in government custody.[22] Following this success, another set of 82 girls was later to be released in March 2017, also brokered by ICRC. The story of the Dapchi schoolgirls kidnapped in Yobe was a bit different as all, but Leah Sharibu (the only Christian girl), of the 110 girls kidnapped were released after successful mediation. Overall, President Buhari's preference for negotiation than military options was clear when he told Rex Tillerson, the former US Secretary of State, that "Nigeria prefers to have schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram from Chibok and Dapchi back alive, and that is why it has chosen negotiation, rather than a military option".[23] The mediated releases of the schoolgirls were rather isolated attempts towards the use of diplomatic options which were rather responses to domestic and international pressure. Therefore, a national framework to holistically deal with the soft power aspect amidst the ongoing military option was required.

It is in a bid to achieve a whole-of-government approach to lasting peace in the Northeast that the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) developed a national framework called the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programme. The programme as enunciated in the Buhari Plan is typically a non-kinetic response to the crisis with three broad areas of de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and strategic communication. De-radicalisation in particular aims to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate former Boko Haram combatants into the communities for productive engagements. Concomitantly, it is this sub-component of the CVE that gave birth to Nigeria's Operation Safe Corridor (OSC). OSC is perhaps the most comprehensive and well-thought-out government project towards the use of non-kinetic power towards tackling the insurgency. Located in Malam Sidi, in Gombe, the facility was established in 2016 to receive and

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[22] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37641101

[23] https://guardian.ng/news/no-ransom-paid-for-91-dapchi-girls-released-presidency-says/

de-radicalise/reintegrate repentant low-risk members of Boko Haram into the communities in which they were once members. The Corridor was conceived and is being implemented based on the realisation that Boko Haram cannot be defeated militarily, and therefore represents a good example of non-kinetic means towards ending the insurgency. So far, the facility has successfully reintegrated 881 former combatants into the society since it was established.[24] This effort has largely been criticised for many reasons. OSC, it is believed, has failed to bring the right calibre of recruits – many of them underage, wrongly profiled into the Corridor. Some of the inmates are not the ideologically-inclined, hard-line fighters but only coerced into becoming members of Boko Haram by some circumstances and have now found their way into OSC.[25] As a de-radicalisation facility, many have also criticised the OSC for being military-led. This is on the grounds that several of its operations are not open to public critique. Despite the challenges and criticism, OSC remains a pioneering African model for Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) which needs to be properly developed to meet the desired expectations.

But the CVE programme in Nigeria has other aspects of soft power as well. In addition to the use of brute force in the Northeast, the military was also simultaneously required to engage in community development work as a form of soft power. This was necessary not only to win the hearts and minds of community members who may be sympathetic to Boko Haram but also to redeem the military's battered public image of previously using excessive, kinetic force in response to the conflict in the Northeast. Thus, in addition to opening a civil-military relations directorate within the Theatre Command, the military was also required to provide life-saving humanitarian interventions in health, food, and water supply, not

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[24] Operation Safe Corridor: Buhari repentant Boko Haram terrorists | Pulse Nigeria
[25] https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b170-exit-boko-haram-assessing-nigerias-operation-safe-corridor

only in the aftermath of the liberation of communities but thereafter. So grave has been the contribution of the military in this regard that the United Nations Resident Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, noted during a high-level workshop on coordination of humanitarian delivery in the Northeast convened by the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, that:

> We should always remember that in 2015 and 2016 when the Nigerian armed forces liberated most areas of Borno State including Bama, Monguno and Rann, they were the first providers of basic humanitarian services. They carried out polio vaccination and were amongst the first to fight against severe acute malnutrition. In Bama, for example, every single day, dozens of mothers and children would cross the road separating the IDP camp from the military-run clinic where they knew they could find the support they urgently needed.[26]

What is clear from the foregoing narrative is that the approach of the government is the use of both carrots and stick to fight the insurgency. But it is also evident that the greater of the effort is the use of force. For whatever reason, the conflict space in the Northeast since July 2021 appears to be fast-changing. The nation woke up to the cheering news of the mass surrender of repentant Boko Haram fighters to the Nigerian military. From a few thousand in mid-2021, there are now 79,000 former fighters (together with their families) who have surrendered to the Nigerian military, some of them commanders believed to be high-risk individuals.[27] For instance, Boko Haram's bomb expert Musa Adamu and his deputy, Usman Adamu (Abu Darda), have surrendered to the military in Bama LGA near Sambisa Forest.[28] In the neighbouring Gwoza LGA,

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[26] https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/civil-security-cooperation-humanitarian-interventions-north-east-workshop-opening

[27] Almost 6,000 Boko Haram fighters have surrendered, Nigerian army says | Reuters

[28] https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/top-boko-haram-commanders-beg-nigerians-for-forgiveness/klm44r2

Amir Adamu Rugu Rugu, a notorious commander in the area also surrendered and is in military captivity.[29] So much is the rate at which Boko Haram fighters surrender that Governor Zulum of Borno State thinks the state is in a difficult situation, not knowing exactly what to do with the repentant fighters surrendering *en masse* given the apprehensions expressed by community members.[30] While these surrenders could be indicative of what may lie ahead, on the one hand, it is also legitimate to be alive to the concerns expressed by community members about the true motivations behind these rising numbers of repentances. Many citizens of the Northeast have asked questions like: could surrender be explained by the result of the sustained military onslaught, the infighting between the two terror groups (Boko Haram and ISWAP) that led to the death of Boko Haram leader Shekau, or a mere change in strategy to diffuse through mass reintegration and strike from within? Many others are also concerned that Boko Haram fighters have surrendered without their weapons. More than ever before, it is also argued that even though the number of actual fighters who surrendered is low (majority of them women and children), accepting and reintegrating them with their families is necessary to convince other high-risk individuals who are yet to surrender to do so to achieve lasting peace.

Overall, whatever the motivations behind some members of Boko Haram currently surrendering, what is also clear is that the greater majority are still armed and willing to die protecting their beliefs. Thus, attacking ordinary, defenceless Nigerians is very much likely to continue on the one hand, and stressing the military, also on the other hand. Simply put, the conflict is far from being resolved. It is on this basic premise that the utility of non-kinetic means as a possible means to resolve the conflict is explored in this book. How exactly affected communities feel about their government

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[29] https://dailytrust.com/just-in-notorious-boko-haram-commander-surrenders
[30] https://dailyhintnews.com.ng/we-are-in-a-difficult-situation-over-boko-harams-surrenthder-governor-zulum/

employing the non-kinetic means of dialogue with insurgents to achieve lasting peace in Northeast Nigeria is necessary to be interrogated. If anything, this is a litmus test for the success of reintegration efforts currently underway in the region. In the seven chapters of this book, research conducted in the BAY states, as well as Kano State in the Northwest (also reasonably affected by the insurgency), are presented. In addition to these, the perspectives of women and youth as important groups affected by the insurgency, and the resilience-building efforts so far made are also discussed to present a broader picture of how the use of soft power is understood by these groups.

In chapter one, Musa Shalangwa demonstrates that the effect of the insurgency in Adamawa is largely confined to the five contiguous LGAs that constitute Adamawa North Senatorial District, i.e. Michika, Madagali, Mubi North, Mubi South and Maiha. At the climax of the insurgency in 2015, these LGAs were overrun by Boko Haram, which along with the LGAs under BH control in southern Borno, constituted its caliphate which it effectively governed for some months before they were recaptured by the military. Despite the recapture by the military, however, Shalangwa notes that the activities of Boko Haram are still significant in the hinterland of Madagali LGA. Areas outside Gulak, the LGA headquarter, are generally unsafe due to the presence of insurgents. The insurgency in Adamawa State has produced many negative effects in the affected areas including the weakening of local administration and social cohesion, stifling the economy. Both traditional and local administration in the affected LGAs became distanced from the people such that district and village heads, as well as local government officials, were forced to operate from Yola, the state capital. The local economy in the five devastated LGAs was temporarily transferred to the hands of Boko Haram. The two most predominant livelihood activities – crop cultivation and cattle rearing – also became impossible ventures as farmlands could not be accessed while cattle were also rustled by insurgents. Probably

the most devastating effect of the insurgency especially in Madagali LGA is the spiral effect it had on social cohesion where some members of the community, e.g. blacksmiths and children born out of wedlock (previously disdained by community members) were either reportedly recruited or aided and collaborated with insurgents as revenge for the treatment they experienced.

Overall, Shalangwa's findings reveal that the opinion of dialogue as a means to end the violent Boko Haram conflict in Adamawa State is that of acceptance by most groups. This is simply borne out of the conflict fatigue which has lasted for over 12 years without an end in sight. The religious and traditional leaders and youth groups especially in the worst affected areas of Madagali believe that the present conflict cannot be defeated militarily, and so strongly support dialogue. A similar opinion is also held by some vigilantes especially the hunters who in Adamawa State (almost single-handedly) helped in the restoration of peace.[31] At the other end of the spectrum, the position of women and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is that of supporting the continuation of military option. There are two main reasons behind this position according to Shalangwa, (i) with the right equipment, sustained campaign by the Nigerian military and support from vigilantes can overpower Boko Haram and end the conflict, and (ii) Boko Haram as a group has committed so many atrocities in Adamawa State that it would be difficult for most community members to commit to living together in peace. The latter position raised by the CJTF only points to how trust has become shattered by the conflict. Since most groups agree to a dialogue, suggestions were also provided on what form it would take in Adamawa. The overall dialogue process was suggested to be government-led with all the actors reached like the negotiation of the Chibok school girls. Others have also suggested a reconciliation committee whose membership should include

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[31] In November, 2014 hunters in Adamawa State killed 75 Boko Haram members to recapture Maiha LGA. See Local hunters kill over 70 Boko Haram insurgents, recapture Adamawa town | Premium Times Nigeria (premiumtimesng.com)

repentant members of Boko Haram, their parents, traditional and religious leaders, vigilante groups and the military. The risks associated with dialogue in Adamawa is that of betrayal, especially by the government and personal risks of the citizens that may be involved including stereotyping of some community members who may be involved in the process.

In the second chapter by Yagana Bukar, the conflict situation, as well as issues associated with the possibility of a dialogue with Boko Haram, were lucidly explored in Borno State, the epicentre of the Boko Haram conflict. The historical evolution of the conflict, including underlying drivers which are too important to ignore, are presented. From a ragtag army of restless youths in Borno under its founder Mohammed Yusuf in 2001, the group metamorphosed into one of the world's deadliest terrorist organisations under its successor, Abubakar Shekau, and later Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, ISWAP's factional leader. Since the evolution of Boko Haram and its major currents have been presented earlier in this introduction, this will not be repeated. Nevertheless, it is important to not ignore Yagana's assertion (in her chapter in this book) on the triggers of the conflict, that "no single factor adequately explains the emergence of Boko Haram." In Borno State, opinion is divided on the capability of the military to win the war on insurgents. While ordinary community members doubt the commitment of the military, security agents feel it is the sustained campaign that led to the decimation of the group and even the surrender of many insurgents to the military authorities. This military onslaught, according to some interlocutors, must continue to win the war. Additionally, security agents, according to Bukar, feel that ordinary people do not understand the operations of the military, and they classify the insurgents into three groups – active, who are fighters, passive, who supply logistics, and informants, who provide the required information by Boko Haram to carry out their operations. Again, this makes it difficult for the military to succeed since the last two

categories who live in communities covertly provide support to the fighters.

As in Adamawa State, Bukar reports that dialogue and reconciliation with Boko Haram were re-echoed by most respondents in Borno State for sustainable peace. An important distinction though is the realisation that Boko Haram is a complex amalgam of many identities, each requiring a detailed understanding. The distinction between ideological elements (i.e. leadership) that would not want a dialogue, opportunists and the foot soldiers, was necessary to identify those amenable to dialogue. The other strand of distinction is the Boko Haram/ISWAP divide with ISWAP more likely to concede to a dialogue, according to some Borno citizens. Unlike in Adamawa State, the CJTF in Borno State welcomes dialogue as means to end the conflict but suggest this must be through a multi-layered process in view of the distinctiveness in the membership of Boko Haram. A key element of the concerns raised in Borno regarding dialogue is retributive jusice to satisfy those community members whose rights were violated and for BH members who perpetrated acts of violence to face the law. This is also in view of the multi-layered nature of Boko Haram earlier discussed.

The position of government in Borno as argued by Bukar is seen as being favourably disposed to dialogue due to its establishment of OSC, which despite criticism, some interlocutors believe is responsible for the mass surrender of Boko Haram to the military. But this government disposition towards dialogue has trifold associated challenges – lack of framework, absence of a government trusted mediator, and BH being a faceless organisation. For these reasons, preference was made for ex-combatants to be resettled far away from their original communities by some to allow time to heal the wounds. To achieve dialogue, broad-based, inclusive participation of stakeholders was recommended. Specifically, the following actors were recommended: factions of BH, Nigerian

Government and its agencies (Federal; State; LGAs) NEMA and SEMA, Nigerian security actors (Armed forces – Army, Air Force, Police, NSCDC), vigilantes (CJTF, hunters, and other vigilante groups). To these groups were added, international organisations especially UNHCR and ICRC, women, traditional and religious leaders. To commence dialogue many groups see international organisations as best fit candidates because as some perceive these organisations are already in contact with the insurgents. Risks associated with dialogue in Borno centres largely on trust. BH is seen as a very unpredictable group that can turn to violence at any time putting the lives of negotiators at risk. Also as in chapter one, community leaders who support dialogue may be seen to be sympathetic towards BH and to mitigate these risks, it was suggested that stringent dialogue conditions with backing from the international community be set by the federal government so that BH does not back out.

If Borno State is the epicentre of BH, Yobe State may well represent the cradle of the conflict as the first major uprising was recorded in Kanamma, Yunusari LGA. Hassana Waziri also discusses in chapter three the effect of the conflict, its transformation, community readiness for dialogue and risks associated in Yobe State. Despite the challenges associated with security in the state, the position of most people in Yobe is that the present administration has done more than its predecessor in tackling insecurity. Waziri argues that two reasons were given in Yobe for this – the establishment of OSC and greater expenditure on military equipment by the Buhari administration. Yobe State government was equally rated high by the people in terms of addressing the root causes of insecurity through the introduction of poverty reduction programmes including vocational training and skills acquisition. On the dialogue option, Waziri surmises that dialogue and negotiation were seen as legitimate options that are acceptable to both the government and the people of Yobe State. But how can dialogue be initiated and by who? Waziri reports that security actors, community leaders,

religious leaders, international organisations, and the media were recommended as best fit candidates to be employed for the dialogue. Two groups of individuals stand clearly in the recommendations of best-fit candidates to commence the process: the international organisations as represented by ICRC and media as represented by Ahmed Salkida, the journalist with deep insights into BH activities. But it was also pointed out that even if the process is started, there are likely to be competing demands from the insurgents, e.g. the release of commanders and rebuilding of worship centres. The risks involved in dialogue appear to be similar to those of Borno and Adamawa states. Many people fear vengeance, betrayal, threat to personal safety as well as stigmatisation for stakeholders who may be involved, especially in situations where dialogue fails. It is hoped that these risks may be mitigated through mass enlightenment and awareness creation of the importance of forgiveness by the clergy, and deliberate promotion of same by the media.

Although Kano State suffered significantly in the past, there is a widely held belief across the religious divide that Boko Haram influence has been largely curtailed in the state. Based on field research, Kabiru Riruwai in chapter four identifies reasons for this and discusses the perspectives of the people of Kano on dialogue with Boko Haram. Vigilantism, youth resistance to violent extremism, and concerted efforts made by the traditional institution in checking and reporting community happenings to security agents were the most important factors responsible for stemming the tide of insurgency in Kano State. The vigilance of traditional leaders in particular (with the active support of the Kano State government) towards making sure estate agents and landlords enforce a strict code of conduct for tenancy was the game-changer in securing the state. Only persons certified as trustworthy could secure accommodation in the state. Should government commence a dialogue with Boko Haram? Riruwai surmises that the general opinion in Kano State is that of opening and maintaining channels

of dialogue with the insurgents, even though there is doubt as to whether the commanders who are allegedly backed by foreign powers can ever be reached. To reach these commanders, repentant and rehabilitated members of the Boko Haram can be reached to start the dialogue, since many interlocutors believe there is possible communication between the two groups of insurgents. One of the uniqueness of Riruwai's findings in Kano is that of holding separate dialogues for the two main insurgent groups – Boko Haram and ISWAP, since agreements reached with one group may hardly be agreed by the other. Since Riruwai also concludes that there could be life-threatening risks associated with the dialogue, it was suggested dialogue should be discreet and parties should not bear arms during the process.

Across the world, the youths constitute an important stakeholder group to engage with, as they are often blamed for precipitating conflicts. To better understand this, Ibrahim Machina in chapter five reviews the prospects of engaging young people in addressing the challenges and risks of dialogue and negotiation as the pathway to ending the Boko Haram insurgency. The key message contained in the chapter is that the benefits of resolving violent conflict using dialogue and negotiation outweigh its risks and challenges. Dialogue needs to be explored as a policy option that can complement existing counterterrorism approaches of the Nigerian government. How exactly can this be achieved and what role can youths play in the insurgency currently underway? According to Machina, there are various roles young people can play in resolving the Boko Haram insurgency such as advocacy, mediation and research. As mediators and advocates, young people lay the foundation for high-level dialogue through public enlightenment that will arouse public support for dialogue and negotiation. This, in turn, will address the challenges of mistrust, fear and misunderstanding between government, citizens, and Boko Haram. Machina recommends that engaging young people as

critical stakeholders in facilitating dialogue and negotiation will lead to the restoration of peace and stability in the Northeast.

One of the most glaring aspects of most conflicts is the near absence of women's contribution to their management. It is exactly to deepen this understanding in Northeast Nigeria that Chris Kwaja and Ndidi Anyawu in chapter six address women's contributions to promoting dialogue and negotiation in the conflict ravaging the region. The chapter, which is based on review, argues that despite being disproportionately affected by the conflict, women in the Northeast have been largely excluded in conflict resolution as a result of cultural and religious practices. Despite this exclusion, however, we are reminded that women have informally influenced dialogue in many ways. A few individuals stand out – Aisha Wakil and Hamsatu Al-Amin, who have made several attempts to encourage dialogue between Boko Haram and the government. At a group level, women in the BAY states have convened peace rallies and campaigns with Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) being the most prominent. Kwaja and Anyawu also report that several community-based women organisations and female vigilante groups in the region played significant roles in both counterinsurgency and peacebuilding activities despite the socio-cultural encumbrances imposed on them by male dominance. While it is true that the conflict in the region has severely impacted women, including defining new roles for them, women are seen helping to build bridges across ethnic and religious divides and developing counter-narratives thereby helping to improve social cohesion that has been severed by the conflict in many communities. The numerous female platforms such as women councils have become ready-made structures for enhancing peace in several communities of the Northeast through influencing informal dialogues. The conclusion reached by Kwaja and Anyawu is that lasting peace in the region cannot be achieved without taking into cognisance the contribution of all parties, including the soft power of women.

In the last chapter of this book, Abdulrahman Abu Hamisu discusses the failure to engender resilience in the Northeast and the implications of this on the non-kinetic approach to addressing the insurgency in the region. Hamisu contends that even though conceptual understanding of the term has been used rather fluidly, the key issue in resilience building is that of a combination of the survival of affected populations and the development of their communities. Findings reveal that in the Northeast, resilience at both individual and community levels is far from being achieved, despite the quantum of resources expended by government and development concerns. Attempts at building resilience have ignored the affected individuals and has led them to opt for negative coping measures that are counterproductive. The apparent misstep in the region appears to have negatively impacted the population in large measure and undermined the non-kinetic approaches to ensuring peace by the government. Hamisu recommends, therefore, that resilience-building must be focused on the people, corruption-free and two-pronged, i.e. one directly focused on the people as victims, and the other on resuscitating their conflict-affected communities in a manner that depicts the model used by the Victims Support Fund in its programming in the Northeast.

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN ADAMAWA STATE:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

MUSA SHALANGWA

BACKGROUND

The insurgency waged by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram (BH), in the north-eastern part of Nigeria has been raging since 2009, though it has considerably waned since 2015. It began in Borno state where members of the insurgent group attacked communities, killed citizens, looted and destroyed homes, businesses, public utilities and forced over 2.5 million people into seeking refuge as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Northeast – over 550,000 IDPs in Chad, Cameroun and Niger Republics and over 240,000 refugees in the four countries (UNHCR, 2019). The relative successes of the operations of the group in Borno state emboldened them to steadily spread their campaign of terror to neighbouring Yobe and Adamawa states and a few other targets in Bauchi, Plateau and Abuja.

In Adamawa State, the activities of Boko Haram have largely been concentrated in the northern senatorial zone with Madagali, Michika and Mubi North, Mubi South and Maiha LGAs bearing the brunt of the attacks, while other LGAs like Hong and Gombi, to a lesser degree, also experienced the destruction of property and large population displacement.[32] At the peak of the insurgency in

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[32]See Shalangwa, M. (2017) Community resilience and the insurgency in Adamawa state. Abuja. CITAD

2015, Madagali, Michika and Mubi were overrun by the insurgents who then established a caliphate in Mubi town. Hong and Gombi suffered considerably and banks, police stations, markets, homes and businesses were attacked and looted. Many people were killed; many women and children were abducted and taken into captivity, while many more fled to Yola and other towns and across the border into Cameroun, Chad and Niger Republics.

The insurgency began to abate towards the end of 2015 and many towns and villages that were under the control of Boko Haram, like Mubi and Michika, were liberated. Other towns that have suffered considerably, frequently attacked (though not seized) like Hong and Gombi, began to experience relative peace. Most people who had earlier fled these towns and villages returned home to begin the arduous task of rebuilding their lives.

No doubt, the Nigerian military has considerably degraded the insurgents and have taken back many towns and communities previously under the control of the insurgents, however, the insurgency is far from over. In Madagali LGA where the insurgents continue to hold sway, many towns and villages outside Gulak, the LGA headquarter, are largely inaccessible and people living there are at the mercy of the insurgents. Farming and other economic activities have largely remained skeletal as they are restricted to a few kilometres outside town. Kidnappings, cattle rustling and other criminal activities have become the new reality for the people living in Madagali and other LGAs. Michika, Mubi and Maiha residents are living in constant fear knowing that the insurgents can attack at any time. While the insurgents continued to attack and pillage communities in Adamawa State, counterinsurgency measures by the military, largely the use of heavy weapons, were deployed. The use of brute force has its limitations and it is becoming increasingly clear that, perhaps, it is time to try other non-military options that may bring the insurgency to an end.

This research examines the nature of the Boko Haram conflict in Adamawa state, the current situation and the perceptions of the major actors about dialogue and reconciliation as a viable option for resolving the insurgency. The research shall also try to understand those actors that can best promote dialogue and reconciliation, the strategies by which they can be approached and also how they can engage the dialogue and reconciliation initiatives.

BOKO HARAM: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The group called Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), also known as Boko Haram, is an Islamist movement that has been operating in northeastern Nigeria since 2003 but gained prominence from 2009 when its leader Muhammad Yusuf was killed under questionable circumstances by the Nigeria security operatives in Maiduguri (Mohammed, 2014). Following the killing of its leader and the brutal repression of its members, the group went underground, regrouped, armed itself and re-emerged about a year later to commence its campaign of terror, executing jailbreaks, attacking police stations, worship centres, public utilities, government institutions, and the like. They also engaged in assassinations, suicide bombings and eventually abductions, raiding and plundering towns and villages, rape, forceful conscriptions, and many other nefarious activities, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee their homes to live as internally displaced persons in neighbouring states or as refugees in neighbouring countries like Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

Another account traced the origin of the group to 1995 when one "Abubakar Lawan established the *Ahlulsunnawaljamaa'ah hijra* or *Shabaab* group (Muslim Youth Organisation) in Maiduguri, Borno state. The group was largely nonviolent and continued to grow and win converts until 2002 when Mohammed Yusuf became the leader (Taiwo & Olugbode 2009; Adisa 2012 cited in Onuoha 2014). Over

the years, the group assumed different names like the *Yusufiyya sect*, *Nigerian Taliban* and recently Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Onouha, 2014). A third account has it that Boko Haram was established from a group of radical Islamist youths who worshipped at Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, Borno state where Mohammed Yusuf was a preacher and leader in the youth wing, Shababul Islam (Islamic Youth Vanguard), of Ahl Sunnah, a Salafi group. Mohammed Yusuf was considered a charismatic and well-liked preacher who made effort to influence the full implementation of shari'ah in many northern states and his inability to do so made him criticise the government as insincere and deceptive and called for an authentic Islamist Revolution, which marked the beginning of his confrontation with government (Walker 2012).

IDEOLOGY AND THE EVOLUTION OF BOKO HARAM

Most radical Islamic groups across the world have the same objective, which is for Muslims to revolt and change "apostate" states and governments and to re-establish a proper Islamic state (Mohamed, 2014). Boko Haram, like other radical Islamic groups, has a similar ideology rooted in Salafi Jihadism and which seeks to purge Islam of all external influences and return it to its pristine practice as it was in the days of Prophet Mohammed. A onetime spokesman of the group, Abu Qaqa, explained that their objective is to put Nigeria in a difficult position by destabilising it and replacing the current political system with shari'ah and possibly return the country to a situation like the pre-colonial days when shari'ah was practised (ICG, 2005).

Boko Haram also preached against bad governance and corruption, especially in the north, which has led to grinding poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and the breakdown of public infrastructure leading to the absence of clean drinking water and sanitation, broken down hospitals without drugs and skilled personnel, dysfunctional public transport system, absence of

housing for low-income earners, absence of social safety nets for the poor, etc. The north consistently comes up with the worst levels of poverty and unemployment in the country and living conditions in most of the communities are simply appalling. While the poor and downtrodden wallow in poverty, anger, frustration and alienation, politicians, on the other hand, with their family members and lackeys, live in affluence, flaunting their ill-gotten wealth shamelessly without regard to the poverty of the majority of people around them. Muhammed Yusuf condemned corruption and impunity in government in his sermons and also organised an informal micro-credit scheme which he used to assist his followers with money to start a business (ICG, 2014). The fiery criticism of government and financial inducement given to members has been appealing to many poor and unemployed youths and many have converted and joined Boko Haram. The group has continued to use financial incentives as an effective strategy for recruitment to date.

How did this relatively small group evolve to become one of the deadliest terror groups in the world? Mohammed (2014) identified three phases of the group's evolution, beginning with the Kanama phase which was between 2003 and 2005. This phase was led by Mohammed Ali, a Nigerian who was said to have trained and fought together with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan; he unsuccessfully tried to wage war against the Nigerian state but failed. The second phase, also called the *dawah* (to invite), took place somewhere between 2005 and 2009. Rising from the ashes of the Kanama uprising, the group won converts, indoctrinated and radicalised them through debates with *Ulama* (clerics) from other sects, attacking western values, democracy and secularism, as well as criticising the corruption and poor governance at both the state and national levels. The third phase began with the brutal oppression of the group and the killing of Muhammad Yusuf, its leader, by the Nigerian security operatives. This forced the group to go underground, reorganise, arm itself and re-emerge to confront the Nigerian state.

The successes of the group in Borno state emboldened them to spread their campaign of terror to Yobe and Adamawa states, and other parts of the country, like Bauchi and Plateau states, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja where it successfully executed several suicide bomb attacks (Shalangwa, 2017). The activities of the group in Adamawa state were largely restricted to the northern senatorial zone comprising the following LGAs – Madagali, Michika, Mubi (North and South), Maiha, and two local governments in the central zone, namely Hong, and Gombi. Three of these LGAs (Madagali, Hong and Gombi) share a common border with Borno state, the epicentre of the Boko Haram conflict. In all the areas they operate in Adamawa, and as they do in other places, the group severally raided communities, killing, abducting, raping, and carting away foodstuff, livestock, vehicles, motorcycles and anything of value that they could carry. They also destroyed churches, mosques, homes, shops and other business premises, as well as public buildings, bridges, schools, etc.

It is important at this point to give a brief background about the state and its socio-economic profile to help us understand and explain why the insurgency has taken the dimension it has in the state and particularly in Madagali LGA.

ADAMAWA STATE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Adamawa State was created by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida-led military government in 1991. It was carved out of the former Gongola and it occupies an area of about 38,700 sq. kilometres. The state shares borders with Taraba to the southwest, Borno to the northwest, Gombe to the west and the Republic of Cameroun to the east. The state has 21 local governments divided into three senatorial zones: Adamawa North (Madagali, Michika, Maiha, Mubi North and Mubi South), Adamawa Central (Hong, Gombi, Song, Girei, Yola North, Yola South and Fufore) and Adamawa South (Demsa, Numan, Guyuk, Shelleng, Lamorde,

Mayo Belwa, Ganye, Jada, Toungo) (Shalangwa, 2017). The state is estimated to have a total population of about 3,178,150 people (NBS, 2011), most of whom are farmers and traders, with many also employed by the state and federal government. The state also has about 58 ethnic groups.

It is worth noting that socio-economic conditions in Adamawa have been dismal since the early 2000s due to many challenges like desertification, land degradation and poor rainfall, which has led to poor farm yields. This has increased poverty, hunger and unemployment, and the state has consistently ranked among the poorest states in Nigeria (Shalangwa, 2017). The National Bureau of Statistics in its report on poverty profile in 2010 estimated that the state had 55.4% of the population suffering from food poverty, 74.2 % were gripped by absolute poverty, while 74.3% were leaving on less than one dollar per day (NBS, 2012). These poor economic indicators may have a significant bearing on the insurgency in Adamawa. The table below shows the incidence of poverty in Adamawa and across the northeastern region.

Table 1. State Incidence of Poverty by Different Poverty Measures

States	Food Poverty		Absolute Poverty		Relative Poverty		Dollar per day based on an adjusted PPP	
	Food Poor	Non Poor	Poor	Non Poor	Poor	Non Poor	Poor	Non Poor
Adamawa	55.4	44.6	74.2	25.8	80.7	19.3	74.3	25.7
Bauchi	54.1	45.9	73.0	27.0	83.7	16.3	73.1	26.9
Borno	33.2	66.8	55.1	44.9	61.1	38.9	55.1	44.9
Gombe	71.5	28.5	74.2	25.8	79.8	20.2	74.2	25.8
Taraba	45.2	54.8	68.9	31.1	76.3	23.7	68.9	31.1
Yobe	58.5	41.5	73.8	26.2	79.6	20.4	74.1	25.9

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2012)

To add to this, Adamawa has one of the highest levels of unemployment in the country, which in 2010 was about 31.4 percent, higher than the national average (Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa, 2012). These figures have only marginally improved since then as the National Bureau of Statistics reported a slight decrease in the unemployment rate in the state to 29 percent and the underemployment rate of 24 percent in the third quarter of 2018 (NBS, 2017).

Madagali is a town at the extreme northern corner of Adamawa state sharing a border with Michika (Adamawa state) to the north, Askira Uba (Borno state) to the west, Gwoza (Borno state) to the south, and to the Republic of Cameroon to the east. Many reasons make Madagali a suitable location for the insurgents and explain why it has been difficult to dislodge them from the LGA. First, its proximity to Borno, the epicentre of the insurgency, makes it vulnerable and insurgents have attacked Madagali and communities from Gwoza, Askira Uba and Cameroon mountains where the insurgents freely operate. Secondly, the topography of the area is mountainous which makes it convenient for the insurgents to move easily and engage in guerilla warfare. Thirdly and, perhaps, more importantly, the internal contradictions of the Madagali communities gave rise to an army of resentful and angry youths and men who joined or are collaborating with the insurgents to inflict pain on communities that have treated them as sub-humans for many years. Blacksmiths (matakam) and children born out of wedlock are generally treated as outcasts in the area; many of these outcasts joined Boko Haram, and their parents or guardians became collaborators and informants for the insurgents.[33]

METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

The methodology deployed for the collection of field data for this research is the Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and the Key

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[33] KII with a traditional ruler

Informant Interview (KII). These qualitative research methodologies were deemed most appropriate because they would help to a face to face interaction and allow the researchers to probe further and elicit even more responses from the interviewees. Secondary data from previous studies on Boko Haram have also been utilised by the researcher to get a better understanding of the insurgency, which also helped in guiding the data collection in the field and the analysis.

The Boko Haram insurgents in Adamawa have lost most of the territories they previously controlled and are now located in Madagali local government area, although they still carryout pockets of attacks on nearby towns and villages like Michika, Lahsa, Uba, etc. This makes Madagali the study site. Although due to security concerns, the researchers could not go to Madagali and had to conduct most of the FGDs and KIIs in Michika town which is about 55km away from Madagali and takes about a one-hour drive.

Four FGDs were conducted and ten KIIs were held with different actors who are directly affected by the insurgency. All the four FGDs were conducted in Michika with four categories of actors as follows: Men, Women, Male youths and Female youths. Seven out of the eight KIIs were conducted in Michika with representatives of groups like the hunters, vigilantes, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the Police, the Muslim Council, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC). Three KIIs were conducted in Jimeta/Yola, the state capital, with a traditional ruler and two community leaders.

This study seeks to explore ideas about dialogue and reconciliation as options for ending the Boko Haram insurgency by gathering the views of different actors who are either directly or indirectly involved with or affected by the conflict. The choice of the respondents listed earlier is deliberate as they are the people directly affected by the insurgency in Madagali LGA of Adamawa state. Most of the respondents have gone through the experience of

displacement, living as IDPs, either in camps or with friends and relations in host communities. Although most of them have returned home, they continue to face the harsh reality of the insurgency in their towns and communities. Their views and opinions on dialogue and reconciliation with Boko Haram are essential and will contribute immensely to the discourse.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CONFLICT IN ADAMAWA STATE

At the height of the insurgency in 2015, Boko Haram had overrun seven local governments and had established a caliphate in Mubi, the second biggest town and the economic hub of the state. As earlier stated, the situation has considerably improved since then as the insurgents have been seriously degraded and many areas previously controlled by them have been liberated, except for Madagali LGA which is still largely under the control of the insurgents. Although degraded, Boko Haram is still in control of most of Madagali local government area, except Gulak the local government headquarters and a few other towns like Bebel, Vigirik, Vokolos, Vorkotok, and Visik which are considered as relatively safe.[34] Many towns like Gubla, Sukur, Daurawa, Kamburu, Mazawa, Vengo, Borkoto, Hidik, Yibango, Makshe, Humshe, Jaje, Gatha, Chakama, Mandaka, Waga, Barngwaza, Gubla, etc. are considered as no-go areas because the insurgents control those areas.[35] Most of the respondents report that they feel unsafe even inside Gulak as the insurgents can be encountered if one goes just a few kilometres (3 kilometres) outside the town. Most community people are generally afraid to go to the farms without being accompanied by hunters or vigilantes.[36] The situation is almost like a stalemate; while the military is in control of the local government

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[34] FGD with group #3
[35] KII with respondent #3
[36] FGD with group #4

headquarters, Boko Haram is in charge of most of the surrounding towns and villages.

Movement for community people is highly restricted and difficult as the military now requires some form of identification at checkpoints. Although this has helped to control the movement of insurgents, it is also hampering the free movement of community people as most of them are farmers and do not have the national identity card that is required to pass through military checkpoints.

There is also a growing belief among the communities in Madagali that Boko Haram is regrouping and possibly getting funding from outside the country. It is also alleged that Boko Haram is looking inwards and raising funds locally by engaging in several criminal activities like kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, organ harvesting, etc.[37] A respondent explained that he believes the high rate of kidnappings, abductions and disappearance of people can only be explained by this.

A number of the respondents are of the view that the current situation has been made possible because of military highhandedness and the unwillingness to join hands with the community to fight the insurgents.[38] The community people allege that the military is unfriendly and hard to communicate with.[39] There are reports that sometimes when vigilantes or hunters report the Boko Haram movement to the military, nothing is done about it.[40] An example was given of a particular situation where a non-state armed group (*Yan-gora*) from Gombi LGA came to Madagali and requested to go into Mandaka, a town occupied by Boko Haram, to confront the insurgents, but the military turned down the request and would not allow them to enter the town.[41] This may be due to

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[37] KII with respondent #7
[38] KII with respondent #7
[39] FGD with group #1
[40] KII with respondent #2
[41] FGD with group #4

low morale occasioned by poor equipment and lack of logistics which leaves the military less motivated than the insurgents (Obasi, 2015). The current state of the conflict can be summed up under four major themes, thus:

1. General insecurity

There is a clear absence of security of lives and property, especially outside Gulak where Boko Haram has demonstrated the capacity to attack at will. Most of the well-to-do people have relocated to Yola and other places because of the risk to their lives. Almost all the traditional rulers in the local government now reside in Yola, the state capital, from where they administer their domains. The general perception is that nobody is safe and anyone can fall victim at any time. Kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, armed robbery and the like have become daily occurrences and many people have had to pay kidnappers ransom to rescue themselves or a family member. Criminal elements have no doubt taken advantage of the security challenge and joined the fray so much so that one cannot tell such crimes are perpetrated by Boko Haram or otherwise; the important thing to note is that Boko Haram created the situation which the criminals are taking advantage of. This view is corroborated by Stroehlein (2012), as Boko Haram has become a cover for all manner of criminal activity and political thuggery of all sorts. The group is generally assumed to be responsible for crimes like bank robberies, kidnappings, cattle rustling, etc., even where they have not openly taken credit for the act.

2. Weak Governance Structure

Secondly, the people in the local government area have been denied the opportunity to enjoy the benefit of governance at that level and there is a general absence of civil authority in most parts. The courts, police stations, local government offices, hospitals and schools have all been abandoned, leaving the people to their fate. This has seriously worsened an already bad situation and

heightened the feeling of despondency among the people, many of whom want the insurgency to end because they are tired of the killings and destruction. Most respondents expressed the desire for peace to return so that they can have their lives back:[42]

> We are tired of the killings and just want peace to return. We want to be able to sleep well, go to the farms without fear and to see our children grow (FGD with women).

3. Dwindling Economy

The insurgency has taken a huge toll on economic activities in Madagali and its surrounding local governments, as most economic activities have dwindled to a trickle of what they used to be. Farming, which is the mainstay of the local economy has been the worst hit because most people cannot access their farms due to the fear of being kidnapped or killed by insurgents. This has seriously affected food production, leading to scarcity and an increase in cost beyond the reach of many, leaving them at the mercy of humanitarian organisations or benevolent neighbours and friends. Livestock owners have also suffered immensely from cattle rustling in the area. The rustled livestock are usually moved through Boko Haram controlled territories to discourage the owners from pursuing them and taken to Gamboru where they are alleged to be transported to the eastern part of Nigeria with armed military men as escorts.[43] The economy of Madagali is in the hands of the insurgents and the military, while the community people are left with very little. A respondent told the researchers that while Boko Haram is in control of the bushes and are the sole supplier of resources like shea butter, which is a major source of income for the community, the military is in control of the sales of alcohol, fuel, and collects rent for landed property and some farmlands.[44]

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[42] FGD with group #2
[43] KII with respondent #7
[44] KII with respondent #7

4. Weakening Social Cohesion

Social cohesion in Madagali is at its lowest ebb due to the many years of suffering from the insurgency. The internal contradictions of the Madagali communities and the many years of alienation and maltreatment of some people gave rise to an army of resentful and angry youths and men who joined or are collaborating with the insurgents to inflict pain on communities that have treated them as sub-humans for long. Blacksmiths (matakam) and children born out of wedlock are generally treated as outcasts in the area and many of these outcasts and their parents, or guardians, joined Boko Haram because of their appealing messages of equity and justice and became collaborators and informants for the insurgents.

Most of these people who joined Boko Haram or who have children or relatives in Boko Haram are known but people are afraid to speak up for fear of reprisal. One respondent told researchers that some Boko Haram members come to their family home at night to eat, rest and return to the bush very early the next morning and no one dares say a word about that.[45] The town is filled with Boko Haram informants and collaborators such that no one knows who to trust. Mutual suspicion and fear has almost paralysed and severely affected relationships between family members, neighbours and friends. Due to uncertainty and fear, most people are afraid to report to security agencies even when they see suspicious characters or movements.

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

The Boko Haram insurgency has been going on in Adamawa state for the past 11 years inflicting misery, sorrow, death and destruction on hapless communities. Although the insurgents have been largely "degraded" and dislodged from most of the local government areas that they were controlling (seven local government areas as of 2015)

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[45] KII with respondent #4

to only one present, the war is far from over. The Nigerian government has spent millions of naira since the outbreak of the violence to equip and train the military with the hope that they would be able to bring the insurgency to an end, but that has not happened. What has happened, however, is that the death toll (civilian and military) continues to rise, public facilities are being destroyed, communities continue to be raided and plundered and gross human rights violations are inflicted on them. There is a general "conflict fatigue" on the side of both government and citizens of Adamawa, so that all actors concerned need to explore other options that would lead to the resolution of this war.

DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION: THE POSITION OF ACTORS

For some time now, the need to explore other means of ending the Boko Haram insurgency through dialogue and reconciliation has been gaining ground (Ibrahim et al., 2013, UNDP, 2018; Kukah Centre, 2018; Olojo, 2019). Interestingly, a good number of the actors either directly involved with or affected by the conflict are not averse to the idea. Both traditional and religious leaders of Madagali are of the view that government should follow the path of dialogue and reconciliation with the insurgents to end the conflict because it has become clear that military might alone cannot end it.[46] This view is also shared by non-state armed actors like vigilantes and hunters who have been at the forefront of the conflict. This group is of the view that although the insurgents have lost a lot of ground and do not have the kind of men and heavy firepower that they used to have, they have been able to hold their ground in Madagali and have demonstrated the capacity to attack at will.

In different FGDs conducted for community people, the men and youths (males and females) believe that the insurgents cannot be

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[46] KII with respondent #7, #3 and #4

defeated by sheer military might alone and that government should consider dialoguing and reaching a peaceful resolution with the insurgents. Interestingly, the women hold a contrary opinion; for them, Boko Haram can be defeated militarily and the government just needs to muster the will to adequately arm both the military and non-state armed actors and Boko Haram will be crushed.[47] Another group that is sceptical about the idea of dialogue and reconciliation with the insurgents is the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). For them, the crimes committed by the insurgents are too heinous to be forgiven, and considering that some of these people killed their parents or guardians should be enough to show that they cannot be trusted.[48] In another interview, a respondent is of the view that the military option may work if the military changes the way it engages with both the community people and the insurgents. He alleged that oftentimes the military personnel seldom move from their checkpoints even when they are informed of Boko Haram activities close by, and unless that changes, it is unlikely that the military would be able to flush out and defeat Boko Haram any time soon.[49]

PROMOTERS OF DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

From the interviews and FGDs conducted, most actors are favourably disposed to dialogue as an option for ending the conflict. Traditional and religious leaders, the men, the youths and non-state armed actors like vigilantes/hunters all agree that dialogue and reconciliation are feasible options and are willing to give their support if called upon to do so:

> We believe that the insurgents can't be defeated by military might alone, so other options like dialogue should be tried and we are willing to give our support (FGD with Male youth).

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[47] FGD with group #2
[48] KII with respondent #5
[49] KII with respondent #1

They also agree that traditional and religious leaders are the people who can best promote dialogue and reconciliation because they are respected and trusted by their communities; this is corroborated by the Governors' forum on building peace in the Lake Chad Basin convened by the UNDP in 2018. <u>A respondent in one of the KIIs suggested that parents of Boko Haram members should not be left out in the dialogue and reconciliation effort because most of them communicate with their children</u> and even send supplies to them in the bush or dropoff such supplies at certain pre-arranged spots. The point here is that if these parents can be convinced to speak to their children to lay down their arms and come home, the insurgency will end in no time.[50]

THE APPROACH

In the course of the FGDs and interviews, several interesting suggestions were made by the various groups and individuals on how to approach the various actors involved in the conflict. The first is that government should kickstart the process by reaching out to all the actors and bringing them to the table. A second suggestion is that government knows how to contact all the actors including the leadership of Boko Haram and initiate dialogue with them separately and eventually bring all the actors together for reconciliation. Some respondents believe that government can explore the same channels through which they were able to secure the release of some of the Chibok/Dapchi girls and initiate dialogue with the insurgents.[51] The third suggestion is that government should establish a dialogue and reconciliation committee and co-opt repentant Boko Haram members into the committee. The assumption is that these repentant Boko Haram elements may still have contact with their people in the bushes and they may also offer valuable suggestions as to how to reach the insurgents and possibly <u>begin dialogue and reconciliation.</u>

[50] KII with respondent #7

[51] FGD with group #1, KII with respondent #1 and #4

COMPETING DEMANDS

It is unclear if the insurgents as a group or as individuals have expressed any demand for dialogue and reconciliation to happen. For instance, the Shekau faction has consistently scoffed at any talk of dialogue and the other factions have not publicly made any demands whether to the government or to communities as to what needs to happen before dialogue or reconciliation can take place. What is clear, however, is that many individuals within Boko Haram are willing to lay down their arms and embrace peace if they get the assurance that they and their families would be safe[52]:

> Some Boko Haram members have told us that they are ready and willing to lay down their arms and surrender but they fear for their lives and the lives of their families (KII with Muslim leader)

Some of them are commanders with close to a hundred people under their command, but they hold back because of the fear of persecution and what may befall their families. As for communities, what they want and have been demanding is the cessation of conflict and for peace to return to their communities. A respondent puts it like this:

> "We are tired with everything and just want peace to return, we want our old lives back."[53]

RISKS IN PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

Some of the respondents interviewed do not think there is any risk involved in promoting dialogue, while others think it would not be known until it is tried.[54] A respondent explained that the risk of promoting dialogue is that government may not be able to sustain

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[54] FGD with group #3
[52] KII with respondent #4
[53] FGD with group #2

the peace process and also the possibility of politicians betraying the trust of both the community and Boko Haram.[55] Some respondents identified personal risk as their main concern in promoting dialogue. They explained that some of them who have helped in negotiating the release of people abducted by Boko Haram have tried to seize that opportunity to try to persuade the Boko Haram members that they negotiated with to lay down their arms and surrender, are seen as Boko Haram collaborators:[56]

> I was involved with the negotiation for the release of a relation of mine who was abducted by Boko Haram. I tried to use the opportunity to persuade the Boko Haram members to surrender and people began to say that I am one of them (KII with Muslim leader).

For another respondent, the risks of suspicion and distrust among community members are high because people can be betrayed for getting involved. The implication of this is that people who believe in and are willing to promote dialogue and reconciliation become reluctant to openly discuss or promote dialogue because they fear for their safety.[57] One suggestion for addressing this is to involve traditional and religious leaders as well as other respected community leaders to get involved in the dialogue and reconciliation process. These people should identify and reach out to all community members who have grievances against the insurgents and get their buy-in for the dialogue process, otherwise, it would end up as an exercise in futility.

ACTORS TO BE ENGAGED IN DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

From the discussions and interviews that have been held, it is clear that the people of Madagali, except for the CJTF and the women

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[55] KII with respondent #1
[56] KII with respondent #7

group, believe that dialogue and reconciliation is a viable option for a peaceful resolution of the Boko Haram insurgency as against the use of military force:

> We the traditional leaders are ready and willing to support dialogue and reconciliation and we are sure that with good enlightenment many community people will support it too (KII with a traditional ruler).

The major actors in the conflict were identified as important for the dialogue and reconciliation process. The military and non-state armed actors like hunters/vigilantes have been at the forefront of the conflict and have apprehended many of the insurgents including commanders and foot soldiers. Contact with the insurgents may have provided the opportunity for them to gather valuable intel about the insurgents that may be very helpful in a dialogue and reconciliation process. Repentant Boko Haram members and their parents, including parents of active Boko Haram members (who are generally known in Madagali), are also important to the dialogue process because many of them are believed to be in touch with their children and comrades in the bushes. These people can be used to reach out to Boko Haram members, especially those that are willing to lay down arms and surrender, to initiate dialogue with them or through them.

Also, the communities, including traditional and religious leaders, men, women and youth, are all important to the dialogue process, because without their cooperation and support, the process is bound to fail. As victims who have suffered from the insurgency, their willingness to forgive the insurgents and embrace dialogue and reconciliation is a big boost to the discussion. Traditional and religious leaders unanimously agreed to lead the process because of the respect that they command amongst the people, while the government is expected to facilitate the process by reaching out to all the actors and providing the logistics and whatever is required for dialogue to happen. For dialogue and reconciliation to happen, the

government has to demonstrate its sincerity and the will to see it through because most actors are worried about the lackadaisical manner the government has been handling the insurgency:

> A lot of us in Madagali believe that dialogue is possible even with Shekau's faction, but politics has prevented government from dialoguing with Boko Haram (KII with Christian leader).

Government must, therefore, muster the courage to do whatever is necessary to end this conflict because it has been going on for too long and many families and communities have suffered irreparable losses and despondency is beginning to set in. Many people in the conflict zone and surrounding environments have expressed weariness and are praying for the conflict to end. For the communities in Madagali, the conditions are right for dialogue and reconciliation as the people have expressed readiness to forgive those who have killed their loved ones, destroyed their homes and means of livelihood, and have generally made their lives a living hell for the past ten years. Despite all that they have suffered, they are willing to support the process so that peace can return to their communities. This is not a small sacrifice that they are willing and ready to make, it is up to the government to take the lead and initiate the process.

CONCLUSION

The Boko Haram insurgency has been ongoing in Adamawa state and other parts of the Northeast for the past ten years and has taken its toll on the people. Many have lost loved ones, while others have lost homes, businesses and the like. Communities are still being attacked and the number of casualties rise daily. It is apparent that the military option favoured by the government is not yielding the desired result. It is time to consider other options that can help bring this needless devastation to an end. Actors involved in the conflict, many of whom are victims as well, believe that dialogue

and reconciliation is the way to go if the government is sincere in pursuing an end to the conflict. It behoves on government to seriously consider the non-military option and expedite action in reaching out to all actors and organise a dialogue and reconciliation initiative that can resolve the conflict and return peace to these troubled communities that have been suffering since the insurgency began.

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PROSPECTS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR THE RESOLUTION OF THE BOKO HARAM CONFLICT IN BORNO STATE THROUGH DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

YAGANA BUKAR

INTRODUCTION

The Northeast of Nigeria has been embroiled in the Boko Haram insurgency since 2009 impacting the lives of over 20 million people as at 2016.[58] The conflict became particularly intense in 2014, leading to the loss of nearly 30,000 lives and displacement of three million people internally and across international borders.[59] The conflict triggered acute humanitarian and forced displacement crises with devastating social and economic impacts on the population, and further deepening poverty and fragility in Borno State and the Northeast region.

Boko Haram first came into the limelight in 2002 as a radical anti-state opposition group engaged in a series of confrontations against security forces under the leadership of Muhammed Yusuf. The group's activities against the State climaxed in 2009 with a violent uprising which was brutally suppressed by state security forces. During the crises, hundreds of its members were murdered and Yusuf was extra-judicially killed by the police.[60] The group

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[58] Data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Round VIII, February 2016; Beltramo T. and P. A. Rossiasco (2016): Forced Displacement in the Lake Chad Region.UNHCR and the World Bank Group 2016.

[59] Displacement Tracking Matrix, IOM/NEMA, 2018

[60] Freedom Onuoha, "The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained," African Security Review, 19(2) (2010): 54-67\

subsequently went underground and resurfaced when it felt there was sufficient ground to claim an Islamic State or Caliphate with Abubakar Shekau as a successor to Muhammad Yusuf. Shekau transformed the group into a clandestine organization and adopted a strategy of terrorism and insurgency from 2010 onwards. Boko Haram developed and expanded the capacity for insurgency with willing volunteers and forced recruitments from Borno State, other parts of Nigeria, neighboring Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and beyond. Under his brutal leadership, Boko Harm sustained a deadly insurgency that overwhelmingly targeted civilians, involving assassinations, assaults, bombings, abductions, invasion of border communities, and seizure and control of territory in Nigeria.[61]

Boko Haram further expanded its linkages by professing support for Al Qaida in 2010 and later pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015.[62] Indeed Boko Haram members were known to have received training from Al Qaida in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which operates across the Sahel and North Africa, and from Al Shabaab in East Africa. Overtime, the militant group diversified its funding sources from engagement in "front" businesses, collection of levies, bank robbery, extortion and kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, drug trafficking to receiving funds from foreign terrorist groups.[63] In the course of the insurgency by Boko Haram and the Nigerian army's counterinsurgency measure, over 30 million people were affected in various ways.[64]

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[61] Ditto

[62] Adewale Maja-Pearce, "Where to begin?" London Review of Books, Vol. 40 No. 8 · 26 April 2018 https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n08/adewale-maja-pearce/where-to-begin

[63] Samuel Oyewole, and Freedom Onuoha "Boko Haram's Abduction of Dapchi Schoolgirls: Context, Controversy and Concerns," African Security Review.

[64] Recovery and Peace Building Assessment 2016 Volume I Synthesis Report

A lot of studies[65] have explored the environment and context in which Boko Haram was able to emerge and thrive, ultimately providing deeper insights into the complex nature of the insurgency itself. No single factor adequately explains the emergence of Boko Haram in the region, understanding the overall context is therefore extremely important to understanding the movement. Chief among the factors that enabled the rise of Boko Haram are the limited state presence and poor governance, unemployment, environmental pressures (enhanced by the receding waters of Lake Chad), desertification, and deep history of Islamic conservatism.[66] Analysts observe that the insurgency emerged in a context of already existing environmental and economic fragility that became particularly virulent with weak governance and socio-economic exclusion.[67] Boko Haram took advantage of the many developmental issues in the area and this perhaps explains why it is often described as one of the most complex crises with many dimensions and outcomes. Chief among such issues is the precarious economic situation in the area characterised by widespread unemployment and lack of basic services which contributed significantly to the underdevelopment and poverty of the region. Compared to other parts of Nigeria, the poverty rate in Borno state in 2017 was 70% higher than in many states in the south of the country, where in some cases the rate was lower than 20 percent.[68] In terms of its geographical location, Borno state has a porous international border with three countries (Niger, Chad and Cameroon) which enabled Boko Haram to thrive through the free

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[65] World Bank Group (2015), Recovery and Peace Building Assessment – North East Nigeria – Volume I, Synthesis report;Nagarajan, C; B. Pohl, L. Rüttinger, F. Sylvestre, J. Vivekananda, M. Wall and S. Wolfmaier 2018: Climate-Fragility Profile: Lake Chad Basin. Berlin: adelphi; Slachmuijlder, L. (2017). Transforming Violent Extremism: A peacebuilder's guide, 1st ed. Washington DC: Search for Common Ground.

[66] Mahmood O. and N. C. Ani, 2018: Responses to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region: Policies, Cooperation and Livelihoods. ISS Research Report

[67] Nagarajan, C; B. Pohl, L. Rüttinger, F. Sylvestre, J. Vivekananda, M. Wall and S. Wolfmaier 2018: Climate-Fragility Profile: Lake Chad Basin. Berlin: adelphi.

[68] Country Briefing 2017: Nigeria, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative.

movement of people, proliferation of illegal weapons, drugs smuggling, and other forms of illegal trade. The porous border served as conduits for illicit transnational traffic of small arms and light weapons such that some of the places that suffered the worst attacks (Baga, Bama and Gwoza) are located along the border that the state shares with Cameroon and Chad.[69] Environmental pressures such as land degradation, desertification and the dramatic shrinkage of Lake Chad all created a situation of competition over dwindling resources resulting in conflicts and violence. It was estimated that in less than half a century, Lake Chad lost almost 90% of its water surface area (from 25000 km^2 to 2,500km^2).[70]

In another context, it is believed that the State's deep historical linkage to Islamic civilisation where the age-long traditional system of Islamic religious education pre-existed secular education provided a sea of willing recruits that fueled the insurgency. It is well documented that the Islamic education system which existed in Kanem-Borno, a pre-colonial political entity that straddled parts of the four countries of the Lake Chad Basin[71] since the 11th century (when Islam became the state religion in the area) predated western education.[72] Thus, colonialism and the secular education it brought came to be superimposed on this long-established Islamic system, relegating the latter, especially as the former gained government patronage.[73] It could be argued that the coming of western education during British colonial rule into the then Borno Province and subsequent attempts by the Christian Brethren Mission

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[69] Onuoha, F. C. (2011). The audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, analysis and emerging trend. *Security Journal*, *25*(2), 134–51.

[70] COE, M. T;Foley, J.A. (2001). Human and natural impacts on the water resources of the Lake Chad basin. Journal of Geophysical Research. 106 (D4): 3349-3356

[71] Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Nigeria

[72] Hauwa Imam (2012) Italian Journal of Sociology of Education vol. I pp. 181 – 204.

[73] Shehu, Salisu. (2003). Improving Qur'anic (*Sangaya*) Education in Nigeria: Trends, Issues, Challenges and the way Forward. Lead Paper Presented at a Three – Day Workshop on T*Sangaya* System of Education, Organized by the Borno State Agency for Mass Education, Maiduguri, 2nd – 5th May, 2006.

(CBM) in the southern hitherto pagan parts of the Province in 1931[74] to convert people into Christianity perhaps marked the beginning of the aversion towards secular education in the area now comprising Borno and Yobe States. Indeed, there is still a deep mistrust, suspicion and sometimes outright disdain to western education, particularly in rural communities where the Qur'anic educational system remains a preferred choice. Over the years, the absence of adequate government support and patronage of the system has resulted in its decline, significantly contributing to poorly educated and out-of-school children that became easy potential recruits to violent groups like Boko Haram.

The above conditions provided opportunities for non-state actors to mobilise individuals discontented over livelihood insecurities with limited alternatives and absence of government support to take up arms against the state.

So far, counterinsurgency activities have resulted in significant achievements and the government has initiated the large-scale reconstruction of devastated LGAs which is an indication of the improving security situation. The Borno State Government is engaged in a multidimensional approach to ending the insurgency from several fronts. These include support for the military, investments in education to fight Boko Haram ideology, de-radicalisation and integration of repentant insurgents, and the use of social protection and creation of jobs to combat economic inducements as recruitment strategy of Boko Haram. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of social and physical infrastructure is currently ongoing alongside restoring social cohesion and trust, all of which are critical preconditions to the stability and recovery agenda of the government

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[74] Banu, D.P. and Mshelia, J.A. (1989) 'The Contribution of the Church of Brethren mission to the Development of Western Education in Borno and Gongola states'. *Annals of Borno*, Vol. VI, pp. 46-55.

However, it has been observed by many that military success alone may not bring about an end to the insurgency because Boko Haram is a complex organization and an ideology which rests in the hearts of its followers. This underscores the need to engage with insurgents in dialogue and reconciliation as unavoidable processes that must be undertaken if the final goal is to end the crisis and obtain sustainable peace. Indeed, it was through mediation and dialogue by third parties that the government secured the release of some of the Chibok schoolgirls captured by BH, and since then, the door for dialogue has been slightly kept ajar on issues including the release of captives and temporary ceasefires. There is a wide scope to expand such initiatives despite the military's continuous insistence that it can defeat Boko Haram.

Against this backdrop of several diverging issues which created one of the world's most complex crisis, this chapter explored prospects and possibilities of ending the conflict through dialogue and reconciliation from the point of view of different actors including state, non-state and community stakeholders. It also explored the challenges and risks associated with promoting dialogue and reconciliation and possible ways of mitigating them.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study utilised qualitative methods such as Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to elicit information from major stakeholders in local communities and IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps in Maiduguri, Jere, Bama and Kaga LGAs. These LGAs were the areas that were relatively safe to travel and conduct interviews under a difficult security situation at the time of the fieldwork. The study was carried out over three months (October to December 2019).

Through the interviews, the research explored the possibilities and prospects of dialogue and reconciliation as alternative means of

ending the conflict. Through FGDs, information was elicited on how experiences of the conflict have affected perceptions and support for dialogue and reconciliation. The KIIs provided deeper insights about the nature and framework as well as the challenges of promoting a dialogue process. The study also relied on desk review for secondary sources such as local media coverage, academic publications, and other reports on the conflict dynamics.

Participants were recruited through existing networks resulting from my long-standing research engagements on the insurgency. The responses to the KIIs and FGDs were derived from a series of open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires that allowed participants to express themselves freely. Respondents were informed about the nature of the study and given assurances about ethical principles such as anonymity and confidentiality. The data was analysed through careful re-reading of interview transcripts and field notes, highlighting and coding common themes. A major limitation was the fact that the selection of LGAs was purely dictated by security considerations above all considerations and this skewed the selection process. Table 1 depicts the LGAs selected and the location of the FGDs.

Table 1: KII and FGD profile

LGA	Types of Respondents	
	Focus Group Discussions (FGD)	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)
Bama	Community Leaders (Shehu's Palace Guest House, Bama) 2nd/12/2019	Hunter's Vigilante Group leader. (03/12/19) Freed health worker (03/12/19)
Kaga	Youths Group Location: GSSS Beni Sheik, Kaga LGA Date: 7th/12/2019	Traditional Ruler (07/12/19)
Jere	Community Leaders, Mairi/303 Housing Estate Location: Mara Zain Guest inn Date: 30th/11/2019	Imam, 303 Mosque (26/10/19) Former Negotiator (20/10/19) Army officer (27/10/2019)
Maiduguri	Women Group (Kawar Maila IDP Camp) Location: Mara Zain Guest inn Date: 28th/11/2019	CJTF leader Sector 4 (27/10/2019) Min of RRR official (28/10/2019) Retired Army personnel (21/10/2019 Women Leader, Kawar Maila (28/11/2019

3.0 DYNAMICS AND RESPONSE TO BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN BORNO STATE

3.1 The Current State of the Insurgency

The Boko Haram conflict is now in its twelfth year and most analysts believe it is steadily coming to a decline with the country drifting into the post insurgency era. FGD participants broadly observe the decline in large-scale attacks, decline in the frequency of suicides and IEDs, and the disruption of their supply chains as some of the major indicators of Boko Haram's declining capability. The insurgents currently possess fewer weapons and manpower resulting in a significant decline in Boko Haram's capacity to launch large-scale attacks and occupy territory. However, most respondents are quick to add that the insurgents capacity to launch minor incessant attacks on various locations and highways continue unabated, and observed that the frequency of attacks has recently increased.[75] A KII respondent critically notes that while the military may claim to have "technically" defeated Boko Haram, residents of Borno undoubtedly disagree with this assertion because the people cannot travel 5km away from settlements without the likelihood of attack by BH."[76] For instance, Boko Haram has proved its capacity to launch several high profile attacks such as the attack on Biu LGA on the 23rd of December, 2019, where BH overran two villages but was repelled before gaining access to the town itself. Perhaps the most audacious attempt was the February 23, 2021 attack on Maiduguri where explosive devices targeted at the city centre killed 16 people. Two days before this incident, the group launched an attack on a military facility and a humanitarian hub in Damasak, Mobbar LGA, killing 40 people. These only signify security challenges, particularly in remote, rural areas which remain inaccessible without security clearance and escort, while some areas e.g. Guzamala, Kukawa, Abadam and Marte LGAs either remain

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[75] April 2019 attack on Jere LGA: Lassa, Askira Uba LGA on the 30th November 2019
[76] KII with a woman Leader in Kawar Maila IDP Camp

significantly under the control of the insurgents or in some cases completely abandoned by communities and devoid of government presence.

The recapture of major towns from the control of insurgents has witnessed the gradual return of civilian population and administrative authority to some LG headquarters. This dynamic is however restricted to urban centres, while rural areas remain relatively insecure. Returnee IDPs are only found within LGA headquarters, most unable to travel more than 3km from the towns.[77] This is the scenario in many LG headquarters including Bama, Rann, Gubio, Damasak, Monguno and Gwoza. Thus, the absence of rural security and fear of renewed attacks, as well as lack of basic infrastructure and administrative authority, continues to hinder not only the massive return of IDPs but is also impelling people to return back to the state capital. The state government has pledged to close all IDPs camps in Maiduguri by May 29, 2021 to resettle IDPs living in the state capital but this has not been achieved yet. At the moment people resident in the recaptured LG headquarters are IDPs from surrounding rural areas living in camps and unoccupied houses. Bama LGA, for instance, was recaptured in 2015 by the military and is considered relatively safe but it is estimated that half of its residents are still living in Maiduguri and other safer locations while the people currently residing in Bama town are IDPs from surrounding settlements. A similar scenario was revealed in Kaga LGA where villagers are unable to return because new IDPs are occupying their villages specifically in Shettimari, Wajiri and Tobolo.[78] Overall, the recaptured LGA headquarters more or less, serve as IDP camps for rural populations while some areas continue to be wrested back and forth between military and insurgent control. The Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM/NEMA, September 2019) estimate that there are 1.3 million IDPs (nearly 50% living in host communities and 50% in camps,

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[77] FGD with Community Leaders in Bama
[78] KII with a traditional Leader in Kaga LGA.

camp-like settings and makeshifts) in Maiduguri. The respondents noted that most of the out-of-school children known as *Almajiris* roaming the streets of Maiduguri are not infact *Almajiris* who attend Qur'anic (*Sangaya)* schools but IDPs forced to beg for food because humanitarian assistance is neither adequate nor frequent[79]. Indeed, the magnitude of the crisis is a major challenge with humanitarian responses struggling to meet up the provision of basic needs of displaced populations.

Security considerations regarding the finance and supply to Boko haram have led to restrictions on the trade of some items (such as cattle and fish), nightly curfews and restrictions on the movement of certain items like fertilizers and fuel. While such restrictions are rooted in security considerations, it has wider implications on local livelihoods and has generated a great deal of resentment from communities. FGD respondents cite the widely reported case of a familiar pattern whereby soldiers have taken over major economic activities like fishing, farming and trading in the recaptured areas and complain that the government has not reined in on such excesses of the military.[80] This has implications on overall military-civilian relations and reflects the challenges of bridge-building, a major prerequisite for the overall dialogue process.

3.2: The Current Capacity of the Insurgents

Boko Haram has split into two distinct factions, namely: The Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA) led by Barnawi/Nur faction, and the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) led by Shekau in 2016. There are other smaller splinter groups like Bukar Mainok's faction which operates around Jakana in Kaga LGA with a fewer number of weapons and fighters. The break up in the group is linked mainly to disagreement among top commanders over doctrinal and paradigmatic issues and this was observed to have

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[79] FGD with Community members in Dalori,
[80] FGD with community members, Dalori

weakened their membership strength to a great deal and enabled some insurgents to surrender or change sides or engage in dialogue with the state government.[81] While the difference in interpretation of their ideology was the major factor in the split, the Shekau-led faction is defined by the indiscriminate nature of its attacks and ISWAP is generally less predatory in its treatment of civilians (though there are reports of onerous taxation and kidnapping for ransom) and more focused on attacking the military and government installations.[82] In terms of capacity, ISWAP is stronger with more sophisticated weapons, vehicles and foot soldiers compared to JAS. A lot of infighting between the two groups has been reported in the past which are thought to have been resolved.[83] However, the feud between the two groups reached a climax on 20th May, 2021 when BH leader Abubakar Shekau reportedly killed himself in Sambisa Forest to avoid capture by ISWAP, while many of his top commanders shifted loyalty to Al-Barnawi. This development appears not only to have significantly weakened Shekau's faction of BH but also proved Al-Barnawi's military might. The implication of Shekau's defeat is that ISWAP is set to become the dominant terror group in the Northeast region, and by usurping many of Shekau's foot soldiers, bringing additional challenges to counterinsurgency measures of the military.

Firstly, ISWAP's strategy mainly targets the military and avoids attacks on Muslims, and secondly, the group uses enormous resources to win the hearts of ordinary community members including economic incentives to get sympathy and recruits.[84] Recently, there has been an interesting twist in the insurgency with the mass defection of its members. Several insurgents and their families have surrendered themselves to Nigerian authorities,

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[81] KII with Imam in Maiduguri

[82] See Crisis Group Report, Nigeria: Coming to Terms with the Islamic State in West Africa Province

[83] KII with a former negotiator with BH

[84] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/28/what-boko-haram-leaders-death-means-to-insecurity-in-nigeria

many of them believed to be from the Abubakar Shekau-led Boko Haram. Close to 6,000 former fighters and their families have submitted themselves to the military in the Northeast, some coming from neighbouring countries, especially Cameroon. While the Nigerian military claims responsibility for the mass defection, many others feel it is the death of Shekau which is responsible for the diminution of Boko Haram fighters currently surrendering.[85] Even though some commanders form part of the mass defection, many of these defectors are believed to be low-risk individuals forcibly conscripted or civilians forced to remain under Boko Haram control. Overall, it is quite clear that Boko Haram and ISWAP are still capable of launching sporadic attacks that cause damage to lives and property and kidnap motorists on highways and rural routes. The decimation of their ability to capture new territories or launch large-scale attacks are perhaps the most significant and measurable indicators of their gradual decline, and more importantly, twelve years on, the conflict appears unlikely to end any time soon.[86]

3.3: Current efforts of the Nigerian State towards addressing Boko Haram Insurgency

The study results indicated that an overwhelming number of respondents believe the military has the capacity to defeat the insurgents and has made significant achievements in that regard. The most frequently cited evidence is the depleting number of BH fighters with no reinforcements, and the inability of insurgents to expand and take new territories. The insurgents no longer possess the weapons or a large number of fighters to embark on large-scale attacks on the military or civilians. Other respondents however dispute this assertion by citing the daring attempts on the outskirts of Maiduguri.

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[85] https://www.africanews.com/2021/08/27/dozens-of-boko-haram-fighters-surrender-in-nigeria-s-maiduguri//
[86] The Borno State Government on the 17th of December 2019 appealed to the military to take over three LGAs (Abadam, Kukawa and Marte LGAs) from the insurgents

FGD respondents further noted that although the military can defeat Boko Haram, they lack the commitment to fight and sometimes even abandon their post and disappear once an attack happens. In the process, sophisticated armory and tanks fall into the hands of BH. A KII respondent laments: "How can a Sandhurst trained army officer run from a rag-tag group of local militants?[87] Another respondent alleged that the military has been unable to take full advantage of the split due to inter-agency rivalry and infiltration of the security sector by Boko Haram.[88] Another frequently cited allegation are cases where insurgency attacks occur after the military has stocked up weapons, indicating an insider collaboration and a disconnect between the military high command and political leadership.[89] Indeed, an attack on a military base in Mainok, Borno on April 24 2021 where new military hardware being transported to Maiduguri were seized by Boko Haram[90] may serve to provide support for such opinions. A KII respondent laments that "almost all the major security leadership are from the northeast and the war is still raging on; we believe that someone somewhere is not telling the truth."[91] Most respondents believe that in the heightened security environment, the Nigerian military, Police and other security agencies have problems coping with the evolving threats.

The above allegations were completely disputed by an army officer who is of the view that local communities generally lack basic/adequate knowledge of security operations. According to the officer, the dynamics of the crisis is such that there is the active terrorist, the passive terrorist (aiding the crises through supplies, logistics) and the informants – all of which constitute important challenges with real implications. Such allegations are corroborated

[87] Interview with a Former Mediator
[88] Interview with a mediator
[89] Interview with community leaders, Maiduguri; Women group K/Maila, Maiduguri.
[90] https://www.africanews.com/2021/04/26/militants-kill-31-soldiers-in-northeast-nigeria/
[91] FGD with Community leaders in Bama

by occasional arrests of community members who support Boko Haram with logistical supplies such as the recent arrest of some community members in Gujba alleged to be supplying the terror organisation with fuel.[92] Indeed, it is the use of maximum retaliatory measures by the Nigerian military, as part of its comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy against BH that led to the decimation of their numbers, arrest or surrender to the military.[93] On perspectives regarding dialogue and reconciliation with BH, it was pointed out that the role of the military is to fight and win the war and not to negotiate or dialogue with BH. The military is focused on achieving this objective despite challenges from several fronts. However, most community members believe there cannot be sustainable peace without the involvement of the military in peace negotiations.

3.4: Current efforts of the Borno State towards addressing Boko Haram Insurgency

The state government is working towards returning IDPs to their homes and most respondents laud this initiative. Many participants insisted that a central element to defeating the insurgents is the return of IDPs to their original homes because it will enable the military to move further away and occupy more space thereby squeezing the insurgents into a tight position. Providing security to rural and urban areas and along transportation routes restricts the freedom of movement of insurgents and allows communities to engage in livelihood activities. Indeed, the government is working with the various vigilante groups in ensuring that vigilantes are found in all the nooks and crannies of the state to provide community policing services.

Another important area of intervention in the counterinsurgency efforts is the state government's support of vigilante groups. The

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[92] https://dailypost.ng/2021/05/29/army-arrest-boko-haram-logistics-suppliers-in-yobe/
[93] Interview with retired military officer

Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in particular played a significant role in protecting communities alongside other vigilante groups. Due to their privileged knowledge of the local population, culture and geography, the CJTF is a vital demographic that filled the gap in the state's security outfit when it became the "eyes and the ears" of the military and instrumental in chasing BH out of Maiduguri and other major towns. The Nigerian military relied on the CJTF for intelligence gathering and manning checkpoints. The interviews revealed overwhelming support for the activities of the CJTF and other vigilantes in communities and at battle frontlines. Despite all the successes in the conduct of its affairs, the CJTF is accused of human rights violations, sexual abuse and extortion. Human rights organizations noted how the CJTF alongside the military sexually abuse vulnerable women and girls who have to trade their bodies to secure food and other basic supplies in IDP camps in what is generally known as "sex for survival" and during their escape from militants.[94]

In a bold effort to further strengthen the capacity of the CJTF, the state government recruited additional 500 vigilantes from the Hunters' Group to join in counterinsurgency activities and increased their stipend from 10,000 to 20,000 naira. The state government recruited additional 150 Cameroonian vigilantes from the Kesh-Kesh group to join Nigerian vigilantes in the fight against Boko Haram and presented the various groups with surveillance vehicles, uniforms and other essential equipment. The Hunters group has been in existence for a long time and historically played community policing roles in curbing banditry and securing rural trade routes. They have better knowledge of the terrain and appear more organised and disciplined compared to the CJTF.[95] Respondents noted that all the vigilante groups work to support the military and there is an improvement in coordination between the various groups as a result of the state government's commitment

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[95] Interview with Hunter's Group official

and programming efforts of many non-governmental organizations in the state. This has improved their capabilities and effectiveness. Thus, while there is overwhelming support for the efforts and sacrifices made by the various non-state groups, the conduct of the CJTF have sometimes raised concerns over human rights abuses. The CJTF, alongside the military, face accusations of committing atrocities, sexual abuse of women and girls returning from BH captivity and in displacement as well as benefitting from the war economy.[96] This allegation has important implications on the wider reconciliation and dialogue process.

4.0 DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION AS A FEASIBLE OPTION FOR RESOLUTION

Despite the widespread demand for accountability and justice occasioned by the release of repentant BH, most respondents agree that dialogue is an unavoidable process that must be undertaken if the final goal is to end the crisis and obtain sustainable peace. Indeed, military success alone may hardly bring about an end to the insurgency because Boko Haram is a complex organisation and a melting pot for a range of identities and ideologies which flourish and expand in the hearts of its followers.[97] The process must be, therefore, combined with dialogue, noting that postponing negotiations and dialogue has dire consequences for civilians such as the killing of captured civilians and aid workers by Boko Haram.[98] The FGD respondents additionally observe that the widespread and complex nature of the conflict makes it almost impossible for the judiciary to provide an adequate response to all the atrocities committed by Boko Haram.

A recurring theme on the challenges to dialogue throughout the

[96]FGD with Women Group in Kawar Maila, Maiduguri
[97]Kii with RRR official, Maiduguri
[98] ISWAP announced executing four staff of "Action Against Hunger on 13th on December 2019

interviews has been the prospect of engaging Boko Haram in dialogue and reconciliation. The radical ideology and violent actions make dialogue with Boko Haram a huge challenge and in this context, most respondents believe that the conflict may never be completely resolved or terminated. The respondents with security backgrounds insist that dialogue is not an option for resolving the conflict. "Boko Haram considers all of us as infidels or unbelievers, or criminals, and readily kills any security personnel it captures. How can we negotiate with people who kill for no apparent reason?"[99] Such respondents believe the war can be won militarily without dialogue with Boko Haram as a prerequisite.

One KII participant described three factions within Boko Haram: the ideological, which is not interested in dialogue; the opportunist and the foot soldier, both of whom can be engaged in dialogue. The ideologically-driven are the ones in leadership positions, they are the most important group for dialogue, and yet, this group does not negotiate.[100] The only way to defeat BH is through sustained counter-offensive strategy, while the ideology maybe countered through education and enlightenment.[101] Respondents observe that compared to JAS, ISWAP appears more willing to negotiate as indicated by ISWAP's tendency to announce abductions or capture of civilians.[102] But negotiations with ISWAP can only be achieved through the involvement of traditional/religious leaders and excluding the military and other security agencies. A broad consensus in the findings indicates traditional and religious bodies play a central role in dialogue because of their historical roles in conflict resolution as more trustworthy and acceptable to all stakeholders as well as their proximity to communities at the grassroots level.

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[99] Interview with CJTF leader in Maiduguri

[100] KII with repentant BH; CJTF and Hunter's group official

[101] KII with Ministry of RRR Official, Maiduguri

[102] Interview with leader, Hunter's Group

The CJTF and vigilante both indicate a willingness to support dialogue with Boko Haram if it brings an end to the conflict. The vigilante leaders observe that within the various factions of Boko Haram, those forcefully recruited or who joined out of fear and coercion (although they may have committed heinous crimes; most in this group were never radicalised but merely enslaved) would be willing to participate in genuine dialogue. But this group does not form part of the leadership of Boko Haram. There is a need to explore how dialogue can be facilitated and sequenced between the different groups. A multi-layered approach to dialogue is therefore needed to address the role of these factions. Indeed, dialogue is often a layered process which consists of a "thin" version (a simple agreement between former enemies to live together and use other means than violence to resolve conflicts); a "thicker" version (where former enemies agree to not only live together in peace but also interact in areas of common interest with mutual respect). An even thicker version of reconciliation would involve a process of mutual forgiveness and healing. The implementation of these steps would depend on the community's readiness to embrace dialogue and the government's ability to manage and support the process.

The study also revealed concerns among respondents who believe that punitive justice must be applied for crimes committed by ex-combatants, drawing attention to the underlying dangers that unresolved violations and injustices portend for social cohesion and stability. For such people, there are no options but to defeat Boko Haram militarily, emphasising that what drove Boko Haram out of Maiduguri is not dialogue but sheer force. Echoing the same concern, respondents in Bama recalled an incident when Boko Haram captured the town on the 1st of September 2014 and urged young men who had gone into hiding to come forward for dialogue but when they showed up, they were all slaughtered.[103] Another group that insisted on demand for justice are the sexually abused (by both Boko Haram, the military and CJTF) women and girls who

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[103] Interview with community leaders in Bama

claim such abuses as a leading source of distress in their newly-reclaimed civilian lives. Such violations must be addressed primarily to receive closure to their suffering and improve their perceptions of the state.[104] However, a traditional leader still cautiously noted that instead of resulting in reconciliation, seeking redress may end up heightening anger, instability and vengeance.[105]

4.1: Government's Position on Dialogue

Overall, it is observed that government appears to be interested in dialogue most often emphasizing that surrendered/captured Boko Haram should be rehabilitated and reintegrated. The release and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram fighters is a major policy response to the crisis through which government seeks to encourage active insurgents to defect and weaken the capacity of insurgents and pressurise the group to surrender or negotiate. In the beginning, the government's disposition towards de-radicalization and reintegration of captured insurgents attracted widespread criticism, cynicism and suspicion among ordinary community members. In particular, some respondents are sceptical of the corrective effects of the rehabilitation programme, citing the case of de-radicalised militants that returned to their community and later allegedly escaped to re-join the militants by pretending to go to the bush to collect firewood.[106] Others expressed concerns that the rehabilitation program prioritises ex-combatants over the victims of the insurgency, who have received minimal government support.[107] The CJTF also shared their dismay over the rehabilitation programme which empowers and provides skills to ex-combatants while many members of CJTF receive limited support, particularly those wounded in the fight.[108]

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[104] Interview with women in Kawar Maila IDP camp
[105] KII with traditional leader
[106] FGD with community leaders in Bama
[107] Interview with women group in Kawar Maila, Maiduguri.
[108]KII with CJTF official, Sector 4, Maiduguri

Nonetheless, a positive gain in the amnesty program is the recent surrender of insurgents in large numbers which respondents linked to the reception accorded to repentant militants and the rehabilitation program.[109] To some respondents, the amnesty program is a successful project because not only is the government gaining strategic information from de-radicalised insurgents, it has also encouraged insurgents that are still fighting to surrender when they realise that their colleagues have been accepted and integrated. There are still cases of communities rejecting de-radicalized insurgents and the government was left with no option but to resettle them elsewhere.

Respondents observe that, so far, the government has not taken the initiative to propose engagement on dialogue for mixed reasons. For one, there is currently no articulated position, comprehensive framework or a blueprint towards dialogue from the government apart from the negotiations for the release of captives and the de-radicalization programme. Secondly, there are no identifiable groups or individuals that can be approached for dialogue; Boko Haram is still basically a faceless organization. There is a lot of mistrust and suspicion which has become a major challenge against dialogue. The government, so far, does not have a trusted mediator acceptable to Boko Haram. While the foot soldiers of Boko Haram may willingly support dialogue, the leadership does not appear to support it. And according to other respondents, the leadership of the military is, on the other hand, perceived to be benefitting from the war economy and the corruption within the system, and thus is not interested in promoting dialogue as an option to end the crisis. However, there is no credible evidence to support allegations that the military is not interested in supporting dialogue.

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[109] FGD, community members, Maiduguri

4.2: Support for Dialogue and Reconciliation as Option for Resolution

One of the most significant findings is that support for dialogue and reconciliation as an option is mixed among participants and this is found to be related to the level of victimization, religious and cultural underpinnings, as well as the role of government. Communities and individuals who have lost family members, young women and girls who have been abducted and abused did not appear to be disposed towards a dialogue process or reconciliation with insurgents.[110] Most are not even willing to accept and live with de-radicalised insurgents in the same communities where the atrocities took place. A religious leader who seems to be in support of the same view cited the example of what happened during the time of the Prophet (SAW). The killer of Hamza (the Prophet's uncle) was forgiven but banished from the community. Other respondent note that even insurgents who are surrendering are doing so because their supply chains (food and weapons) are disrupted, and not because they renounced their allegiance and repented.

Respondents also revealed that when Boko Haram captured Nigerian soldiers and civilians, it summarily executes them and so why should the Nigerian government engage in any form of negotiation or the rehabilitation and integration of BH. These respondents posed insightful questions such as: "Dialogue with who? Dialogue over what? What are the clear demands of Boko Haram? How can one dialogue with people who attack and kill innocent IDPs in camps"[111] According to a traditional ruler, Boko Haram just wants to attack and fight the last man standing and not willing to lay down arms. How do you fight an enemy that is willing to die?"[112] These insurgents do not practice Islam. Some do not even

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[110] Interview with women at Kawar Maila IDP camp
[111] Ditto; interview with community members in Maiduguri and youths in Kaga
[112] Interview with a traditional leader in Kaga

know why they are fighting. A significant number of respondents are of the view that to resolve the conflict is to kill all those that are not willing to surrender, while those who surrender should be rehabilitated and reintegrated and this is the only form of dialogue the government should undertake.

Nevertheless, the dominant narrative indicates that there will be support for dialogue from communities because most people seem to be tired of the conflict. Communities want peace "under any condition and welcome dialogue as an option from a religious perspective, citing the Qur'anic verses in support of dialogue and the fact that even the Prophet dialogued with non-believers in Mecca."[113] In a similar perspective, respondents believe that even Boko Haram would welcome dialogue because it is believed that the predisposition towards dialogue by some members was one of the main reasons for the split in the group. Several communities echoed the same view: "the conflict is very complex, our rights have been violated by both BH and the Nigerian military; people do not have the energy or desire to seek justice, let us reconcile through a peaceful process and carry-on with our lives. Let us initiate dialogue processes on the best way to move forward."[114] A KII respondent suggested that the government can cajole citizens not willing to embrace dialogue by using traditional and religious leaders to convince communities. An example with the polio vaccine was cited, where traditional rulers had to be involved to convince the general public to accept the vaccinations. Overall, addressing some of the major drivers of the crisis and providing communities with a semblance of their economic/social standing before the insurgency, through economic incentives and resuscitation of livelihoods, could make dialogue an attractive option to the people.

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[113] Holy Qur'an Chapter 4 verse 128: "wal sulhu Khair"
[114] FGD with Comm. Members, Bama

4.3: The Best Actors in Dialogue

The participation of all stakeholders across the board in the dialogue process is very important because it can strengthen the effectiveness, quality and sustainability of agreements. FGD participants noted that broadening participation to include actors with significant power and influence in the conflict would minimise opposition to agreements and prevent those who feel excluded from acting as spoilers.[115] Many participants also brought up the issue of inclusion because no bilateral agreement could adequately address the underlying drivers of conflict if some of the most important players are excluded.[116]

The decision on who should participate in the dialogue with BH is highly context-specific and is also linked to the objectives of the dialogue. In the context of the current crisis and analysis of the discussions, the dialogue process could take the form of a multi-layered process that should take place at different levels. As a first stage, community members drawn from various groups and supported by the government should engage in a community healing and counselling process which prepares them to understand and accept the wider version of the dialogue that encompasses both victims and perpetrators. The role of traditional and religious leaders in facilitating this phase is critical to the success and sustainability of the wider dialogue process.

In general, the actors identified include factions of Boko Haram; Nigerian Government and its agencies (federal, state, and LGAs – NEMA and SEMA, Nigerian security actors (Armed Forces - Army, Air Force, Police, NSCDC); and Vigilantes (CJTF, Hunters, and other vigilante groups). Many emphasized the inclusion of women at every step and level of discussion because they are not only disproportionately affected by the crisis but are important assets

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[115] KII with RRR official

[116] KII with Traditional ruler, Kaga LGA

that play a critical role in dialogue and reconciliation. International Agencies (like UN organisations, humanitarian actors, INGOs, national and local NGOs) are seen as providing international dialogue and mediation expertise and facilitation roles.[117] The UNHCR and the Red Cross are the two organisations frequently mentioned by respondents often citing the roles played by these organisations in the release of the Chibok girls and other similar negotiations[118.] The involvement of traditional and religious leaders in the dialogue process is vital, particularly regarding their roles in forgiveness, accountability of residents and sustainability of the reconciliation agreements[119.] The engagement of traditional rulers is envisaged to provide broad public support, especially among victims of the insurgency as well as some form of legitimacy to the process. According to women in one of the FGDs, traditional rulers are important in securing communities and sieving out suspicious and bad elements in the community. However, some respondents expressed opposition to broader participation which could get complicated if the number of parties increases, and it is important to exclude groups that may have limited roles in post-agreement implementation mechanisms.

4.4: Conditions Under Which Dialogue Should Take Place

Dialogue is a multifaceted concept that means different things to different people and it is vital to set dialogue and reconciliation on the principle of an implementation plan. FGD participants underlined the importance for the process to be transparent, coordinated and a context-sensitive approach, while simultaneously empowering local communities to strengthen their participation. There is a lot of mistrust, suspicion and unaddressed grievances in communities, and as such, there must be a lot of awareness creation so that government receives the buy-in required

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[117] KII with former negotiator in Maiduguri
[118] FGD with community leaders in Dalori
[119] Interview with religious leaders and a woman leader

for dialogue to be successful and sustainable. The government must adopt a series of confidence-building measures in that regard. The idea of winning the war and losing the peace must not be allowed to happen. There must be motivation for the various actors through incentives that will warrant their engagement.

Additionally, the government must have the upper hand through intelligence gathering but must not make BH feel betrayed. Other stakeholders are wary of government's position because according to a KII respondent, the government wants to dialogue on the position of strength because of its reliance on military force. A former mediator of the release of the Chibok Girls notes that a dialogue process is often not an easy path and quite often, the parties hardly get 30 percent of the requirements.[120] The government must avoid a sense of impunity and highhandedness, and must be perceived as more open to dialogue. The government must be willing to sacrifice some form of limited rights and privileges for peace. Thus, it is important to understand the diversity and position of the various stakeholders, of victims and perpetrators, and identify where the red line lies and what happens to those that cross the red lines.

A major framework for reconciliation must, therefore, be inclusive, "leaving no one behind" (whether victims and/ or perpetrators). The indiscriminate and widespread nature of the insurgency had made entire communities and their population victims, including women who have been disproportionately affected. The process must be restorative, aimed to promote community healing and cohesion through forgiveness and reconciliation. It is also agreed that addressing the economic and social needs through compensation could enhance and strengthen the dialogue process. There are, however, KII respondents who believe that the possibility of punitive justice must not be entirely excluded from the process. Thus, regardless of differences in priorities or

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[120] Interview with Barrister Zanna Bukar Mustapha, Chibok Girls' negotiator

diverging views of the road to dialogue and reconciliation, participants agreed that it is in the interest of all stakeholders to strive towards a viable and inclusive dialogue and sustainable peace. This, perhaps, underscores the immediacy for dialogue and reconciliation through a transitional justice procedure tied to the religious and cultural beliefs of the people.[121]

4.5: Insurgents' will for Dialogue and Reconciliation

Participants primarily focused on the fact that it is very difficult to understand the current demands of Boko Haram. Some believe that there are no known demands from Boko Haram; they do not have a known political framework or a strategy; terror is their only known ideology and weapon. They have succeeded in inculcating fear into the hearts of people and this indicates Boko Haram is 100 percent unwilling to dialogue.[122]

In terms of ideology, Boko Haram seeks a return to the fundamental tenets of Islam as existed during the time of the Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and the subsequent early generations of Muslims (*salafs*), though almost all Muslims disagree with BH's interpretation of the past. Boko Haram sees this as being of paramount importance in their attempts to carve out ideological and operational spaces in the region as a whole. Its leaders articulated the goal of establishing an Islamic state in northern Nigeria as early as 2002, almost a decade before the current leader, Abubakar Shekau, declared jihad in July 2010 and the ensuing insurgency in September 2010. In an attempt to provide some historical context on the region's long history with Islamic education and the coming of western education, a KII participant observed that the ideology of BH reflects the long history of the Kanuri tribe's aversion towards western education which has been apathetic, aggressive and harsh.[123] The only strange issue is the

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[121] Interview with traditional ruler, Maiduguri
[122] Interview with military official
[123] KII with official of ministry of RRR

militancy and violence associated with Boko Haram. He described a Kanuri's description of child enrolment into western school in the colonial period as "*Tadanyi muwantiro chata,*" loosely translated to mean "my child has been captured to join western school." Thus some of the likely demands of Boko Haram as a condition for dialogue, according to KII participants, include an enclave where they can independently practice their view of Islam, the release of their colleagues in captivity, and compensation. Indeed, the dominant narrative from the analysis shows that these demands are not likely to be agreed to by communities or met by the government.

4.6: The Best Way to Approach the Insurgents for Dialogue

The insurgents can be approached through NGOs – and in fact, the government has already used this medium to secure the release of some abductees. FGD participants claim that International NGOs are in contact with the insurgents evidenced by the fact that humanitarian essentials distributed by NGOs are found in the hands of rescued/captured BH members who reveal that such items were given to them by the same NGOs. Thus, NGOs can approach them for dialogues through food supplies, medicines, radios and other essentials, and gradually engage them in discussions regarding dialogue. It must be a gradual process that may likely culminate in losing followership on the part of insurgents.

Most respondents also say that the ISWAP or the Barnawi group is tilted towards dialogue and this was one of the reasons for the split up of the original Boko Haram group, and informed the suggestion by the respondents that it can be used to draw the Shekau faction into dialogue. An imam, however, observes that both factions remain essentially the same in terms of attacks and violence and the split is a mere political gimmick. BH cannot be approached for dialogue since their demands for a caliphate cannot be entertained.

4.7: Quest by Communities for Dialogue and Reconciliation

There is a broad consensus that dialogue should take place at several levels and there has to be a nuanced understanding of what dialogue entails at the different levels. For the victims of the insurgency, who have been severely affected by the atrocities, it was found that addressing the legacies of massive human rights violations is a major pre-requisite for fostering dialogue and peaceful co-existence, although not necessarily in a punitive form. A key element is to restore victims to their previous situations – and this includes returning communities to their original homes and the resettlement and restoration of livelihoods. The government must also address the atrocities committed by the military and the CJTF who have killed innocent men, abused women and girls, burnt down entire villages, arrested and detained innocent civilians. Communities would demand from BH, an assurance to stop attacks, renouncement of their ideology and surrender of arms. A KII respondent who participated in the de-radicalisation program, however, sadly noted that not even traditional rulers were happy to receive de-radicalised insurgents that returned to Gwoza at the end of the programme. On the positive side, the fact that most victims and perpetrators are mostly from the same communities and households makes the idea of criminal justice procedures very generally unappealing.

4.8: Government's offer for Dialogue and Reconciliation

Participants observed that the government's position on dialogue is neither clear nor predictable. No one can clearly say what the government's demands are or how it intends to pursue a dialogue process. The government is not taking proactive steps towards the process and is only paying lip service. However, it was noted that ownership of the dialogue process is fundamental towards achieving success and it is critical for the government to own and lead the process. The government must insist on having the upper

hand and if such arrangement is not acceptable to BH, the government must be prepared to fight them to the end.[124] Boko Haram must surrender its weapons and cease attacks against the military and civilians.

4.9: Risks in Promoting Dialogue

The participants argue that power is not decentralised within BH and absolute power rests with the leadership (which is not in support of dialogue because they are mostly driven by ideology), and this may constitute a significant challenge to negotiations. For one, Boko Haram seemingly on the brink of consensus can suddenly change their minds. The unpredictable and erratic nature of Boko Haram may likely get actors/mediators killed or kidnapped. A KII respondent observes that a negotiation that has achieved 90% progress, for instance, could easily be reversed to 0% due to the unpredictable nature of BH.[125] BH may decide to break away from negotiations at any given time even after government agrees to all their terms and conditions. "It is quite easy to harm or kill mediators; after all, they easily kill each other based on flimsy excuses."[126] It was also noted that community leaders who support dialogue may be seen as betrayers and labelled as sympathisers of Boko Haram. There is also the tendency that the government may be negotiating with the wrong people.

The above challenges can be mitigated with the government setting harsh and stringent conditions should Boko Haram decide to break away from negotiations and dialogue and the international community should be involved to serve as deterrents. Both factions of Boko Haram must be involved for negotiations to be effective. BH must not be allowed to dictate the conditions of agreements to the government.

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[124] KII with Religious Leader
[125] KII with Mediator; KII with RRR official; FGD with community members in Maiduguri
[126] KII with Military officer

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter sheds light on how Boko Haram emerged in the context of an already existing socio-economic and environmental fragility in a region with a deep history of Islamic conservatism and developed into a full-scale insurgency.

It was also revealed that, so far, both the government and the insurgents have not achieved the desired level of success to warrant a declaration that the war has been won by either side. Nevertheless, Boko Haram is currently on the defensive and struggling with decimated numbers and weapons.

The chapter explored the prospects of dialogue as a means of ending the crisis by providing deeper insights on the basic nature and features of dialogue and the role of various stakeholders in the process. The framework and objectives of the dialogue ultimately determine who should participate. It is, however, important to hear from all those who were needed to end the conflict. While most community stakeholders are likely to support dialogue, the government must conduct preliminary groundwork activities to prepare communities in accepting dialogue. Thus, the basic framework for the dialogue must be an all-inclusive (leave no one behind) of victims and perpetrators. There must be ownership of the dialogue process, and here, the government is identified as the appropriate authority to own and direct the process without being seen as dictating to other actors. International organisations perform the role of mediators and provide expertise from experience in similar activities in other conflicts. There must be a coordinated, context-sensitive and community-specific approach to dialogue and reconciliation, while simultaneously empowering local communities.

6.0: RECOMMENDATIONS

Boko Haram was able to exploit the vulnerabilities of the physical and socio-economic environment for its emergence and spread. This includes political and economic marginalisation, inequality and poverty, as well environmental degradation. These vulnerabilities are a result of exclusion, marginalisation and poor governance and must be addressed in any consideration within possibilities of ending the conflict. This can be achieved by adopting an inclusive, community-based, participatory and evidence-based approach to meet the basic needs and priorities of communities, by making the safe and dignified return of IDPs a major priority and restoring livelihood opportunities.

The government should also ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups (women, youth, the displaced, veterans, widows, the disabled) are elicited and addressed and such groups are involved in the design and implementation of dialogue, reconciliation and other peacebuilding activities. Thus, addressing the major drivers of the conflict can enhance greater support for dialogue from communities, and this, once more, can be facilitated through the provision of social protection and humanitarian aid to restore destroyed livelihoods.

The ideology of Boko Haram, which is seen as a major obstacle to dialogue, can only be countered through education and enlightenment. This means increased investments in the education sector since a significant number of Boko Haram recruits joined out of ignorance of the basic tenets of the Islamic religion. The integration of the Qur'anic school system (Sangaya) with the formal education system will be an important way to educate and create awareness. The extreme and violent narratives of Boko Haram can also be countered through advocacy, awareness and enlightenment. Government can make a meaningful investment in time and resources to change the mindset and attitude towards dialogue

through consultation and enlightenment, involving various stakeholders. Traditional and religious institutions, and indeed community leaders, can play a significant role in promoting dialogue and in countering the violent ideology of Boko Haram. In the search for an effective framework for dialogue, it is imperative to incorporate the perspectives of all segments of the society, the local conditions and traditions. In this context, existing traditional mechanisms for dialogue and reconciliation play important roles. It must be noted though that some of these traditional reconciliation processes are quite patriarchal and as such consensus-building must allow the meaningful inclusion of women, youth and marginalised groups. Women have overall been disproportionately affected by the conflict and for the success of dialogue programming, there is a need to target women, especially for trauma training as a first step.

While the military, with the assistance of vigilantes, has made substantial progress in limiting the capacity of Boko Haram, their practices have sometimes resulted in abuse and violations of the rights of innocent civilians, including women and girls. The CJTF in particular is accused of identifying innocent individuals as Boko Haram members. Such grievances must not be pushed aside by the government if the overall goal is to achieve meaningful and sustainable peace. This informs the need for dialogue to be a layered process that promotes community healing and prepares stakeholders for a wider dialogue with insurgents.
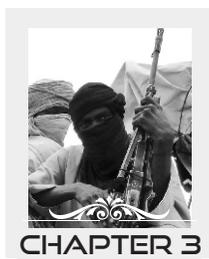
DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION APPROACH AS OPTION FOR RESOLVING THE BOKO HARAM CONFLICT IN YOBE STATE

HASSANA IBRAHIM WAZIRI

INTRODUCTION

The Boko Haram conflict and its attendant consequences have continued to take their toll on the human, material, and environmental existence of people in the Northeast and Yobe State for over ten years. Although the government has argued that its support for military response has largely degraded and technically defeated the insurgents, which has contributed to the decline in the frequency and extent of the violence committed by the Boko Haram insurgents, the end of the conflict is still not in sight. The imperative for change in strategy to find a sustained solution is apt at this point, for the needed reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reintegration to happen effectively. This requires change and consideration for viable options and ideas that reflect people's desires, aspirations, inclusion, and participation towards ending the violent conflict. This study, therefore, explored dialogue and reconciliation processes as viable and workable options for ending the conflict. The research looked at how relevant actors could buy in the options for dialogue and reconciliation as viable means for ending the conflict. To this end, the research examined a range of views from key actors in Yobe State, to harness and incorporate lessons learned from other states.

Specifically, the research examined:

a. The characterization of the current state of the conflict in Yobe State.

b. The positions of government, non-state armed groups, religious and community leaders on dialogue and reconciliation as an option for resolution.

c. Which actors are better positioned to promote dialogue and reconciliation.

d. The best way to approach the actors on the option of dialogue and reconciliation.

e. The competing demands/conditions of major actors and the feasibility of the demands.

f. The risks of nonviolent resolution and possible mitigation strategies; and

g. Actors and approaches to be engaged in resolutions initiatives.

BACKGROUND

Yobe State was carved out of the former Borno State by the former military administration of Retired General Badamasi Babangida on 7th August 1991. The State shares borders with the Niger Republic from the north, Borno State from the east, Gombe to the south, Jigawa and Bauchi States from the west. There are seventeen local government areas in Yobe State. Yobe is generally agrarian, with vast mineral deposits, fishing ground, and with the largest livestock rearing area/market in West Africa. Islam is the dominant religion, although there is a minority Christian population. The main ethnic groups are Bolewa, Hausa, Kanuri, Kare-Kare, Manga and Ngizim. Since its creation in 1991, the major security challenges faced by Yobe was the occasional outbreak of religious conflicts between the

two religious' groups (Islam and Christianity), farmers-herder conflicts, as well as electoral violence, mostly in Potiskum, which were usually contained by security apparatus and never escalated to massive destruction as seen as that of the Boko Haram. There was also highway robbery referred to as *Kwanta-kwanta*, which dominated the early years of the state, perhaps due to the newly established seat of power and government with the supposedly economic prosperity that typically attracts criminal activities.

The start of the Boko Haram insurgency could be traced to Kanamma, a town in Yobe, from 2002 when a group of mostly young men, destroyed a Police station in Kanamma, and some towns – Geidam, Yunusari, Yusufari and Damaturu. The group later relocated to the rugged terrain of Mandara Mountains in Gwoza Local Government Area, Borno State as a perfect hideout, presumably difficult to reach by government forces. The eventual crackdown by the government dispersed the group from the Gwoza Mountain to rally under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf in his *Markas* (centre) in Maiduguri from 2002-2009.

The Boko Haram violent confrontations in Maiduguri began in 2009 and soon spread to Yobe with the first major attack on a Police station close to the Emir of Fika's palace in Potiskum. Initially, the target of attacks by the insurgents were security officials, but soon included government officials, traditional and religious clerics who openly or presumably opposed the ideology of the insurgents. The destruction of infrastructures, more especially barracks, schools, health facilities, churches, mosques, and markets also ensued unabated. This virtually affected all aspects of human life, socio-economic activities, politics and governance, commercial and private activities, as well as forced migration and displacements. The intensity of violence and destruction heightened from 2012 to 2014 and a state of emergency was declared in both Borno and Yobe States. Other prominent attacks in Yobe include a suicide attack on the Emir of Fika after the weekly Muslim Friday prayers on 3rd August, 2012 and second attempt on 10th December, 2012 , a suicide

bomb at the Government Science and Technical School in Potiskum during a morning school assembly in November, 2014, attacks on Government Secondary School Mamudo on 6th July 2013, mass killing at College of Agriculture Gujba on 29th September 2013, as well as in Federal Government College, Buni Yadi in Gujba LGA on 25th February 2014. Subsequently, several attacks, killings, bombings and destruction were experienced in Damaturu, the State capital as witnessed in neighboring Borno State capital, Maiduguri. The escalation of violence led to the capture of 12 out of 17 LGAs in Yobe State (Oshita, 2017) and from then on the insurgency caught international attention, especially with the abduction of the 276 girls from Government Girls College, Chibok in Borno State (Waziri,2017).

The change of government in Nigeria in 2015 and more importantly, the counter-offensive launched by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) organized by governments of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria in 2015, brought about a slow and gradual reduction of the incessant attacks and suicide bombing by the insurgents in the Northeast, in Borno and Yobe in particular. The MNJTF were mandated, among others, to create a safe and secure environment in areas affected by the Boko Haram violent activities (Waziri, 2017). Furthermore, the split of the Boko Haram insurgents in 2016 into two prominent groups weakened and altered their tactical and, perhaps, strategic plans as well. Abubakar Shekau who had earlier sought to connect with Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL or ISIS) international terrorist group with similar strict rules, akin to violence and more deadly attacks, became the leader of the conservative faction situated in Sambisa Forest. And Abu Musab Al Barnawi's faction eventually became aligned to the Islamic State group around the fringes of Lake Chad tagged Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP); this group is generally considered less violent, especially to civilians.

For example, the quick and successful negotiation and release of the abducted 110 girls from Government Girls Science and Technical

College (GGSTC) Dapchi in February 2018 was reached by the Al-Barnawi faction. As a result of the relative return of peace to the state, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps officially recognized by governments were closed in Yobe with normalcy being restored to a large extent. So far, an area of threat to citizens in Yobe and Borno since 2017 is from the frequent attacks and abductions along Maiduguri-Damaturu Road, Gujba LGA, especially in some communities like Buni Gari, Magza, Gashuwa, and Kamuya, close to and along Damaturu-Biu Road. There are still threats and fears of attacks, blockage, ambush, and abductions along the Damaturu-Biu Road linking Damaturu, and Gujba town to Biu in Borno. The resurgence of attacks from Tarmuwa LGA to Jajere, Babbangida, and remote communities bordering Borno has recently intensified – a common occurrence that heightened during festive periods – especially the ember months when large movements of travelers are recorded. The seeming lack of central leadership among the insurgents due to their split in 2016 has rendered the situation uncertain and more precarious. It is suspected that break-away groups of insurgents may have also been engaged in spontaneous attacks on citizens and kidnapping for ransom, mainly along the highways.

The above notwithstanding, there is a gradual decrease in attacks and security threats in the Northeast in general, and Yobe in particular, which provides the opportunity to further explore alternative means of ensuring an end to the insurgency. Since dialogue and reconciliation has worked in other conflict-affected areas of Africa, such as the Rwandan Peace and Truth Commission, this study explored the relevance of such initiative in Yobe State.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study was a rapid policy research restricted to exploring perspectives, options and ideas about dialogue and reconciliation as viable options for ending the Boko Haram conflict in Yobe State.

Selected key informants were interviewed and four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with identified relevant stakeholders to explore and provide a nuanced understanding of dialogue and reconciliation as an option to end the conflict. The discussion included conditions laid out by relevant stakeholders necessary to end the violent conflict. It identified possible key promoters of dialogue and reconciliation, the best groups, and individuals to engage, and how to effectively undertake such engagement. The identified respondents included government officials, religious and traditional leaders, internally displaced persons, military personnel, other security personnel, ordinary citizens, civil society organizations and community vigilante members.

The identified respondents did not, however, include any repentant Boko Haram member, as attempts to locate them failed from all possible avenues. As rapid research, time limitation was a factor that did not allow in-depth data collection. To address the challenges of the language barrier for respondents not very conversant with the English language, the interviewer and note-taker interpreted the English texts to the Hausa language to relay and obtain better insight from the respondents. The research was conducted in Damaturu, although some respondents travelled from communities outside Damaturu, the State capital.

METHODOLOGY

In generating data for the rapid assessment in exploring perspectives for bringing an end to the Boko Haram conflict, document materials, key informants' interview and focus group were utilized to analyze data. The research used a multi-stakeholder approach to gather data. This is to obtain, as much as possible, respondents' different opinions of the objectives of the study. Data was collected through KII and FGD, which were conducted with 10 and 40 respondents respectively. Respondents for the KII were selected

from key actors consisting of the military, government officials (SEMA), religious (CAN and MORA) and traditional leaders, IDPs, academics, hunters, JONAPWA, women groups (NCWS) and NURTW. The FGD engaged other actors and non-actors in the conflict, the victims, as well as ordinary members of the public. bearing in mind gender sensitivity in gathering data. This was categorized into four groups: government officials from different state ministries, traditional and religious leaders' groups – including imams and tribal group leaders, women groups, and youth and civil society groups, to ensure diversity of ideas, thoughts, and opinions.

A note-taker wrote down responses from the respondents and FGDs during interviews, to ensure maximum data collection. The questions for the interview and FGD were interpreted from English to Hausa language for ease of understanding, for in-depth, clear responses from respondents.

The data collected was analyzed from primary sources, using structured interview questions on ending the conflict. The qualitative data was analyzed using a coding system approach in sorting, arranging and presentation. For anonymity and ease of analysis, the key informant interview was assigned and transformed into a response to represent the participants of the study. The data was organized by generating close-ended questions, and selective coding that is converted into themes and responses. Emerging themes from the interviews were presented according to the research questions developed. Some of the data collected through interviews was analyzed using simple frequency and percentage, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 descriptive tables for the research questions, to determine the relative association between the studied variables. However, the final report was presented in the form of narratives to discuss the result of the research and according to thematic areas as follows:

CURRENT STATE OF BOKO HARAM CONFLICT IN YOBE STATE

There is a great improvement in the security situation of Yobe because of the reduction in intensity, frequency, and level of destruction from attacks and bombings from the Boko Haram insurgents. This is evidenced by the fact that there is currently no LGA under Boko Haram control in the state. Due to this improved situation, many respondents opined that Yobe is now undergoing recovery and reconstruction of the basic infrastructure destroyed by the insurgents. IDPs from Gujba LGA, the worst hit by Boko Haram, have returned to their communities. The reconstruction of their hospital, township roads and new schools have taken place while construction of other critical infrastructure is still ongoing (SEMA Executive Chairman, 2019). Other reconstruction efforts include various police stations destroyed by the insurgents in Dapchi, and Fune, as well as courts and schools. All other official IDP camps have been closed in the state, while reintegration projects for empowerment through skill acquisition training and enhancement, loan disbursement, for improving livelihood have been implemented for the benefit of citizens. However, not all IDPs have relocated completely, as some of the IDPs only go to their communities to work on their farms and return to safer areas, especially the state capital, Damaturu, to reside.

A general sense of improvement in security in Yobe was given by a participant in one of the FGDs as follows:

> There is serious reduction in the capacity of the Boko Haram to strike, before they come to attack villages with armored vehicles and many other weapons but now one can only hear of attack by the Boko Haram on few vehicles or motorbikes (FGD, 2019).

Nevertheless, despite the return of peace in many parts of the state, some areas continue to remain threatened by attacks. Most of the threats from Boko Haram come from the northern axis, particularly

from Geidam, Tarmuwa and Bursari LGAs bordering Borno, an area under ISWAP control. Although the decrease in attacks in Geidam enabled the reopening of its market in 2021, the LGA has recorded several deadly attacks mostly targeted at military formations and government buildings. In the first half of 2021, ISWAP attacked Geidam about five times destroying police stations, schools, and carting away medical supplies from the general hospital. A recent tactic employed by ISWAP is kidnapping for ransom where high profile individuals are kidnapped, such as the attack on 22nd February 2021 on Geidam during which three officers of Nigeria Customs Service were kidnapped. Apparently, in an attempt to replenish its depleting manpower, ISWAP was reported to have been giving large sums of money to families in Geidam to recruit new members. The organization gave the sum of N20,000 (about $50) in cash to over 50 households on 23rd April 2021 when it took control of the town (Humangle, 2021). So far, the road linking Damaturu to Potiskum remains the only safe road, while Damaturu - Gashua, and Damaturu - Buni Yadi - Biu (Borno) continue to record intermittent attacks.

A very disturbing scenario with serious implications on the future trajectory of ISWAP is the collection of taxes (*jizya*) for protection in some remote communities in Gulani and Gujba. In these communities, there are also reported cases of forced marriages and conscription of youths by the insurgents. There are eminent threats of ambush and road blockage by the insurgents in Gujba LGA, where attacks have repeatedly occurred in communities close to Gujba town. Other hotspots include Katarko, Buni Gari, Gashuwa, Magza and Kamuya which are being targeted by the insurgents. Threats from Boko Haram have largely prevented IDPs from having safe access to their farmlands without the risk of encountering insurgents, for fear of being killed or abducted, even for those who have returned to their communities. One of the respondents in the KII remarked that:

> We still see a group of the insurgents passing or wandering to look for water, food, fuel, and other requirements, or perhaps passing to go and attack some communities from Sasawa, Damaturu LGA. Our hunters spotted them passing, before they went to attack the residence of the Emir of Tarmuwa and this information was passed to the traditional leaders, who in turn informed the army (KII, IDP 2019).

Some of the impact of the insurgency in Yobe is manifested in the increasing vulnerability of women, girls and children who often face various forms of abuse and deprivations. With breadwinners gone, most women are left uncared for with orphaned children with no secured means of welfare and livelihood. This situation, if left unattended, breeds other forms of resentments and grievances akin to similar drivers that brought about the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast in general. Other insecurity challenges as enumerated by the Executive Governor during the security summit held in November 2019, includes rising cases of rape, kidnapping, robbery, homicide, farmers and pastoralists conflict and cattle-rustling, which he affirmed must be confronted to enable socio-economic progress in the state.

Since the rift and breakup of the Boko Haram insurgents into two groups in 2016, it becomes imperative to know which group is more active in the state to judge which faction to engage in the event of any dialogue and reconciliation initiative. To this effect, most respondents were uncertain as to which faction is active. This is largely because attacks by Boko Haram in Yobe happen from two axis: from Gujba LGA in the south and Tarmuwa/Geidam LGA axis in the north. However, few respondents confirmed that the Barnawi faction is the active faction in the northern part of Yobe, especially in Tarmuwa LGA, where they come to attack communities in Yobe from Damasak LGA axis in Borno State around the fringes of the Lake Chad Basin. The Abubakar Shekau led faction is more active in the Buni Yadi axis, Gujba LGA, located in western the fringes of Alagarno Forest.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO ENDING BOKO HARAM CONFLICT

An area of focus of this study is the evaluation of government efforts and commitment to ending the Boko Haram conflict in Yobe. Specifically, the role of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and that of the Yobe State government and the challenges constraining whatever successes recorded based on their mandates and specific area of operation were examined. In generic terms, there is consensus among the respondents that both the federal and state governments have done well, though with some reservations.

In the case of the federal government, most of the respondents maintained that the current government under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari has shown more commitment and readiness to end the Boko Haram conflict in the Northeast, and in Yobe in particular. For example, the operation "Safe Corridor" is an attempt to attract repentant Boko Haram insurgents to surrender and lay down their weapons in exchange for rehabilitation and reintegration into communities through the de-radicalization process. The government has realized the need to adopt other means of taming the insurgency, as stressed by Brechenmacher (2018), that the Boko Haram resilience highlights the limits of a purely military solution to Nigeria's conflict, therefore a broader demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration strategy becomes imperative. Critics have, however, frowned that the Operation Safe Corridor initiative is marred by secrecy in its operation and process of determining who the repentant members are. More so, the period undergone by the repentant Boko Haram members is deemed too short and inadequate to guarantee a genuine change in character, least of all, radical religious ideology. On the other hand, optimists in their argument posit that the Safe Corridor initiative provides an opportunity for conscripted members who were forcefully abducted as members of Boko Haram to be rescued from the grip of the insurgents, while vital information about the Boko

Haram operations could be received, which could be utilized against the insurgents. Characteristically, most of the participants of the Operation Safe Corridor are low-ranking members, often used as foot soldiers, neither with no power to make any concrete decision, nor access to information regarding the top-level leadership, tactics, or strategy within the Boko Haram hierarchy.

The respondents confirmed that so far, no member from the Operation Safe Corridor has been reintegrated into any community in Yobe State. This may be due to lack of preparedness of communities to accept any repentant member, inadequate enlightenment, sensitization, or information regarding the safe corridor project to ordinary members of the public. The latter could be the most likely scenario because reintegration is handled covertly, so many people are not aware of the efforts made so far.

Respondents also highlighted specific areas of improvement by government in the welfare of the security operatives, procurement of arms, ammunition, and other military hardware, as well as introduction of safety net programmes to alleviate poverty, a dominant narrative as one of the major causes of Boko Haram conflict. One of the participants in an FGD narrated thus:

> The effort of both federal and Yobe State government is highly commendable, as the federal government has done well in the area of deployment of troops. In addition, there is also improvement in the provision of military hardware and operational gadgets. There is also financial support from the state government right from the administration of Governor Ibrahim Gaidam to the present Governor. As of recent, the state government has donated 30 operational vehicles to boost the capacity of the security operatives, hunters, and vigilantes (FGD, 2019).

The Yobe State government has done even more than the federal government in terms of logistic support, improved welfare of the military, recruitment of local hunters and vigilante groups to

support the military in their operations. Also commendable is the recent launching of operation "Ha Maza," which provided logistic support of 30 operational vehicles, and resources to security personnel in the state, as well as the introduction of poverty reduction programmes such as vocational training and skills acquisition programmes, to boost the capacity of the Yobe state indigenes to reduce poverty level.

Undoubtedly, the Presidency and the military have consistently maintained that Boko Haram cannot be defeated through a military approach alone. This was equally echoed by respondents in Yobe State. Historically, there is no single record in conflict literature that shows military efforts alone could end violent conflict, as in most cases, peace can only be tenable via roundtable discussion. The dialogue and reconciliation approach will offer a new lease of life in efforts to end the conflict, most respondents agreed. This is more so as efforts by the government are characterized by flaws and inconsistency. The prominent challenges highlighted are corruption, negligence, and inconsistent provision of the welfare of the security operatives. The abysmal response in terms of advocacy and propaganda by the National Orientation Agency is a huge challenge since the insurgents thrive in propaganda videos, which the government acknowledges constitute a means by which the insurgents recruit members. Inter-agency rivalry among the Joint Task Force prevents coordinated air and ground response from delays in acting promptly. Similarly, respondents decried the delay in response to intelligence reports provided by community members to the security operatives. One respondent in an FGD observed that:

> To some extent, corruption, and selfish interest by government officials and, particularly, military/security agents is a serious setback. There seem to be connivance of traditional leaders and community members with the insurgents which impede the process of winning the conflict, or to be fair enough, the lack of prompt response discourages communities from divulging

information for fear of reprisal from the insurgents, especially when the military does not respond (FGD, 2019).

DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION AS OPTION FOR PEACE

The lingering conflict in the Northeast has become an issue of grave concern among actors and stakeholders alike. The desperation for peace and end to violence and conflict has resulted in a plethora of questions on the lips of all those that care. Since the beginning of the conflict, there have been frantic efforts to end the conflict via a military approach. Although the military approach has drastically degraded the capacity of the insurgents, it has not halted the destructive attacks, least of all, ending the conflict. It is in line with this situation that one of the objectives of the research examined dialogue and reconciliation as a strategy for ending the conflict, with the focus on the feasibility of dialogue and reconciliation as options to peace and the willingness of stakeholders to support the approach.

The consensus by most respondents is that no conflict has been resolved using violence or force alone, as most conflicts end on the negotiation table. The Boko Haram conflict is no different. Respondents reported that everybody is virtually fatigued by the cycle of violence, including the insurgents. Thus, there is congruence among respondents that dialogue and reconciliation enjoy a high degree of legitimacy among stakeholders such as government, traditional/community leaders, religious leaders, and even the ISWAP (Mamman Nur faction) who, according to respondents, demonstrated a willingness to negotiate and or reconcile to end the conflict. As such, a dialogue and reconciliation approach should be considered to end the conflict. There is, however, a consensus that the Abubakar Shekau faction is more deadly and may not be willing to sue for peace, judging from his propaganda utterances on social media.

The government has amply demonstrated willingness for dialogue and reconciliation from the previous negotiation for the release of the abducted Government Girls Science and Technical College Dapchi in 2017, and more importantly Governor Mala Buni's utterances during the November 2019 Security Summit, when he reiterated the "need to actively explore and engage in dialogue, using back channels to open communications and contacts that both sides could trust as credible" (@neptuneprime.com.ng). He further stated that the military should open a "safe haven" for insurgents who desire to repent and defect" to hasten the process of ending the conflict. The Yobe State government has also organized workshops, public information, and enlightenment campaigns with members of the public to eschew violence and pass on any useful information to the security, who should exhibit a friendly disposition to gain the confidence of the public for collective action against a common enemy. Few respondents, however, interpreted the government's offer for dialogue as a sign of weakness and stressed that poor coordination in the process of dialogue marred previous attempts by the government.

The dominant view among religious and traditional leaders equally supports dialogue and reconciliation and they are ever willing and ready for dialogue because peace is everybody's business. Traditional leaders maintain that as custodians of the tradition and culture, they have the sole responsibility of ensuring its sustenance to preserve peoples' identity. The religious leaders, on the other hand, affirmed that dialogue and reconciliation are the hallmarks of the two major religions, Islam and Christianity, and a divine duty to ensure followers adhere to. The respondents confirmed that the focus of the teachings of religious leaders falls nothing short of what the two holy books, the Qur'an and the Bible, command, that mankind make peace and reconcile whenever conflict arises among themselves:

> We, as religious and traditional leaders, are willing to support dialogue and reconciliation as a means of achieving peace. We are

> closer to the people, and have knowledge of the local environment and know how to reach out to people and the insurgents (KII, 2019)

As for the non-state actors, respondents conclude that ISWAP, headed by Al-Barnawi or Maman Nur, are more disposed to dialogue. Maman Nur is commonly viewed to be the son of the late Boko Haram leader Muhammad Yusuf that broke away from the Shekau group over disputes on the position of the shari'ah and other ideological dispositions. Most of the narratives revealed that the mode of attack of the Al-Barnawi (Maman Nur) faction is on the military formation, and to access food, medical supplies, and logistics. The level of destruction by this group is considered low compared to Shekau's. However, in recent times, in December 2019, ISWAP has kidnapped and executed its abductees and are also suspected to have perpetrated the Auno village massacre of 30 motorists, abduction of 22 women and children as well as burning of over 18 vehicles in Borno State (*Daily Trust*, 11th February 2020). The Abubakar Shekau faction, whose allegiance is to ISIS/ISIL, is generally considered to be more deadly and indiscriminate, with a "no retreat no surrender" posture. They equally see every individual, Muslims, and non-Muslims alike, as infidels, unless and until one accepted their *fatawa* (religious injunctions/teaching). In the words of one of the respondents:

> Some of the insurgents, particularly the ISWAP under the leadership of Mamman Nur, may accept dialogue, while the others under Abubakar Shekau may not, because of their ideology of no retreat, no surrender. Lack of food has ravaged them, so they are likely to consider dialogue.

BEST WAYS TO APPROACH THE INSURGENTS

The proposition that most conflicts end with peace talks suggests some element of indisputability of dialogue and reconciliation as an option to end violent conflict. But it is an entirely different ball

game for such an approach to be successful as it depends to a large extent on certain variables – of particular interest is the quality of involvement of the appropriate stakeholders in the mediation, in terms of experience, knowledge, and degree of influence they command among members of the communities within which the conflicting parties reside. It is in line with the above reality that one of the objectives of the research sought to find out who should constitute the main actors in promoting peace, why are they considered the best, and what influence they exert as the key actors to be involved in peacebuilding. This also involves the best way to approach the insurgents in a dialogue and reconciliation scenario.

The common ground among most of the respondents indicates traditional and community leaders, religious leaders, security agents, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and the media are the best-disposed stakeholders to participate and promote dialogue. Traditional, community and religious leaders are closely connected to the grassroots; they understand the cultural complexity of the locals, including the local language and knowledge to counter the narratives. Similarly, they are seen as custodians of the customs and fathers of tradition, just as religious leaders are seen as custodians of religious knowledge, mentors, and role models in their respective institutions. Both are well respected as dependable intermediaries, who relate well with members of their respective communities, exert influence on their followers and command loyalty, respect, and followership. They are also reliable mediums of information dissemination through traditional meeting points or *Majalisa,* weekly sermons and daily preaching. The INGOs are considered by the NSAGs as neutral and reliable as they were involved in the past negotiations for the release of the abducted Chibok and Dapchi school girls, which is seen by most respondents, to a large extent, as successful. The ICRC has featured prominently in this regard, while a popular journalist, Ahmed Salkida, was mentioned as a potential mediator or connector. The media, both mainstream and social, are also considered as key

important avenues, because of their indispensability in information, communication dissemination and management that are beneficial to the major parties in the conflict.

The best way to approach the insurgents for successful dialogue remains a daunting challenge because the choice of the pathway to approach the major parties in the conflict, especially the dreaded NSAGs, determines the outcome and success of the dialogue and reconciliation. This depends to a large extent on the representation of the key actors in the conflict. In the case of Boko Haram, majority of respondents revealed that the best pathway to reach the insurgents is through the media outlets, in both mainstream (radio, television and print media) and social media, as well as through active and experienced NGOs and INGOs, particularly the ICRC, and renown mediators and respected religious leaders and faith-based organizations, as may be identified by the insurgents. The government could be approached through traditional institutions, elected representatives, and government functionaries, as well as media. This approach poses no known stress because the government has repeatedly requested the insurgents to come to the negotiation table to lay down their grievances in a peaceful manner.

On appropriate action and approach to engage in the resolution initiatives, results suggest a community-based approach, where community members are engaged to participate and own the dialogue and reconciliation process. This provides the opportunity for communities to adopt respective alternative dispute resolutions as may be determined by their values, norms, and culture. As soon as contacts are established, advocacy visits to relevant government agencies and key stakeholders, including INGOs in the peacebuilding process, could be approached. It is paramount to also design concrete, specific and measurable projects to address the fundamental drivers of conflict such as poverty, unemployment, and ignorance, through social safety net programmes and access to education. A respondent added that for dialogue and reconciliation to be successful there is a need for:

Cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders through expanded stakeholder meetings, intelligence gathering, responsive and responsible governance, available logistics and resources needed to sustain the dialogue process and achieve lasting peace (FGD, 2019)

COMPETING DEMANDS OF MAJOR ACTORS IN THE CONFLICT

There is no gainsaying that conflict is inevitable in any society; this results from the incompatibility of interest and values and the competition over scarce resources among individuals and interest groups. These notwithstanding, every conflict has its drivers and moderating variables for its resolution. Therefore, the major parties in conflict and the stakeholders affected by the conflict come to the reconciliation table with their demands as a precondition for a cease-fire and enduring peace. The general view of the respondents is that the major need of the insurgents cut across the following: the need for government to release their major commanders and members, compensation, reconstruction of their worship centers, state protection, as well as freedom of worship, among others. The Abubakar Shekau faction may further demand the total establishment of the Islamic State and acceptability of their doctrines and teaching by all, irrespective of religious belief. This faction, according to respondents, considers anyone who does not conform to their teachings and doctrines as an infidel and must be dealt with decisively.

Just like the insurgents, communities affected by the violent conflict have different demands depending on the degree of damage committed. While some communities require lasting peace and a stable environment, restoration of basic functional socio-economic institutions for the provision of basic needs, such as education, health services and water, some communities demand justice. These include reconstruction of destroyed properties,

reconciliation, and assurance that such violent conflict should not occur again.

The Federal government of Nigeria and the Yobe State government on their part place more premium on peace and security. Thus, the need for the Non-state Armed Groups to embrace peace, respect constituted authority and become law-abiding citizens may not be negotiable. It is also the wish of the government that the Non-State Armed Groups surrender and lay down their arms, as well as completely jettison their extreme and radical ideologies. This, according to the respondents, will result in total restoration of peace and needed livelihood. The military, a key actor that has suffered heavy brunt of the conflict and frontrunners in the fight, is equally willing to dialogue, although with reservation. From the point of view of the military, a combination of force and dialogue is needed for any eventuality. Therefore, the military requires the insurgents to surrender and lay down their arms to set the peace process, while government ensures improvement in soldiers' welfare including compensation schemes to families of the fallen heroes and wounded soldiers.

RISK INVOLVED IN PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN YOBE STATE

Promoting and achieving dialogue and reconciliation comes with its risks and costs. Some of the risks highlighted include the fear of betrayal, vengeance, threat to life and personal safety, as well as stigmatization for stakeholders involved, who fear losing the respect and trust from community members who may suspect or question how they came to relate with the insurgents. The implication of such risks is the possibility of increased vulnerability of those involved in the dialogue to the danger of being attacked by the NSAGS members, and mistrust by community members, especially when the dialogue process fails or become threatened. There is the possibility of a lack of trust for the present and future

dialogue process. One respondent believes that:

> People are skeptical and have lost confidence in the dialogue process and the system in general. Once dialogue/reconciliation is mentioned, people feel reserved on how they can ever see and live with people who killed their relations. There is also fear of stigmatization as people will begin to suspect one as an insurgent collaborator, informant, and all sorts of names. (KII, 2019)

Despite these risks and their possible implication, however, most of the respondents believe that such risk can be mitigated through sensitization, enlightenment, and preaching by religious clerics, to inculcate a spirit of forgiveness and acceptance; while advocacy through media such as radio jingles, drama and other mediums of information dissemination could be vigorously utilized to gain peoples' confidence and support for the dialogue process.

CONCLUSION

As a pillar and tool for inclusiveness, understanding and harmony, the dialogue process requires painstaking efforts from the parties involved to respect, inspire, and mutually agree with each other to reach a common position to end hostilities. Reconciliation as a process also aims to ensure the establishment of a relationship to normalcy, where the past strained relationship does not determine future actions. The decade-long Boko Haram conflict has inflicted grave and untold destruction of lives and properties and affected all aspects of human life – physical, psychological, political, socio-economic, and environmental terrain of Yobe State. The negative impact remains a huge cost that will take decades of conscious efforts to regain.

Amidst the fear, suspicion, mistrust, and uncertainty from both sides of the conflict, it is imperative to pause and look at other alternative means of resolving the conflict. This is largely because

the violent conflict has not provided the desired outcome to either side. Experiences from previous global conflicts have also shown that the path to negotiation, dialogue and reconciliation remain the only option to sustainable peace and security for all.

Field data from Yobe indicates that reconciliation is a viable means for ending the Boko Haram conflict and a timely initiative that is fully embraced by all the stakeholders interviewed. Despite the lack of total or complete end of hostilities, and previous failed attempts to reach out to the insurgents, the current security situation is ripe to initiate contact and communication with Boko Haram. It is essential to recognize and include the insurgents in finding lasting solutions as the military approach has not completely ended violence; the best approach now is to adopt alternative means to eventually end the conflict. The Yobe State government and key stakeholders interviewed have indicated the workability and are in support of dialogue and reconciliation to end the impasse. There are deliberate efforts to address some of the drivers of the conflict on the side of the government, religious and traditional leaders, INGOs and local civil society groups. Key stakeholders have also been identified and are willing to champion the course of the dialogue and reconciliation process despite the risks involved. It is, however, imperative that mechanisms that will be employed for the resolution of the conflict should involve local actors to ensure ownership and sustainability of the process and the outcome.

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CHAPTER 4

BOKO HARAM CONFLICT IN THE NORTHEAST:
LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THE KANO EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION

Kano is in the northwest of Nigeria. It is a major commercial centre, not only in the north, but also across the country serving as a major trade link across North and West Africa. As a trading centre, it also has a long history as an early learning epicenter for Islamic education. For this reason, it attracted people from different parts of the country who have made the city their home. According to the 2006 census, the state has a population of about 20 million people, out of which an estimated 8 million live in Kano city. It is one of the high-density populated parts of Nigeria.

In the past, it has experienced a series of ethno-religious riots, and there were concerns that the Boko Haram insurgents could build a nest in the city. Certainly, it had several attributes that made it alluring for the Boko Haram insurgents. Firstly, its cosmopolitan nature and the tradition of religious learning have made it open to all types of influence. This was how the radical-leaning Maitatsine made Kano his base in the 1980s. Secondly, with its rapid population explosion, many new settlements such as Naíbawa, Unguwa Uku, Danbare, Kuyan Taínna, Fanshekara, Hotoro, Mariri, Farawa, Gaida, Sauna, Dakata, Kawaji, Gayawa, and host of others, have sprung up on the fringes of the city. These new settlements are

populated by people from different parts of the country. Unlike the inner and more traditional quarters, where the existing traditional leadership is established and respected, it is not a similar case in these new settlements. Moreover, in the new settlements, people hardly know each other. There is thus little sense of community and social coherence. In such a situation, criminals and insurgents could simply live and operate with little public attention and scrutiny. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Boko Haram established cells in the state, they used these new settlements as their bases. Thirdly, the high population density of the city also presents an opportunity for the insurgents to inflict massive causalities than in sparsely populated areas. For the Boko Haram leadership, Kano was also another reason. A foothold in the state could allow them to have access to the Northwest. Thus, they could establish a strong base and presence in the state and easily spread their operations from the Northeast to Northwest of the country.

Despite this setting in greater Kano city, until January 2012, the popular perception was that the Boko Haram insurgents could only operate in the Northeast. On the afternoon of January 20, 2012, that myth was shattered when the insurgents launched well-coordinated, simultaneous attacks on several targets in Kano City. Among the worst hits was the Police Headquarters in Bompai where many police officers were killed. But casualties were also recorded in four other police formations in different parts of the city, as well as in the Immigration Office. As if to make a statement that the attack of January 20, 2012 was not a fluke, the insurgents attacked Kano repeatedly over the next couple of months up until 2015. They include the attacks at Bayero University, Kano (30th April 2012), the Federal College of Education Kano, (17th September 2014), the School of Hygiene (23rd June 2014), Kano Polytechnic (30th July 2014), the Central Mosque (30th November 2014) and even more cheekily, the attack on the late Emir of Kano (19th January 2013).

By the middle of the year 2012, the situation had become too precarious in the city with its dense population, which provided an opportunity for a mass target for the insurgents. Hundreds of innocent lives, and properties worth billions of naira, have been lost. As a commercial hub and economic base of the North, between 2012 and 2016, the insurgency brought about the decline of business activities in the state. During the peak of the insurgency, trade and commercial activities in the state dwindled to almost zero percent. The city had been deserted, as many traders and investors relocated with their businesses to other parts of Nigeria due to the security challenges. The attacks, which focused more on police stations, mosques, motor parks, educational institutions, markets and other security formations, adversely affected the socio-economic fortunes of the state. As cited by Moses, "Businesses witnessed a record of low patronage because businessmen from the other parts of the country and neighbouring countries were no longer willing to travel to Kano for transactions because of the concern around insecurity" (Moses, 2017).

Despite the grim situation above and the alarming success of the insurgents who were interested in taking over Kano to create an extended territory in the Northwest, the plan by Boko Haram insurgents to capture Kano and make it one of their bases wasn't successful. In the end, the insurgents appeared defeated in Kano despite their early successes. How was this achieved? What lessons does this present in the wide efforts to win the battle against the insurgents?

It is instructive that the successes recorded against the insurgents were not due to military force. There was very little confrontation between the insurgents and the law enforcement agencies and the army in the state. In other words, it was an example of a non-kinetic strategy that worked in the state. As we look for a broader non-kinetic approach to ending the Boko Haram insurgency in the country, it is, therefore, important to study the experience in Kano

State to understand the key elements that were at work, what ensured its successes and what lessons can be utilised in other areas.

This chapter presents findings of a study of the efforts made to rout out Boko Haram from Kano and deprived of capacity to consolidate on its earlier successes. The study aimed to document successes recorded in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in Kano state and highlighted the strategies used by various stakeholders towards addressing the problem. Specifically, the objectives of the research are to:

❖ Determine the current status of the conflict in Kano state;

❖ Describe measures/strategies used towards eradicating the insurgency in Kano state;

❖ Explain successes recorded in unravelling the insurgent activities in the state;

❖ Ascertain the possibility of using dialogue as an alternative to the military approach; and

❖ Suggest possible ways to end the insurgency in other north-eastern states and in Nigeria.

3.0 METHOD AND DATA

This study is purely qualitative. It is a descriptive qualitative study. Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary qualitative data was collected from stakeholders within Kano state. Respondents were purposely selected from traditional rulers, religious leaders, security agencies, women groups, youth groups, government officials, leaders of motor parks and commercial places, as well as the ordinary citizens. Two types of instruments were used for the data collection – Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides. For the KII, a total of

24 interviews were conducted, while four FGD sessions were also conducted with various stakeholders. In total, 48 individuals participated as respondents for the study. The secondary data was collected through a desk review of literature related to the possibility of using dialogue and reconciliation as an alternative tool to contain the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The data was presented and analysed using a thematic approach.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the early 2000s, Nigeria witnessed an upsurge of violent conflict, mainly occasioned by the activities of the *Boko Haram* insurgent group, which is considered as one of the largest terrorist groups, not only in Africa but the world over. The group became notorious for its stance that *boko* (Western-style of education) was *haram* (prohibited by Islam). MacEachern (2018) subscribed to the belief that the term *Boko Haram* might be more accurately translated as "deceitful education is forbidden." Reports reviewed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the United States House of Representatives (2014) traced the origin of the *Boko Haram* group to 2003 when reportedly about 200 university students and unemployed youth created a camp in Yobe State near the Niger border to withdraw from what they considered to be corrupt, sinful and unjust Nigerian government, and their community was supposedly founded on ideal Islamic law. The group was then known as the Nigerian Taliban (MacEachern, 2018). The above claim was reaffirmed by the Human Rights Watch (2012) which posited that a complex mixture of economic, social, and political factors including poverty, endemic corruption, impunity for violence such as horrific intercommunal killings and human rights abuses by security forces were the factors responsible for the emergence of the *Boko Haram*.

4.1 Violent and Nonviolent Methods of Managing Boko Haram Conflict in Nigeria

It is a simple fact that the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategy depends on the model used. Crelinsten (2009) argued that counterterrorism policies adopted by individual states or international bodies must involve either: (1) the use of hard power, including arrest and detention, prosecution and trial, punishment and trial, international law and policing, proactive policing, criminal intelligence, anti-terrorism legislation, peacekeeping, retaliatory strikes, military invasion, gunboat diplomacy, economic blockades, military exercises, military occupation, counterinsurgency training and peacekeeping; or (2) soft power, including regulation of resource utilisation, trade, foreign aid, employment policies, promoting economic growth, market liberalisation, development programmes, amnesties, negotiation, reform, counter-radicalisation, community policing that aims to promote trust and open dialogue. While hard power is largely violent, soft power emphasised nonviolent strategies (ibid).

Unfortunately, Nigeria does not seem to have a comprehensive policy framework or strategy to respond to insurgency or terrorism (Anugwom, 2019). Nonetheless, efforts have been put in place to counter the insurgent activities of Boko Haram. Available literature suggests that the Nigerian government has, over the years, adopted both violent and nonviolent methods to resolve the Boko Haram conflict (Comolli, 2015; Mohammed, 2015; Anugwom, 2019). Comolli (2015) believed that violent repression had usually been the most preferred and the most used approach, which was carried out at the expense of a more holistic attempt to address some of the grievances put forward by the Boko Haram group. The government's violent response to Boko Haram has very much shaped the sect's early resolve to carry arms against the Nigerian state (ibid). Mohammed (2015) cited in Anugwom (2019) contends that the decision of Boko Haram to resort to violence might be a

product of the highhanded and repressive approach of the military to the problem. Most notably, brutal military force was most often used to crackdown on Boko Haram members (Azama, 2015). However, the consistent use of force and coercive directives to suppress Boko Haram insurgency by the Nigerian government had only worsened the situation to such an extent that the Nigerian security forces were reported as earning the anger of local communities because of their arbitrary dragnet arrests and careless human rights violations in most of their operations (Solomon, 2015).

The fact that the Boko Haram sect continues to survive the series of crackdowns by the security forces, then reappearing even stronger, better organised, and more lethal is a testimony that a wrong approach, built on wrong assumptions, has been used all along. It should, thus, be noted that the continued survival of the group has proven, beyond doubt, that defeating Boko Haram through improved military counterterrorism measures alone may not be sufficient to resolve the insurgency in Nigeria (Walker, 2016). It, however, means the need to review the underlying structural problems that generate the uprising by deploying alternatives by the Nigerian government. As such, McNamara (1968) argued that for any solution to a security situation to be effective, a multifaceted approach that addresses not only the symptoms of terrorism but also the root causes must be used to address the problems.

Looking at the literature above, it can be observed that nothing much was documented on the efforts put forward by the Nigerian government to curtail the Boko Haram conflict through nonviolent means (Harjani, 2013). However, Solomon (2015) argued that the counter-radicalisation measures used by the Nigerian government involving religious, cultural, communication and governance elements were poorly administered. He further argued that activities that primarily emphasised inter-faith dialogues, an Imam training program, and research on Islam, building a database on

Islamic institutions and promoting extracurricular activities for the youth, such as sports, failed to yield the anticipated results. On the other hand, Barkindo and Bryans (2016) revealed that the de-radicalisation, which is essentially a prison-based exercise that aims to engage violent extremists (both convicts and suspects) in religious, ideological, physical and entrepreneurial value to change their attitudes, were also used by the Nigerian government, but the results are yet to be fully evaluated by the available empirical studies.

4.2 The Role of Negotiation in Managing Boko Haram Conflict

Duyvesteyn and Schuurman (2011) were of the view that successful negotiations do not necessarily produce a lasting resolution of conflict, because negotiated settlements are often brittle and frequently lead to a resumption of violence. In particular, compromise in states in which political power is defined in zero-sum terms tends to lead to new rounds of fighting. The authors further argued that, in general, negotiated settlements often contain calculated decisions, and their main effect can be manipulated to allow extremists to consolidate their control and push for greater gains. In some cases, opportunities for dialogue can be misappropriated by irregular opponents to bid time for a renewed offensive, or to conceal true intentions (ibid). It was reported that "40% of post-conflict countries went back to war again within five years of ceased fire" (Human Security Centre, 2005).

Despite the potentials above, negotiation could still be considered a powerful tool for resolving violent conflicts like the Boko Haram insurgency. A good example of a successful negotiation to counter an insurgency occurred during the Algerian Insurgency from 1954-1962 (Algeria, 2005). It was also reported that in 1962, in Evain, negotiations for peace between the French Government and the FLN led to a cease-fire (Olojo, 2019). Powers (2011) narrated that the Rhodesian Liberation War from 1968-1980 featured several negotiations which took place between the Rhodesian Prime

Minister Ian Smith and the insurgent group known as the "Patriotic Front," consisting of once opposing groups–ZAPU (The Zimbabwe African People's Union) and the ZANU (The Zimbabwe African National Union), which facilitated the end of (insurgency) violence late in 1979 and negotiated an interim government and new elections.

Boko Haram currently does not speak with one voice as it comprises two main factions: the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (the parent Boko Haram group) under the late Abubakar Shekau, and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) led by Abu Abdallah Ibn Umar Al-Barnawi. Misunderstanding between these two factions resulted in a serious setback in Nigeria's attempt at negotiation (Olojo, 2019). The first attempt at negotiation was in 2011 when a meeting was arranged between President Obasanjo and the brother-in-law (Mr Fugu) of the deceased Boko Haram leader, Muhammad Yusuf (Olojo, 2019). Unfortunately, Fugu was assassinated, which ended Obasanjo's intervention (ibid). In 2012, Boko Haram agreed to another talk with the President of the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria, who also had to withdraw because of the government's poor handling of the negotiation (ibid). It was similarly found in the literature that there was also another attempt during the government of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2013 for an amnesty programme, by appointing a committee with the mandate to develop a framework to offer amnesty for members of Boko Haram. The effort was, however, short-lived and not much was achieved during the negotiation (Harjani, 2013).

In 2017, the Nigerian government launched a national action plan for preventing violent extremism (PVE), in which a framework was developed by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in consultation with civil society organisations, the media, students, and the academic community. The action plan focuses on four key areas: (i) strengthening Nigerian institutions to PVE; (ii)

strengthening the rule of law and human rights; (iii) building community engagement and resilience; and (iv) integrating strategic communication to PVE (Anugwom, 2019; Brechenmacher, 2019). It is important to note that none of the above key objectives gives primacy to dialogue with the extremists to end the crisis.

4.3 Successes and Failures in the Fight Against Terrorism

The success of the fight against insurgency may require more than the use of either violent or nonviolent responses, but also good governance. Hogendoorn (2018) believed that Nigeria needs to do more in order to address the drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency. These drivers, according to him, include governance failures in the Northeast in particular, and Nigeria in general; a poorly coordinated, mainly military response; multiple security challenges that stretch the army to the breaking point; and the unwillingness of the elites to address the unsustainable status quo. A successful counterterrorism strategy will require addressing the root causes of terrorism in the country and proposing proactive policies that would strengthen the country's counterterrorism efforts. Researchers found out that Nigerian terrorism was bred by factors such as poverty (Adesoji, 2011), poor socialisation, violence with impunity and militarisation of societies (La Roche, 2004), as well as frustration and unemployment (Onuoha, 2010).

Given the above, Solomon (2015) argued that Boko Haram could be mainly found active in the Northeast and their activities signify the use of violence as a tool by the citizens in the abandoned communities to expose government neglect of their area and its pervasive impoverishment. Solomon further argued that the government's neglect of this region has almost disconnected the residents from the federal government, and that has created the hostility demonstrated by the Boko Haramists. To such an extent that Ahokegh (2012) concluded that if Boko Haram were to be destroyed, other groups could emerge as well if injustice, poor

economic environment, impunity and corruption are not addressed in Nigeria. This position explains the inseparability of addressing the root causes of terrorism and combating it. As such, Richardson (2011) suggested that policymakers must appreciate the underlying factors responsible for terrorism to craft out a holistic and effective counterterrorism regime. Such an approach, according to Kundnani (2015), should consist of a combination of police investigation, military intervention and preventive methods.

For example, upon identifying poor socialisation as the major cause of radicalism by Egypt's largest radical Islamic group, *Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya*, a cause-based solution was reportedly used which made the group renounce bloodshed in 2003. During the intervention, an intellectual dialogue was brokered by a Muslim attorney between the group and the Egyptian government, and a programme in which Muslim scholars debated with imprisoned group leaders about the true meaning of Islam was put in place (Kruglanski et al, 2014). As a result, the leaders wrote 25 volumes arguing for nonviolence, and the group has perpetrated no violence since that time (ibid). Another major Egyptian violent religious group, *Al-Jihad*, renounced violence in 2007 based on a similar program (ibid). Hence, it is the belief of some scholars that if the same cause-based approach was used by the Nigerian government, Boko Haram could have been exterminated long ago (La Roche, 2004; Onuoha, 2010; Richardson, 2011; Adesoji, 2011; Kundnani, 2015). In effect, Lum, et al. (2006) concluded that for Nigeria to effectively counter terrorism, it must design strategies that involve prevention and alleviation of early risk factors, situational prevention of actual events, or post-event responses.

Thus, a combination of poor response by the Nigerian government, public response (including the neutrality of elites) to Boko Haram, most especially in the Northeast and its affiliation with the ISIS, have contributed to giving Boko Haram an upper hand that resulted in successful attacks on their victims and, of course, the

consolidation of the group's activities over the years. Notwithstanding the numerous successful attacks carried out in Kano, especially in the first four states of Boko Haram's early targets; still, all efforts by the group to establish a strong base in the state remained largely unsuccessful and unachievable (Mohammed, 2015). Perhaps the success in Kano was achieved because, unlike the residents of the north-eastern states, Kano residents were generally vigilant, unfriendly, intolerant and resistant to Book Haram's ideology. Even, the state's elites were so resistant to Boko Haram in the state, so much so that in November, 2014 Emir Muhammadu Sanusi instructed that the citizens should arm and protect themselves against Boko Haram attacks (Sanusi, 2014). Despite the above rejection and intolerance of Boko Haram insurgents and the unique vigilante spirit demonstrated by the civilian population in Kano, which made it stand out against Boko Haram targeted abodes, the empirical literature is generally non-existent on the subject.

5.0 RESULTS AND KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study. The data obtained was analysed and presented in thematic form – the current state of Boko Haram insurgency in Kano State; the lessons drawn from Kano experience; government efforts towards addressing insurgency in Nigeria; the possibilities for dialogue and reconciliation as alternative resolution mechanisms for the insurgency; better approaches for engaging the parties to be involved in the dialogue and reconciliation; and the risks involved in promoting dialogue. Finally, the last section under this presented the key findings of the study.

5.1 Current State of Boko Haram Insurgency in Kano State

The description of the current state of the Boko Haram conflict in Kano and the current capacity of the insurgents to carry out their

activities within the state's territory are the focus of this section. The study revealed that currently, there is minimal or an absence of Boko Haram insurgency in Kano. For instance, a FGD with officers from different security agencies revealed that Boko Haram insurgents have been completely wiped out from Kano for about three years now, as one of them answers: "There is no Boko Haram in Kano state. About 99% of BH is cleared. For about 2-3 years we had no issue of BH attack in Kano State" (FGD, Security Officer, Fagge, 2019). Also, a CSO activist attests that "… there is no BH conflict in Kano. Even if there is, we are not aware of it. We are enjoying peace in the state" (Interview with CSO, Nasarawa LGA, 2019). Even members of the Christian community harboured the same belief that Boko Haram has been defeated in Kano as admitted by a Christian leader interviewed, who said, "the issue of BH insurgency is history. It has become history in Kano State… [as] they cannot attack the state."

Despite the above belief, there are indications that some traces of Boko Haram insurgency still exist in Kano; perhaps the group has not given up their effort to capture Kano and make it part of their territory. In reaffirming the above statement, a youth participant of the FGD revealed that Boko Haram insurgents should not be underrated as they still:

> …have capacity. They still send their people into this city. Not so long, it happened that I even saw the guy they sent here to Kano. He moved around markets under the pretence of a physically challenged beggar. But he was eventually arrested by security agencies. So, for this, we can't say there is no BH in Kano, as they send their people for surveillance, to know how the town is. The guy was identified by a soldier who said he knew him in the Sambisa forest. After his arrest, it was confirmed that he is not disabled. Also, weapons, including guns, were recovered from his body (FGD, Youth Leader, Kano Municipal, 2019).

In spite of the above revelations, coupled with the current security situation in the state, it is apparent that Boko Haram is not visibly present in Kano and cannot carry out attacks in the state.

5.2 Lessons Drawn from Kano Experience on Containment of BH Insurgency in the State

Kano has demonstrated a unique approach to the Boko Haram insurgency, which made it stand out among its peers. The residents, including the stakeholders, were able to work collaboratively with security agencies, especially the police, in addressing the problem. Findings show that many neighbourhood committees were formed, everybody was on alert, neighbourhood vigilantism was intensified and collaborations with security agencies, involving intelligence information sharing, were given priority. In reaffirmation of the above, a leader of the Christian community believed that to end Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast and elsewhere, there is the need for the residents to: "…come together collaboratively like the people of Kano, especially on sharing information, collaboration with security agencies, and in taking the whole issue boldly" (Leader of Christian community, Sabon Gari, Fagge LGA, 2019).

A participant of the FGD session for the vigilante group also emphasised the need to involve youths, by encouraging them to resist extremist ideology, through economic inclusion, empowerment and dialoguing. He noted that:

> Though appears to be late, as their youth have already accepted the ideology, unlike Kano where it was not the case, however, there is still hope for the northeastern states. The residents of the Northeast should learn from Kano, that youths should be embraced and called upon to shun this ideology. This can be done by engaging them in various forms of income-earning activities (Youth Leader, Tsamiyar Boka, Hotoro, 2019).

Similarly, the traditional rulers had also taught lessons to their peers elsewhere. It was found that they were never passive in contributing to the suppression of the Boko Haram insurgency in the state. A participant in one FGD session called on leaders in the Northeast, especially traditional leaders, to emulate their peers in Kano, as she noted that, "the Emir of Kano had, after the Central Mosque attacks, called and sensitised the public about taking self-defence measures to prevent self and their community against insurgents' attacks." (Women, Gwale, 2019).

Also, village/ward heads and estate agents were found efficient in taking strategies to contain insurgency in the state, as reported by a respondent who believed an important lesson lies in such an intelligent approach, as he said: "these people collaborate and took upon themselves to ensure only those people approved to be known of good character were allowed to rent houses or apartments in their communities, unlike in the past." It was thus revealed that the estate agents played a crucial role in this regard. They introduced a verification form that must have the endorsement of a guarantor *who is known* before a tenant is given a house to rent. This strategy contributed greatly to making people extravigilant, contributing in no small measure to the suppression of the Boko Haram insurgency in Kano.

The community efforts were also acknowledged by the majority of people interviewed. For instance, a participant from FGD with security agents acknowledged that: "We have committees in various communities that voluntarily undertook surveillance and other vigilante activities... Estate agents initiated the use of screening form for renting a house or apartment to any stranger" (FGD, Security agent, Fagge, 2019). Another participant also believed one of the lessons to be learnt from Kano by people in other places who suffer from the Boko Haram insurgency, is the "community-police synergy". There was collaboration between the community leaders and the security agencies. Whenever the community leaders see (or

get report on) any suspicious movement, they inform the security who quickly mobilise (officers and men) to the locations to carry out their activity of dealing with the suspects.

The above descriptions show that there are important lessons to be learnt from the Kano experience, which include, but are not limited to, community participation, the readiness of the community members to share intelligence information with the police, the resistance of the extremists' ideology by the youth, sensitisation efforts by the traditional leaders, and active involvement of estate agents. Findings also show that community passivity in the fight against insurgency may compromise the efforts of security agencies to contend with Boko Haram. Notwithstanding the efforts of the community members, governments at all levels have also played a pivotal role.

5.3 Assessment of Government Efforts towards Addressing the Insurgency

In general, the effort of government, at all levels, to end the Boko Haram conflict cannot be overemphasised. For instance, it is generally believed by respondents that some of the measures put in place by the government have complemented the community efforts in suppressing Boko Haram insurgency in Kano and Northeast at large. The deployment of a handful of military and other security forces to the affected states, the relocation of the military command centre to Maiduguri, and the border closure were identified as part of the efforts and commitments of the federal government to contain the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria. These efforts of the federal government were acknowledged by even the security agents, as some participants of an FGD with security agents admitted that "it was in its commitment to eradicate the insurgency that the new government relocated the Defense Headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri to squarely deal with the problem. But there is still a need to put more effort" (FGD, Security Officer, Gwale, 2019). Another participant added that "it is part of

government's effort; the idea of border closure… is done with a view to not only stop the importation of rice and other commodities but also improve on the security of the nation as BH get weapons through the land borders" (FGD, Security Officer, Fagge, 2019).

Even the state government too had contributed to the successes recorded in Kano, perhaps the policy initiatives by the government to create awareness and put in place some strong community-based measures in collaboration with citizens to make the environment unfriendly for the insurgents. Supporting this majority view, a participant of an FGD session noted that:

> [The] state government had carried out sensitisation and enlightenment trainings to landlords and caretakers on how to identify who to rent their houses to, and how to report some suspicious movements or arrival of suspected people within their vicinity (FGD, Youth leader, Gwale, 2019).

In spite of the above efforts, some of the respondents alleged that there are loopholes in the security agencies as Boko Haram, too, have its informants that work for it in various government agencies. A participant of an FGD for leaders of women groups noted that:

> The federal government is trying but it is the security forces that have problem. There are loopholes within the security, the military. Because some captured BH members used to state that within the security agents some supply them with food, weapons and secret of where to go for the daily operations. …the insurgents have their own informants within the security circle that provide intelligent report for them (FGD, Woman leader, Uguwa Uku, Kumbotso, 2019).

There were also allegations in some quarters that the Boko Haram conflict has been politicised. From the findings, it is argued that the efforts of the government have been troubled by political saboteurs. For instance, a respondent interviewed alleged that:

> ...the federal government is doing its best, only that some people hijacked the effort and make it so political. That is why the federal government is finding it very difficult to deal with the situation. But, to my own understanding, we have been hearing a lot of budgets and other good things the federal government has been trying to do. So, to me, they are doing their best, only that they need to do more (KII, Christian leader, Sabon Gari, Fagge, 2019).

The above positions have shown that both federal and state governments have been actively committed to seeing the end of Boko Haram insurgency in Kano State, in particular, and Nigeria at large. Although problems such as those posed by saboteurs within the security agencies and the activities of political miscreants exist, the governments have remained committed and focused on their efforts to end the inferno of Boko Haram in the country.

5.4 Possibility of Dialogue and Reconciliation as Alternative to Resolving the Insurgency

Dialogue has been one of the most effective techniques used for conflict resolutions, not only in Nigeria but the world over. The study found that the use of force is not the only option to end the Boko Haram crisis. This is because a lot of lives have been lost and property damaged, no thanks to the government's emphasis on the military option. It was believed that dialogue is a key alternative to end Boko Haram in Nigeria, as it allows the conflicting parties to understand the needs and expectations of the insurgents, which can facilitate the healing process of the wounds that generated such rebellion. This perhaps explains why most of the respondents for this study emphasised the use of dialogue as a complementary mechanism to end the Boko Haram conflict in the Northeast. For example, in an FGD with CSO activists, one of the respondents argued that: "the insurgents cannot be defeated using only the military force. There is a need to interface dialogue with the BH. There is need also to engage women in FGDs, as they have

influence over their children, who are mostly recruited into the insurgency" (FGD, CSO, Nasarawa, 2019).

An Islamic scholar also highlighted the importance of dialogue in dealing with ideologically based struggles. According to him, ideas are better fought with ideas rather than weapons. In his words:

> The use of military cannot solve this problem at all, as it is an ideology. It is a thought which cannot be eradicated with the use of force. The only way to address this issue is to… use ideas to fight ideas. It is difficult to use force to fight belief reinforced with money and complicated ideologies. The problem can best be resolved through dialogue, if a forum will be opened to engage them and hear their demands, reasons and grievances, so that measures could be taken to address the issues raised (KII, Islamic Scholar, Rijiyar Zaki, Ungogo, 2019).

However, few respondents believed that dialogue in serious conflicts like Boko Haram may not be the best option. For instance, a security agent suggested to the people in the Northeast to embrace the Kano approach, as an alternative to dialogue, to end the crisis. He noted that:

> There is need to learn from Kano approach of engaging all stakeholders in a more collaborative effort. Because the issue (of Boko Haram) is so complicated in that it has an international dimension. Dialogue can only be possible with low profile insurgents who have not gone deep into the activities. If such category of people can be found and engaged in dialogue, the success can be achieved. But dialogue for reconciliation hardly yield the expected results when major leaders and commandants of the terrorist group are involved, as they have gone far and have some international backings (KII, Vigilante Group Hotoro, 2019).

From the above findings, it implies that dialogue can be an important instrument for reconciliation, but in addition to dialogue in the case of Boko Haram insurgency, there is always the need to

emphasise working collaboratively with the community leaders in the Northeast, just like what has happened in Kano during the time of Boko Haram conflict.

Thus, since dialogue was identified as important then the need for identifying the actors to be involved arises. Some of the key actors identified by the study include respected leaders in the community, traditional leaders, religious leaders, officials of the security agencies, government agencies, members of some CBOs like youth and women groups, and the leadership of the insurgent group itself.

5.5 Approaching the Insurgents for Dialogue and Reconciliation

Even if the government has resolved to use dialogue, logic should be used in approaching the insurgents and specific steps must be adhered to succeed. This has been the view of the majority of the respondents. For instance, a Muslim cleric suggested that for dialogue to be effective, the insurgents must be approached politely and most fairly. He stresses that:

> … government (must) listen to the insurgents. … their problems should be understood … They should be asked to suggest the best way to address their problems; then government should study the suggestions and see the possibilities of solving the problems. Government must ensure that all aspects of the agreement reached with the insurgents are respected and all promises fulfilled. There shouldn't be deception or betrayal on the part of the government (KII, Islamic Cleric, Rijiyar Zaki, Ungogo, 2019).

In a related scenario, a respondent recommended the adoption of snowballing method in which the reformed Boko Haram members could be used to reach out to the Boko Haram leadership. He suggests that: "the best way to approach them is to make use of the rehabilitated and repented members of the insurgent group (especially those) … recently released by the government. These

people know their leaders and can … facilitate the working of the dialoguing process." (KII, Member of Vigilante Group, Tsamiyar Boka, Hotoro, 2019).

Also, a security agent in an FGD session for security suggested for "separate dialogue" for the two factions of Boko Haram, as the best way to approach them. He advised that:

> The two factions of Shekau and Al-Barnawi can be engaged, but separately. If one is engaged and success was recorded by fulfilling all the promises and agreements reached, then the other faction will learn from that and surrender for the dialogue, believing that they will also be respected and given the same treatment (FGD, Security Agent, Fagge, 2019).

Although the demands of the insurgents may compete and/or be in disagreement with what the government wants, and the process of dialoguing with the insurgents may be risky and life-threatening, safeguarding conditions should be provided to guarantee safety for the participants. Even the meeting itself should be handled with utmost care and secrecy so that its content may not be prematurely released into the public domain to avoid unnecessary public discourse and debates on the subject. It was also recommended that security should be maximally provided to both parties involved, and the insurgents should not be allowed to come well-armed and with their followers. The venue should be made so friendly to both parties and for smooth conduct of the dialogue, and members should trust one another.

5.6 Key Findings

The followings were the key findings extracted from the study:

❖ It was found that the plan by Boko Haram to capture Kano was suppressed by a mixture of governments' commitment to end the crisis and the collaborative efforts of the community stakeholders (the federal government, the state government,

traditional and religious institutions, CSOs, estate agents, security agencies and the citizens).

❖ The use of neighbourhood security committees formed in Kano has proven to be a useful method in suppressing the activities of Boko Haram, even in the north-eastern states.

❖ Neighbourhood vigilantism, intelligence information sharing, and youths' resistance to the Boko Haram ideologies have been of profound influence on the suppression of the Boko Haram insurgency in Kano.

❖ The traditional institutions in collaboration with estate agents have contributed to making it difficult for the insurgents to get rented houses to be used as hideouts, an effort that assisted greatly in the suppression of the Boko Haram insurgency.

❖ The relocation of the military command centre to Maiduguri and the border closure policy were found to be of great help in the suppression of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

❖ The study has also found that dialogue with the insurgent is a better option for combating the Boko Haram crisis because ideas are better fought with ideas, not weapons. Thus, separate dialogues is suggested for the two factions of Boko Haram in which the insurgents' grudges will be heard and addressed, is useful in ending the crisis.

❖ The study has also identified ex-Boko Haram members recently rehabilitated by the government as an important instrument to be used as a link to the group's leadership.

❖ It was further established that the dialogue should be carried out with fairness, utmost privacy and security of the people involved and all agreements reached must be honoured by both the government and the insurgents.

❖ It was also stressed by the study that the participants of the dialogue might be at higher risk; therefore, modalities must be created to ensure their safety.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The effort of the government to maintain social order, which is part of its core responsibilities, has been disrupted by insurgent activities. Thousands of lives, of both civilians and security personnel, have been lost and a huge amount of money that could have been used for developmental projects were also budgeted for defence. In spite of the above, the effort of the government to end the crisis were far from being successful, especially in the Northeast, perhaps because too much emphasis was put on using the military option at the expense of dialogue and peaceful resolution of the conflict. The study thus concludes, that tremendous successes were recorded in the fight against insurgency, in Kano State, which could be attributed to the uniqueness of the approaches used which involved the collaborative efforts of the stakeholders (the government, the security agencies, traditional institutions and the people themselves, etc.) in the state to contend with Boko Haram insurgency. The study further concludes that the involvement of the citizens and the mobilisation of the youths against Boko Haram's ideologies could be instrumental to ending the crisis even in the Northeast. Finally, it was suggested that a combination of community collaboration with the security forces and the use of dialogue to address the grievances of the Boko Haram insurgents is very instrumental to ending the menace in the Northeast states and beyond.

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ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES AND RISKS OF DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION AS A PATHWAY TO ENDING THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

IBRAHIM MOHAMMED MACHINA

INTRODUCTION

The extremist group Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (commonly known as Boko Haram) has been unleashing violence in communities in Northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad region since 2009. Violence by the Boko Haram insurgents, as well as the counterterrorism measures by the Nigerian government, has left a high death toll and many incidences of human rights violations and abuses. This protracted conflict has made significant populations of the country vulnerable to forced displacement and has disrupted livelihoods and socio-economic activities for a long time by denying communities access to natural resources such as land for subsistence agriculture.

This has caused large-scale humanitarian crisis in the Northeast region of the country (Nagarajan, 2019). Thus, most communities often rely on humanitarian assistance from governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for their survival. As a result of the Boko Haram crisis, more than 37,000 people have lost their lives, an estimated 2.5 million have been displaced, while more than 10 million are in dire

need of humanitarian assistance,[127] including five million people who are suffering acute food insecurity and 490,000 malnourished children.[128]

The Boko Haram insurgency has exacerbated existing structural vulnerabilities in communities in Northeast Nigeria, especially among young people and women who have been facing unequal power and gender relations before the emergence of the insurgency. In communities in Northeast Nigeria, women and men experience the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency differently (Haynie, 2020). Scholars have argued that violent conflict and peacebuilding encompasses distinct gender dimensions and violent conflict often transforms gender relations in many ways that can empower or neglect women after the conflict (Krause, 2019). The situation is further worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures imposed by the government to manage and contain its spread (Wahito & Machina, 2020).

The Nigerian government and other non-state actors have responded to the Boko Haram insurgency primarily using a hard-power military approach. While these responses have recorded some successes against the insurgents, especially between 2016 and 2017, recent attacks by the insurgents in the Northeast indicate that Boko Haram is still active. These are proofs that the hard-power approach by the Nigerian security forces is inadequate and cannot establish sustainable peace. Against this background, to achieve sustainable peace in Northeast Nigeria, it is crucial to employ nonviolent conflict resolution measures, such as dialogue and negotiation, as a pathway to end the Boko Haram insurgency. However, some scholars and individuals think that government should not dialogue and negotiate with extremist groups because such action may lead to more violence and encourage the rise of other extremist groups. (Ibrahim, 2019; Jacob Victor & Zartman,

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[127] Nigeria Security Tracker, available at https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483, last visited 10 February 2020.

2009; Neumann Neumann, 2007; Hoffman, 2004).

This prerogative of non-dialogue and non-negotiation with terrorist and extremist groups emerged from a well-established policy in western Europe and has been commonly used by governments and elites around the world. For example, the G8 argued that democracy should not give in to extremism by rewarding extremist groups for their actions. That is why in 2013, the G8 tried to reach a global consensus to prohibit the use of negotiation and paying ransom to extremist groups (Neumann, 2007). Despite this objection against the use of dialogue and negotiation to end violent conflict and terrorism, experience has shown that in most instances, defeating terrorism with hard-power, military approach has proven to be ineffective(Cantey, 2018). For example, after more than a decade of counterterrorism efforts by the Nigerian government, the group continues to pose formidable threat to the human security of Nigerians.

This experience indicates that using coercive power alone cannot adequately address the threats of Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria. In addition, experience from other armed conflicts around the world such as in Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Somalia and Syria have shown that ending armed conflicts between states and violent groups usually requires a soft-power approach that focuses on nonviolent conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Olojo, 2019a). Moreover, the hypothesis that dialogue and negotiation with extremist groups breed more terrorism has been repeatedly challenged by many scholars (Olojo, 2019b; ICCT, 2011; Neumann, 2007). For example, Olivie Bangerter, who served as an advisor on dialogue with armed groups for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from 2008 to 2011, argued that negotiations with armed groups for humanitarian purposes take place regularly and are used for a

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[28] "Nigeria Humanitarian Response Strategy: January 2019", UNOCHA, December 2021.

variety of reasons. This has frequently led to improvements in human security at the local level. [129]

Scholars in support of dialogue and negotiation argued that governments can enhance non-violence by demanding that extremist groups should lay down their arms and engage in peace talks (Neumann, 2017). Thus, to establish sustainable peace in Northeast Nigeria, it is crucial to unpack and analyse the prospects of nonviolent conflict resolution such as dialogue and negotiation as measures to effectively address the Boko Haram insurgency.

Although, dialogue and negotiation with extremist groups is a sensitive and complex undertaking, it needs to be explored as a policy option that can complement existing counterterrorism approaches of the Nigerian government. In addition, response to violent extremism requires a coherent and robust response strategy that will address the structural challenges in the Northeast which made it possible for Boko Haram to emerge in the first place. This chapter is structured into six different sections and examines the prospect of engaging young people in addressing the challenges and risks of dialogue and negotiation as a pathway to end the Boko Haram insurgency.

The second section following this introduction discusses the methodology of the study. The third section conceptualises the concepts of dialogue and negotiation. The fourth section discusses the challenges and risks of promoting dialogue and negotiation for conflict resolution. The fifth section analyses the prospects of engaging young people in addressing the challenges and risks of dialogue and negotiation as a pathway to end the Boko Haram insurgency. The sixth section concludes this chapter and proposes coherent recommendations to help in resolving the conflict that has continued for over a decade.

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[129] Report from a seminar on "Negotiation with Terrorist Organisations" hosted by ICCT Hague.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter used qualitative approach, collecting data from desk study and key informant interviews (KIIs). The qualitative approach is relevant in this regard because it enabled the researcher to elicit responses from young people mainly through questions and observations. The researcher reviewed existing literature on dialogue and negotiation as approaches to conflict resolution before conducting key-informant interviews (KII) with young people in Northeast Nigeria. The KII enabled the researcher to gain insights and build on the information already available in the secondary literature.

The researcher ensured that the required ethical standards were adhered to during the interviews and the researcher has followed the key principles of conflict sensitivity, ethics and gender as emphasised by Moss (2018). For the literature review, relevant materials utilised include books, journal articles, reports, online publications and conference/events papers. The researcher ensured that the voices of young men and women, community members and other relevant voices in the communities are adequately captured.

CONCEPTUALISING DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

Dialogue is both a tool for communication and a process for transforming relationships. Harold Saunder defined it as a "process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn" (Saunders, 2009).

Dialogue provides an avenue for conflicting parties to deliberate on the root causes of their violent relationship and resolve them amicably.

Dialogue is framed in this chapter as a sustained process of transforming the conflictual relationship between the Nigerian government, Boko Haram and communities affected by the insurgency. Sustained dialogue as a process of conflict resolution paves way for negotiation. William Zartman defined negotiation as "the process of combining conflicting positions into a joint agreement" (Zartman, 2009).

Successful negotiation is a way of preventing or resolving conflict because most conflict in societies arises from irreconcilable positions shared by different actors. It becomes violent when one actor resorts to the use of coercive power to promote their position or agenda.

Key actors in conflict resort to negotiation when unilateral victory seems impossible and the cost of continued conflict is enormous. Negotiation is framed in the context of this paper as the process of resolving the Boko Haram insurgency by reducing and de-escalating violence which in turn, will lead to sustainable peace. It involves an exchange of influence rather than a unilateral victory because both sides must be willing to give something to get something. Negotiation is an essential step to reach a mutual agreement that leads to sustainable and perpetual peace in a given society (ibid.).

CHALLENGES AND RISKS OF PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

One major challenge for nonviolent resolution of the Boko Haram insurgency is how to encourage the rebuilding of relationships. How can the complex and controversial concepts of dialogue and negotiation be made meaningful in the context of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria? Some of the challenges and risks that led many scholars and individuals to object to the use of dialogue and negotiation to address violent extremism are multifaceted. Firstly,

negotiation is viewed by many as rewarding and reinforcing extremist actions.

Many individuals who lost their family members or relatives as a result of violence by the Boko Haram insurgents are too aggrieved and are calling for retributive justice. These individuals are of the view that since Boko Haram insurgents have killed thousands of innocent civilians and security forces and have destroyed people's sources of livelihood, "they do not deserve any mercy."[130] Like the military, these segments of society focus on achieving a victory rather than a joint solution. However, these respondents unanimously agreed that they want an end to the insurgency and that the current military approach is not effective in defeating the insurgents.

Secondly, they think that dialogue and negotiation may legitimise the activities of extremist groups and breed more violence. This may provide legitimacy to the insurgents and they may utilise dialogue to make demands that will strengthen their capacity such as demanding the release of their captured fighters or demanding financial reward. This may inspire more extremist groups or conflict entrepreneurs to use violence to achieve their objectives in the future. Thirdly, dialogue and negotiation may give armed groups a window of opportunity to recuperate, rearm and regroup for the next offensive. One interviewee narrated that "the challenges and risks attached to this approach is the credibility of the parties involved in the negotiation process, especially from the side of the insurgents. The group now lack unified, central leadership that will represent the interest of the whole group."[131] In March 2015, Boko Haram declared allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

However, by August 2016 the group splintered and its breakaway

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[130] KII, Damaturu, 2021

[131] KII, Damaturu, 2021

faction was recognised as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Boko Haram and ISWAP disagree on ideological issues and their modus operandi differs. For example, the Shekau faction of Boko Haram is more violent to communities in the Northeast, while ISWAP is less violent and more open to the idea of dialogue and negotiation. With this division, many individuals are claiming the leadership of the two factions. Since March 2019, after the reported death of Mamman Nur, ISWAP has reportedly been led by Abu Abdullah Ibn Umar al-Barnawi. Therefore, "unless the credibility of the leadership of Boko Haram is assured, this is a challenge to the prospects of dialogue and negotiation in resolving the insurgency."[132] It can also lead to a split within the ranks of the extremist groups between those who are in support of negotiation and hardliners who oppose any kind of leniency or compromise. Fourthly, dialogue and negotiation hinder the prospects for transitional justice.

As mentioned above, some segments of society are demanding the prosecution of the insurgents who killed their people and destroyed their livelihoods. However, when asked about the issue of retributive justice as demanded by some community members, one interviewee argued that there is a need to focus on building sustainable peace now and discuss the punishment of perpetrators later. He argued that without peace, we cannot punish the perpetrators.[133] Scholars such as William Zartman also argued that dialogue and punishment for violent atrocities need not be mutually exclusive (Zartman, 2009). The benefits and advantages of resolving violent conflict using dialogue and negotiation outweigh its risks and challenges. There is a need to focus on building peace now and demand justice later because, without peace, retributive justice cannot take place.[134] Because, while the

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[132] KII, Damaturu, 2021
[133] KII, Damaturu, 2021
[134] KII, Damaturu, 2021

military approach may solve the conflict, however, it often tends not to address the entire problem.

The military approach also leads to increased violence including violation of human rights and abuses, gender-based violence, and corruption. An effective response to violent extremism requires a coherent and robust response strategy that will address the structural challenges in the Northeast which made it possible for Boko Haram to emerge in the first place. One interviewee narrated that "despite the atrocities done by the insurgents, they are in support of dialogue and negotiation if it will lead to the restoration of peace and stability in the Northeast." Another interviewee added that it is widely known that the adoption of brute force or military action by the Federal Government of Nigeria has proved ineffective in defeating the Boko Haram insurgency. Therefore, it is expedient to resort to dialogue and negotiation as a strategy to address the insurgency.[135] This segment of the society includes young people such as students, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), hunters group, vigilante, religious and traditional leaders, academia and civil society members.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES AND RISKS OF DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION AS A PATHWAY TO END THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY.

Young people have contributed to countering violent extremism and conflict resolution in the past. The focus on young people stems largely from the demographic reality of youthful populations voicing their agendas through both violent and nonviolent processes. In the context of Northeast Nigeria, most young people have proven to be important drivers and agents of peace by actively working to build sustainable peace in the region (Machina, 2020).

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[135] KII, Damaturu, 2021

There are diverse and vast advantages of engaging young people in nonviolent conflict resolution processes. These advantages are derived from the unique position of young people in society that places them in a better position to address some of the challenges and risks of employing dialogue and negotiation in resolving the insurgency. Engaging young people and youth-led organisations in peacebuilding efforts may inspire a sense of commitment and engagement to peacebuilding to transform conflictual relations between the Nigerian government, communities in the epicentre of the crisis and Boko Haram. This, in turn, will transform violent relations into a peaceful one. There are various specific roles young people can play in resolving the Boko Haram insurgency. These can be categorised into community advocacy, mediation and peace-making, as well as research and training.

Community Advocacy, young people should be engaged as catalysts for empowering other vulnerable youths, re-establishing the strained relationship between communities and governments, and transforming unjust social structures.

Young people should be engaged in community advocacy and campaign about the use of dialogue to promote sustainable peace. Involving all segments of society is key to resolving the Boko Haram insurgency and establishing sustainable peace. This means that both an official peace agreement between governments and Boko Haram and changing the mind frame of the population at the community level is necessary. While dialogue and negotiation are desirable processes, they will be more successful when there is eagerness, willingness, motivation and genuine commitment from all the actors involved in the conflict to pursue peace. This is important in resolving conflict and peacebuilding.

More so, in many instances, negotiations are mostly not initiated by the key actors involved in the conflict. In this context, young people are crucial in reaching out to the government and communities in the hotspots of the crisis in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states,

to make them appreciate the need for peaceful resolution of this protracted conflict. By building bridges at the local level, it will lay the foundation for a high success rate of dialogue with the Nigerian government, representatives of these affected communities and the extremist groups. Building bridges between the perpetrators and their victims will minimise the victim's feelings of injustice and the social exclusion of perpetrators.

The dialogue process must be sincere, inclusive and solution-oriented to rebuild the trust necessary to restore peace. Mutual suspicion and fear exist between the key actors involved in resolving the Boko Haram insurgency, so the trust deficit between the government and the citizens, and between the government and Boko Haram must be addressed to effectively end this conflict. To address the growing mistrust between citizens and government, young people should advocate for the use of dialogue to end the insurgency. Through sustained advocacy and sensitisation campaigns, young people would educate the relevant actors involved in this conflict who are sceptical about the adoption of a nonviolent approach in resolving the conflict. This public enlightenment will rouse public support for dialogue and negotiation and will address the challenges of mistrust, fear and misunderstanding between government and citizens and between government and armed groups.

Mediation and Peace-Making, young people, together with religious and traditional leaders, should be engaged in keeping communication channels open, act as a go-between, facilitate back-channel negotiations and identify mutual problems that hinder dialogue and negotiation between government, communities and the insurgents. Communication is the process of transmitting messages between two or more actors – and keeping communication channels open is crucial in dialogue and negotiation. Effective conflict resolution involves constant communication between the key actors involved in the conflict and

its resolution. While "ripeness" theory provides an important key to the decision to negotiate, it is dependent on perception, a condition that parties to conflict often cannot achieve alone.

Most dialogue and negotiations are usually facilitated with the help of a third party not directly involved in the conflict. Third parties are individuals who have credibility in the eyes of the warring parties and are often better situated to open channels for the peace process and pursue the key actors to realise the need and opportunity to negotiate. When successful, mediation may "soften up" the parties, promote diplomacy, and be instrumental in achieving a cessation of hostilities, peace agreement, or full settlement of a conflict (Bercovitch, 2009). Mediation may be effective in bringing the government and the insurgents together to resolve the conflict and transform conflictual relations (ibid.).

Young people should be engaged to enable the Nigerian government and communities in the Northeast to reach an agreement of nonviolent resolution of the crisis. Peter Northouse defines leadership as the process of influencing people to achieve a shared goal (Northouse, 2016). Youth leaders, including women groups, religious and traditional leaders usually enjoyed greater legitimacy and creditability in communities affected by the Boko Haram violence because religion plays an important role in Northern Nigeria. They are highly revered and respected as custodians of moral and spiritual guides. Due to this legitimacy and credibility they enjoy, they hold a unique advantage in ending the insurgency.

In addition, young people are crucial in addressing the challenges of exclusion in the dialogue and negotiation process. There is a wide assumption that there are two main actors in the conflict: the government and the insurgents. This led to the exclusion of one of the key actors, the affected communities and their religion and tradition. The role of community is very crucial for successful

conflict resolution and reintegration. Victims and perpetrators in war-affected communities are required to begin the formidable task of reconciling with one another and come to terms with the legacies of the past.

Thus, religion and tradition in conflict resolution would enable young people to integrate values such as love, tolerance, forgiveness and justice to emphasise the importance of peace, reconciliation, tolerance and coexistence. These values guide young people and inspire them to foster interconnectedness between the victims and the perpetrators by invoking the divine within them. Since Boko Haram used religious traditions as the basis of legitimacy of their atrocities, young people should engage religious leaders to sensitise the public using religious principles and values such as mercy, forgiveness, patience and predestination.[136] This can be done by replacing violence using religion with a culture of peace through capitalising on religio-cultural symbols, values, traditions, and examples. This will enable young people to facilitate programmes that will help in mitigating and healing past traumas and deep injuries which are key to the transformation of the conflict into peaceful relations. Understanding how Boko Haram used religious traditions and identities to promote the culture of violence is relevant in transforming the conflict and building peace.

Bringing in religious resources may contribute to the effective resolution of the conflict by including social, moral and spiritual resources in the negotiation process. This will also bring legitimacy to the dialogue and negotiation process that will encourage engagement with the insurgents. Framing the dialogue and negotiation process within religious narratives would make it possible for young people to gain access and increase their potential impact on the government, aggrieved community members and the insurgents.

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[136] KII, Damaturu, 2021

Many respondents were too aggrieved and thus sceptical about the idea of dialogue and negotiation with the insurgents.[137] These individuals and their families have experienced horrible and violent atrocities done by the insurgents. However, incorporating religious traditions in nonviolent conflict resolution will enable young people to utilise vast and established values and principles that emphasise forgiveness, mercy, harmony and peaceful coexistence. These values would provide a moral framework and inform attitudes that would be relevant in the peaceful resolution of the conflict. These well-established religious values can be used by young people as powerful sources of inspiration to engage communities and resolve the conflict using nonviolent means.

Research and Training, young people should be engaged in conflict transformation by reaching out to the community through training, workshops, seminars, and other social activities to pioneer the need for communities to accept dialogue and bring people together across religious and ethnic lines, to develop a nuanced understanding of each other's perspectives.

Through policy-oriented research, young people should produce policy briefs and policy documents to decision-makers and the general public on the imperative of nonviolent conflict resolution. Young people should utilise research outcomes to advance religious tradition and educate and sensitise aggrieved community members about the culture of forgiveness and mercy to enable them to accept the idea of dialogue and negotiation to end the Boko Haram conflict. This should also be used by young people in training, motivating and empowering religiously-oriented communities towards peace. Young people with experience in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts incorporate these outcomes to conflict resolution in their modules and guides when preparing, training and equipping conflict practitioners with the requisite skills and

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[137] KII, Damaturu, 2021

knowledge necessary to facilitate meaningful dialogue and negotiation and set them for much more proactive roles in transforming the conflict. This would be effective in transforming the Boko Haram conflict dynamic in Northeast Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

There are diverse and vast advantages of engaging young people in nonviolent conflict resolution processes. These advantages are derived from the unique position of young people in Northeast Nigeria that places them in a better position to address some of the challenges and risks of employing dialogue and negotiation in resolving the insurgency. Engaging young people and youth-led organisations in peacebuilding efforts may inspire a sense of commitment and engagement to nonviolent conflict resolution that would transform conflictual relations between the Nigerian government, communities affected by the crisis and the Boko Haram insurgents. This chapter examined the prospect of engaging young people in addressing the challenges and risks of dialogue and negotiation as a pathway to ending the Boko Haram insurgency.

This chapter critiqued the prerogative of non-dialogue and non-negotiation with terrorist and extremist groups which emerged from a well-established western policy. This school of thought believes that government should not dialogue and negotiate with extremist groups because such action may lead to more violence and encourage the rise of other extremist groups. While acknowledging that the hard-power, military approach has its place on the battlefield, the adoption of unconventional methods such as dialogue and negotiation to address unconventional warfare is inevitable. The benefits and advantages of resolving violent conflict using dialogue and negotiation outweigh its risks and challenges.

This chapter argued that employing dialogue and negotiations in the pursuit of sustainable peace and stability is a positive step to end

the Boko Haram insurgency. Furthermore, there are various, specific roles which young people can be engaged in to address the challenges and risks of dialogue and negotiation in resolving the Boko Haram insurgency, such as **advocacy**, **mediation** and **research**. As mediators and advocates, young people lay the foundation for high success rate of dialogue through public enlightenment that will rouse public support for dialogue and negotiation. This, in turn, would address the challenges of mistrust, fear and misunderstanding between government, citizens and Boko Haram. Therefore, to effectively address the Boko Haram insurgency and pursue sustainable peace in Northeast Nigeria, this chapter recommends the following:

Firstly, there is a need to adopt dialogue and negotiation as policy options to complement the existing counterterrorism approaches of the Nigerian government. Secondly, there is a need to adopt a coherent and robust response strategy that will address the structural challenges in the Northeast which made it possible for Boko Haram to emerge in the first place. This can be achieved by investing in social and economic development in vulnerable communities in Northeast Nigeria that have been devastated by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Thirdly, engaging young people as critical stakeholders in facilitating dialogue and negotiation would lead to the restoration of peace and stability in the Northeast. Therefore, policy-makers and relevant stakeholders should engage young people in the design of policy at the local and national level and carrying out corresponding action plans is key to creating a sense of agency and a voice that prevents young people from joining extremist groups. Fourth, a report of the various committees set up by the Federal Government of Nigeria, such as the Galtimari and Turaki committees, to look into root causes of violent extremism and other armed conflicts should be implemented. Fifth, the government should engage young people and religious leaders to educate the public to support

nonviolent conflict resolution, and collaborate to address violent extremism. Lastly, influential young people should be identified by the government to enhance their capacity as peer influencers and positive role models for the value reorientation of the youth.

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CHAPTER 6

ROLES OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION AS A PATHWAY TO ENDING THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

CHRIS M.A. KWAJA, PHD. & MS NDIDI ANYANWU

INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram, has embarked on a violent campaign against the Nigerian state and its neighbours. Although the group began its activities in 2002 by condemning Muslims in Northeast Nigeria for engaging in religious practices they described as un-Islamic, members of Boko Haram were nonviolent until the 2009 violent crackdown by officers of the Nigerian military, resulting in the arrest and murder of some of its members and the extra-judicial killing of the sect leader Mohammed Yusuf in police custody.[138] Yusuf's death embittered members of the sect and triggered anger and hatred for security operatives, all of which led to violent attacks against the police, military and civilians.

Abubakar Shekau succeeded Muhammad Yusuf as Boko Haram's leader. From 2010, he revolutionised the insurgent group's activities by incorporating clandestine activities that use the strategy of

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[138] Onuoha, Freedom C.; Oyewole, Samuel (2018): Anatomy of Boko Haram: The Rise and Decline of a Violent Group in Nigeria. (Aljazeera Centre for Studies Report). URL: http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/04/ anatomy-boko-haram-rise-decline-violent-group-nigeria-180422110920231.html

insurgency and terrorism. In 2016, Boko Haram split into two groups – the main faction led by Abubakar Shekau and the IS-afflicted Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Both groups' ideology is often described as comprising two stances – rejection of the western style of education and opposition to democracy.[139]

The terror unleashed by these groups on the population has been devastating. Over 40,000 people have been killed,[140] while more than 2 million displaced since the insurgency began.[141] Between January and November 2020, the group carried out 142 attacks in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. About 1,606 people lost their lives from these attacks.[142] Although the Nigerian military has regained control of most communities in the region, the impact of the prolonged battle on civilians, especially women and children, questions the effectiveness of efforts to mitigate the violence and address the key drivers.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions 1325 notes that women and children account for most of those negatively affected during armed conflicts and are increasingly targeted by combatants.[143] Women in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have paid a heavy price for Boko Haram violence. Women continue to experience grave violations of human rights, widespread sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, displacement, and psychological abuses. While the insurgents kill mainly men, their

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[139] British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (December, 25, 2020). Boko Haram kills villagers in Christmas Eve attack. Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55448105

[140] Council on Foreign Relation (2021). Nigeria Security Tracker. Available at https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

[141] UNHCR (2021) Nigeria Emergency. Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html

[142]Reliefweb (2020). Boko Haram Fatalities in 2020, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BH2020.pdf.

[143] UN Security Council, S/RES/1325, 31 October 2000

core strategy is the abduction of women.[144] At least 2,000 women and girls were kidnapped between January 2014 and April 2015.[145] The loss of family breadwinners has also forced many to assume the responsibility as heads of households. Despite making up half of Nigeria's population and experiencing violent conflicts in their homes and communities, women and girls have a limited role in building peace.

Women are very important in easing tensions, promoting dialogue and negotiation. Yet, they are constantly left out in official peace process at every level, despite the plethora of studies showing that women's participation in dialogue and negotiation improves the likelihood of reaching a lasting peace agreement.[146] In this sense, women's contribution reinforces post-conflict recovery, and their political participation is associated with a lower risk of conflict relapse.[147]

The historical, political, economic, religious and ethnic dimensions of the Boko Haram insurgency have been investigated,[148] as well as the motivations and capabilities of various key actors in the insurrection. While the insurgency's impact on women has also

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[144]International Crisis Group. (2016). Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency, Report 242. Accessed March 2, 2021, available at: https://d2071andvip0wj. cloudfront.net/242-nigeria-women-and-the-boko-haram%20Insurgency.pdf

[145] Julia Bicknell (2020). Boko Haram has killed more than Islamic State in Iraq and Syria combined. Available at https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2020/07/boko-haram-has-killed-more-than-islamic-state-in-iraq-and-syria-combined/

[146]Jamille, B & Delphi, C. (2020). Women should be at the center of Afghan peace talks. CNN. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleaveland/index.html

[147]Jamille, B & Delphi, C. (2020). Women should be at the center of Afghan peace talks. CNN. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleaveland/index.html

[148]Omenma, J. (2020). Untold Story of Boko Haram Insurgency: The Lake Chad Oil and Gas Connection. *Politics and Religion, 13*(1), 180-213.

[149]Amao, O. (2020). A decade of terror: revisiting Nigeria's interminable Boko Haram insurgency. *Secur J* **33,** 357–375.

been examined,[150] very little attention is dedicated to women's role in promoting peace. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to fill this gap by providing evidence-based research on women's role in promoting dialogue and negotiation as a pathway to end the Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria.

This study is structured in the following subsections: the first section begins with the paper's background. The second section focuses on the conceptual clarifications of insurgency, dialogue, negotiation, and the relationship between women's role in dialogue and negotiation. The third section is the methodological approach. The fourth section examines the current state of the Boko Haram insurgency. The fifth section analyses women's role in dialogue and negotiation, focusing on Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Insurgency

The concept of insurgency has been subjected to not only different interpretations but misinterpretations by scholars and researchers. A critical interrogation of the existing literature reveals the use of the concept as the same as terrorism. For example, politicians and researchers fail to draw a clear distinction between insurgency and other types of political violence such as terrorism.[151] In other instances, while engaging the concept of insurgency, some scholars overlook the responsibility of conceptualising it within its usage framework. These interpretations have caused some people to consider some insurgent groups as terrorists. However, it is important to conceptualise insurgency within an uprising

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[150] Alhaji Ali, Mustapha & Ahmad Zakuan, Ummu Atiyah & Ahmad, Mohammad. (2018). The Negative Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on Women and Children in Northern Nigeria: An Assessment. American International Journal of Social Science Research. 3. 27-33. 10.46281/aijssr.v3i1.141.

[151] Merari, Ariel. (1993). 'Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 213–251.

framework to steer clear of misunderstandings created by some researchers.

Insurgency is defined as "a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organisations."[152] Insurgent groups in different parts of the world share important characteristics. First, the major goal of insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram, is to gain control of a population or a particular territory. Secondly, insurgent groups are organised movements – in which their activities lead to prolonged violent conflict. Another goal of insurgents is to overthrow the constituted government or change the political order as previously emphasised by Boko Haram leaders. The means through which insurgent groups achieve their aims are through subversion, armed conflict, sustained violence, social disruption and political actions.[153] These characteristics and goals separate insurgent groups from terrorist organisations.

The insurgent group known as Boko Haram is an Islamic religious sect that derived its name from Hausa language, which means "western education is forbidden." The group is popularly known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, Arabic, for the "people who are committed to propagating the teachings of Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) and Jihad."[154] The name Boko Haram describes the insurgent group's contention: western civilisation represented by its secular

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[152] United States Government (2012). Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency. Available at https://www.hsdl.org/c/

[153] Jason Rineheart (2010). Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency. Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol 4, No 5 Terrorism Research Initiative and the Center for Terrorism and Security Studies. Available at http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/122.pdf

[154] Ahmed Aliyu (2015). Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria. Available at http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/47778.

education is a sin and prohibited to believers of Islam. Boko Haram is one of the most prominent security threats in the history of Nigeria. The insurgent group "operates based on Quranic verse which states that: anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors."[155] Therefore, based on its understanding of this and several other verses of the Qur'an the group encourages its supporters not to participate in social and political events with any relationship with western civilisation. Utilising an armed group that is subverting the legitimacy of the Nigerian state, Boko Haram exemplifies an insurgent group.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an essential concept in human relations as people are in constant communication with one another. As women in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states are currently witnessing Boko Haram violence, how they respond to conflicting views is vital for managing the protracted conflict. Scholars, researchers and international institutions have presented different opinions on the meaning of dialogue. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) defined dialogue as "a form of communication (most often linguistic, though not always) occurring when participants, having their perspectives, yet recognise the existence of other, different perspectives, remaining open to learning about them."[156] The international organisation outlined speaking and listening as the requirement for dialogue, specified as talking about own concerns, ideas, interests and passions, further listening to the others. UNESCO emphasised that dialogue is an initial and essential step for reaching an agreement or compromise.[157] The main goal is to

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[155] Ahmed Aliyu (2015). *Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria.* Available at http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ass/article/view/47778

[156] UNESCO (2013). *Intercultural Competences. Conceptual and Operational Framework.* Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, Bureau for Strategic Planning. 7 Place Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.

[157] Ibid.

understand the opinion of a rival party. The main attribute of dialogue is to listen before speaking, to understand the other person better.

Negotiation

The concept of negotiation has been examined extensively in the literature, and the meaning varies from one author to another. However, what is certain among the existing explanation is that there is no comprehensive conceptualisation that grasps the entire components of negotiation. As Mayer puts it, negotiation is "an interaction in which people try to meet their needs or accomplish their goals by reaching an agreement with others who are trying to get their own needs met."[158] This definition captures the central idea of a negotiation process by identifying three essential components: two parties, needs/goals, and the need for finding an agreement. These components are the key elements of negotiation. Negotiation has also been defined as a search for an outcome that is adequately suitable to both parties.[159] Despite the variations in these definitions, it is crucial to understand that the parties involved in negotiation have the opportunity to engage in constructive interaction and improve each other's conditions.

RESEARCHING DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION ROLE OF WOMEN

Existing studies on women in conflict situations have focused mainly on the role of women as victims of sexual violence, rather than women as actors for peace.[160] Some studies have examined women as victims of displacement,[161] while others have interrogated

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[158] Mayer, B., (2000). *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[159] Weber, Thomas (1991). *Conflict Resolution and Gandhian Ethics*. The Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi.

[160] Isolde, T (2018). Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Inclusion of Gender Provisions. Master's thesis, Department of Government, Uppsala University.

[161] Tickner, J.A. (2001), "Gendering world politics: issues and approaches in the post-Cold War era", Columbia University Press, New York.

the role of women in peacebuilding.[162] These studies employed different processes that include a different population of women.

However, following several global declarations calling for women inclusion in dialogue and negotiation, more interest is being paid to the role of women in peace processes. In 2000, the United Nations passed the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), emphasising the importance of gender perspective and gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding. The UNSCR 1325 was the first significant global effort that advocated for women's inclusion in the peace process. After this resolution, there was a UN Study on Women, Peace and Security in 2002. This was followed by more robust resolutions from the international body, including UNSCR 1820, UNSCR 1888, UNSCR 1889, UNSCR 1960, and UNSCR 2106.[163] These resolutions focus on several roles women play in peace processes.

Interrogation of the existing literature suggests that women have been involved in 27% of peace agreements globally since the resolutions were adopted. While this figure represents a tangible increase compared to the number realised before peace agreements between 1990 and 2000, it shows the marginalisation level women still experience in dialogue and negotiation processes worldwide.[164] Although the gaps in women's involvement in peace processes remain significant, there are a plethora of studies showing that women's participation in dialogue and negotiation improves the

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[162] Stone, L. (2014). "Women Transforming Conflict: A Quantitative Analysis of Female Peacemaking". Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2485242

[163] Dong Jin (2019). Beyond identity lines: women building peace in Northern Ireland and the Korean peninsula. Asia Europe Journal (2020) 18:463–478, available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00551-5

[164] Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). Preventing Conflict, Transforming Peace, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. New York: UN Women.

likelihood of reaching lasting peace agreements.[165] However, there is a growing body of literature showing that the activities performed by women in dialogue and negotiation are from a feminist perspective.[166] Scholars who supported this view argue that women's dialogue and negotiation activities are not primarily motivated by their instincts but in response to violent situations driven by masculinity.[167]

Generally, conceptual and theoretical discussions on women's role in promoting dialogue and negotiation have focused on women's activities in encouraging peace in post-conflict environments. While mentioning some of the activities, Schirch and Sewak reveal that women wage conflict nonviolently, build capacity, reduce direct violence and transform relationships. Their study indicates that women work as peace advocates, human rights activists, peace mediators, relief aid workers, and counsellors.[168]

Following the fall of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in 2011, the role of women in mediation process came to the fore in the Libyan democratic transition. Issues of political exclusion, struggle for legitimacy, weak federal government and decentralized power centres, and recurrent armed attacks led to widespread violence,[169] culminating in the second Libyan civil war in 2014. The lack of

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[165] Jamille, B & Delphi, C. (2020). Women should be at the center of Afghan peace talks. CNN. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleaveland/index.html

[166] Olofsson, L (2018). Women's role in Peace Processes: A comparative study of women's participation in the peace processes in Africa and Western Asia. Linnaeus University, Sweden. Available at http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1179606&dswid=-2641

[167] Dong Jin (2019). Beyond identity lines: women building peace in Northern Ireland and the Korean peninsula. Asia Europe Journal (2020) 18:463–478, available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-019-00551-5

[168] Schirch, L & Sewak, M (2005). "The role of women in peacebuilding", *Issue Paper, Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. European Center for Conflict Prevention, Utrecht*.

[169] Christopher, S. C, Keith, C., Peter, M., Jeffrey M. (2012). "Libya's Post-Qaddafi Transition: The Nation-Building Challenge". Available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR100/RR129/RAND_RR129.pdf

representation stifled various formal talks and actions to resolve the armed struggle and unite the country. However, the critical role community leaders, especially women leaders, play in endearing a bottom-up approach to peace and promotion of inclusion is highlighted in the mediation efforts of tribal groups under the auspices of the National Movement for Libya (NML), which has been working since 2015.[170] Historically, Libyan women were left out of formal decision-making.[171] Male elders who often represent the communities in the decision-making process refused to allow women to participate in dialogue and negotiation processes until the women came under an umbrella, the National Movement for Libya.[172] One of the reconciliation initiatives of the women is the setting up of mobile tents in conflict communities. According to Aïssata Athie the idea was to bring women from rival tribes, especially those who lost their husbands and family relatives, into one place and form bonds to facilitate dialogue and negotiation and search for lasting peace.[173]

In Zimbabwe, women are involved in promoting dialogue and negotiating at both the local and national levels. For instance, part of women's roles at the community level include promoting peace between rival groups in the villages through women's peace clubs and women peace groups in churches. These women got their

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[170] Athie, A (2017) "Women, Tribal Leaders Key to Rebuilding Libyan State", *The Global Observatory*. Available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/04/libya-peacebuilding-government-national-accord-haftar-gaddafi/

[171] Council on Foreign Relations. (2022). Women's Participation in Peace Processes: Libya Case Study. Available at https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/libya-4

[172] Larsson, D. K, & Mannergren, S. J (2014), "Gender and Transition in Libya Mapping Women's Participation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction", *The Swedish Institute of International Affairs.*

[173] Athie, A (2017) "Women, Tribal Leaders Key to Rebuilding Libyan State", *The Global Observatory*. Available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/04/libya-peacebuilding-government-national-accord-haftar-gaddafi/

[174] UN Women (2014). "Zimbabwean Women in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Past Experience and Future Opportunities", *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*.

legitimacy through the church and often engaged in activities tailored towards community healing and reconciliation.[174] Also, the women working at the grassroots level sometimes partner with non-governmental organisations to enhance women's status in society. Women's Action Group (WAG) has worked with women in rural communities in Zimbabwe by training them on dialogue and negotiation skills to help address domestic conflicts.[175] At the national level, the women adopted a resolution demanding a minimum of 30% representation within the government's executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The demand was made before the signing of the peace agreement.[176] These positive results hinge on the inclusion of women in dialogue and mediation processes.

To ensure the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, UN Women worked with the federal government of Nigeria and three Northern state governments (Adamawa, Plateau and Gombe). *Promoting Women's Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria* was a 4-year initiative (2014-2018).[177] By the end of the programme, women were engaged in peace and security by traditional and community leaders in 64 communities, in both formal and informal settings. In Gombe, 50 women served as titleholders to provide strategic advice and support conflict resolution and decision-making – an unusual fate in most parts of Nigeria, especially the north. Increased representation of women in leadership, decision-making, peace and security, is attributed to the programme.

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[175] Rukuni, T, Shanyisa, W, Madhuku, J, Maxwell, C. C. M, (2016). "Enhancing women participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes in Zimbabwean rural communities", *Public Policy Adm*, Vol. 6, No, 9.

[176] UN Women (2014)."Zimbabwean Women in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding: Past Experience and Future Opportunities", *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*.

[177] UN Women (2018) "Promoting Women's Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria." Accessed March 2 2021, available at: https://www2.unwomen.org//media/field%20office%20africa/attachments/publications/2017/04/northern%20nigeria%20women%20peace%20and%20security%20program.pdf?la=en&vs=5907

METHODOLOGY

This study is derived from a comprehensive review of the secondary data from a wide range of sources, including academic literature, local media news, national reports, international and civil society reports, non-governmental organisations reports, and other reports attributable to the Boko Haram insurgency.

THE CURRENT STATE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

Nigeria government officials have, on many occasions, claimed victory against Boko Haram. The recent political leader to repeat this position is the Minister of Information, Lai Mohammed. The Minister reiterated the government's longstanding position that the insurgent group was "technically defeated.[178] To a certain extent, the Information Minister has a point. There is no denying the fact that Boko Haram has been assaulted and factionalised. The insurgent group controls less territory and has killed fewer persons than it did in 2014 and 2015 when the group was declared the world's deadliest terrorist organisation by international institutions.

However, the claims of victory against Boko Haram by the Nigerian government are untimely. The insurgent group is still very much active in northeast Nigeria, especially across the BAY states. In 2019 alone, the group caused 750 security force causalities.[179] The recent killing of 43 farmers in Borno state is one of the deadliest attacks in years, indicating that the counterinsurgency responses are not working.[180]

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[178] Nathaniel Allen (2019). How Boko Haram Has Regained the Initiative And What Nigeria Should Do To Stop It. War on Rocks, available at https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/how-boko-haram-has-regained-the-initiative-and-what-nigeria-should-do-to-stop-it/

[179] Ibid.

[180] Maram Mahdi (2020). Time to consider talks with Boko Haram? Relief web, available at https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/time-consider-talks-boko-haram.

Sustained violence in the three key states has resulted in a massive loss of lives, forced displacement and widespread humanitarian crisis. The former Nigeria Army Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, at a meeting with state governors, security personnel, civil society, academics, traditional rulers, and community leaders, admitted that defeating Boko Haram will take longer than anticipated.[181]

The federal government of Nigeria has leveraged the military, alongside other law enforcement institutions, to counter the Boko Haram threat. Hence, numerous exercises have been launched by the Nigerian Army in the Northeast for this purpose – Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Restore Order, Operation Boyona, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Positive Identification, Operation Last Hold, and Operation Rattle Snake. The government has also expanded the scope of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to include the fight against terrorism. MNJTF consists of Nigeria's neighbours – Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. These efforts have been augmented by voluntary policing groups in Nigeria such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Vigilante Group of Nigeria, Hunters Association, and Pulaaku Brigade.

The Nigeria military and the MNJTF have won various battles against the insurgent group. They have been able to kill some Boko Haram fighters and repelled attacks from the group, but they have not won the peace. Consequently, the insurgency continues. Regrettably, the counterterrorism approach has continued to cause human rights violations. In their latest report, Amnesty International reveals how Boko Haram and the Nigerian military

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[181] Nathaniel Allen (2019). How Boko Haram Has Regained The Initiative And What Nigeria Should Do To Stop It. War on Rocks, available at https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/how-boko-haram-has-regained-the-initiative-and-what-nigeria-should-do-to-stop-it/

[182] Amnesty International (2020). Nigeria: Older people often an invisible casualty in conflict with Boko Haram. Available at https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/nigeria-older-people-often-an-invisible-casualty-in-conflict-with-boko-haram/

committed atrocities against older women and men in the three key states, with nobody held to account.[182] The 67-page document reveals that older women and their counterparts were often killed in military raids and died in illegal military detention. Accordingly, when Boko Haram fighters invade villages, older women and men are often among the last to flee, leaving them vulnerable to armed groups' brutality and repression.[183]

Since the Boko Haram violent attacks began in 2009, the federal government has increased its defence budget. Available data reveals that by the end of the 2018 fiscal year, the government spent about $16.7 billion (₦6 trillion) on defence only, given budget appropriation since 2008.[184] The data also reveal that between 2014 and 2018, the Federal Government of Nigeria spent US$3.9 billion in arms procurement.[185] However, more than US$2 billion of the amount was alleged to have been embezzled by unscrupulous politicians in the infamous *Dasukigate*.[186] Despite these figures, the complaints about military underfunding in the Boko Haram insurgency persist.

However, because the government's approach has failed to address the lingering Boko Haram insurgency, it needs to explore how to work with other actors to address the conflict. There is a growing acceptance within Nigeria, and globally, that women are agents of

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[183] Ibid.

[184] Freedom C., Chikodiri N., Michael I (2020). Counterinsurgency operations of the Nigerian military and Boko Haram insurgency: expounding the viscid manacle. Security Journal, available at https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-020-00234-6

[185] Oriola, T. (2018). How Nigeria's $1 Billion arms fund will be spent, *Sahara Reporters*, April 29. http://saharareporters.com/2018/04/29/how-nigeria%E2%80%99s-1-billion-arms-fund-will-be-spent-%E2%80%98tope-oriola

[186] Ukpong, C. (2017). Nigeria's political elites hid behind military to steal billions of dollars—report. *Premium Times*, May 18. https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/23155 6-nigeriaspolitical-elite s-hid-behind-military-to-steal-billions-of-dollars-report.html

peace. Their participation in dialogue and negotiation improves the likelihood of reaching a lasting peace agreement.[187]

WOMEN IN DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION

Historically, women in the northeast region of Nigeria, especially in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, have been ignored or excluded from the dialogue and negotiation table. They often encounter discrimination when attempting to influence conflict resolution.[188] The region's religious and cultural norms often limit women's status to a domestic role. When it comes to the community leadership system, the leaders are men (elderly). For instance, when conflict erupts in the communities, contacts for management are mainly channelled to the older men. The authority of men implies that the role of women in governance is limited, although women (and children) account for most of those negatively affected during armed conflict.[189]

The upsurge of insurgency has significantly altered thousands of women and girls' lives by casting them voluntarily or by force into new roles outside the domestic sphere. Over the years, there have been tremendous changes in some communities' governance structures in the region as women have been actively involved in informal or unofficial dialogue and negotiation. In Borno state, some women have negotiated with Boko Haram to free abductees and even offered themselves in exchange for their children.[190] Other

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[187] Jamille, B & Delphi, C. (2020). Women should be at the center of Afghan peace talks. CNN. Available at https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/05/opinions/women-should-be-at-the-center-of-afghan-peace-talks-bigio-cleaveland/index.html

[188] Chitra Nagarajan (2019). Gender Relations in Adamawa. Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Research Report. Available at https://www.justicesecurity.ng/sites/default/files/mcn_research_report_adamawa_web_final.pdf

[189] Managing Conflict in Nigeria (2019). Entrenching Peace: Assessing Community Resilience and Peacebuilding Initiatives in Northeast Nigeria. Field Report and Analysis, available at https://nextierspd.com/entrenching-peace-assessing-community-resilience-and-peacebuilding-initiatives-in-northeast-nigeria-report/

[190] Imam; Hauwa Biu; & Maina Yah (2020). Women's informal peacebuilding in North East Nigeria. Christian Michelsen Institute, available at https://www.cmi.no/publications/7296-womens-informal-peacebuilding-in-north-east-nigeria.

[191] Ibid.

women in the three states have performed critical roles in relief and reconciliation. Also, some women, including Aisha Wakil and Hamsatu Al Amin, have tried to bring Boko Haram and government officials to the dialogue and negotiation table.[191]

Women have organised peace conferences, rallies, and campaigns. In 2014, women in the BAY states organised and participated in several peaceful matches, protests and campaigns to draw attention to gender exclusion and demand participation and action for peace. One of the most prominent activities of women that gained international attention is the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, which is meant to bring back the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Borno state.[192]

Findings from a study on community resilience and peacebuilding reveal that the women council in the Ngaranam community in Borno state was formed to enhance women's participation in promoting peace, which challenged the second-class role women were subjected to in the community.[193] Thus, with the creation of the council, women acted as negotiators on disputes concerning their wellbeing, after which the older men are briefed on the outcome of the council meeting. This development spurred the setting up of other community development associations in which women play a strategic role in dialogue and negotiation at the community level. For instance, the Gamboru Development Association is said to have 30 executive members, of which 13 are women, and one of them is the vice president of the group.[194]

Women are also part of peace committees in some communities, such as Jiddari Polo, Gidan Taki, Gulak and Mulai. Women in these

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Managing Conflict in Nigeria (2019). Entrenching Peace: Assessing Community Resilience and Peacebuilding Initiatives in Northeast Nigeria. Field Report and Analysis, available at https://nextierspd.com/entrenching-peace-assessing-community-resilience-and-peacebuilding-initiatives-in-northeast-nigeria-report/
[194] Ibid.

communities are organised in groups such as the women farmer's council, Zumuntan Mata and market women's associations. These groups provide mediums through which women from rival groups are brought together for mutual interest. As part of their effort to promote peace, women in the above communities played a significant role in early warning and countering violent extremism. The women also played a substantial role in the surveillance and intelligence gathering, identifying suspected insurgents and safeguarding the communities.[195] In Hong community, women are part of the hunter's group, even before the advent of insurgency, because hunting is part of the people's tradition; the hunters have been part of the vigilantes used against the Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) in Adamawa state. There are about 122 registered female Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members[196] fighting alongside men in counterinsurgency operations in Borno.

Generally, women in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have been involved in building bridges of dialogue and empathy, forming cross-community alliances to address core social concerns and initiating movement beyond ethnic, religious and political stalemates.[197] The new role women are playing in the context of the Boko Haram insurgency is creating counter-narratives to demonstrate an informal way of building peace and social cohesion.

In recognition of women's contribution to peace and security, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 stresses the importance of women's role in promoting dialogue and negotiation and the need to increase their role in decision-making concerning conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Thus, with the help of

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[195] Ibid.

[196] International Crisis Group. (2016). Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency, Report 242. Accessed March 2, 2021, available at: https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/242-nigeria-women-and-the-boko-haram%20Insurgency.pdf

[197] Ayo, C. and Suthanthiraraj, K. (2010). Promoting Women's Participation in Conflict & Post-Conflict Societies. Global Action to Prevent War, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

external actors and civil society organisations, women have been integrated into peace and security structures at the community level. Supported by civil society organisations such as the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), Catholic Relief Service (CRS), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Oxfam, Arewa Consultative Forum, International Medical Corps, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), United Nations (UN) Women, and Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), greater women's rights and freedom have been advanced.

These organisations have undertaken several peace initiatives to enhance the role of women in dialogue and negotiation. For instance, the NSRP supported peace clubs and carried out conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in several communities in Borno and Yobe states.[198] Similarly, women are active partners with civil society groups in Adamawa to influence change and promote social cohesion. In Yola, the United Nations (UN) Women conducted a study to review structures at the state and community levels designed to mitigate conflict and ensure women's inclusion. The programme was carried out in Yola North, Maiha, Mubi South and Numan local government areas and has led to an increase in women's participation in peace processes.[199] Other women's groups that participated in this programme include FOMWAN, Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), the Widows' Council, National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), and women political leaders in the country. These actors mentor other women to enhance their role in dialogue and negotiation.

Despite the countless efforts made by women to promote peace, societal barriers have continued to contribute to women's

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[198] Chitra Nagarajan (2017). Gender Assessment of Northeast Nigeria. Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN), available at https://chitrasudhanagarajan.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/gender-assessment-of-northeast-nigeria.pdf

[199] Ibid.

exclusion, especially in formal peace processes. In most instances, patriarchal and cultural norms have denied women access to education; lack of capacity building, and economic dependence on men reinforce these obstacles, thereby creating a challenging environment for women to engage in formal and informal peace processes. Nevertheless, there have been some signs of change in recent years, with some leaders taking conscious steps to include women in community leadership in the study area. For instance, in Adamawa, both the supreme leader in Numan Local Government Area (LGA) and a community leader within the same LGA appointed 39 women advisers in his council and 4 women assistants to the ward heads.[200] These developments are encouraging and empower women and other stakeholders not to give up in their effort to promote and build peace in the region.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study investigated women's role in promoting dialogue and negotiation as a pathway for ending the Boko Haram insurgency. This was done through a comprehensive review of the secondary data from a wide range of sources that interrogates the relationship between women and the Boko Haram insurgency in BAY states. Since the violent insurgency and counterterrorism operation started in 2009, women have been greatly affected by the conflict. Sadly, women have been ignored or excluded from dialogue and negotiation tables, despite making up almost half of the population. Although, cultural norms, the economic dependence on men and other factors reinforce these obstacles, creating a challenging environment for women to engage in the formal and informal peace processes. However, there have been tremendous changes in the governance structures of some communities in recent years as women have been actively involved in informal or unofficial dialogue and negotiation.

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[200] Ibid

Findings from the studies reveal that women have formed peace councils and peace committees in the communities. In recognition of their contributions, women have received support from civil society groups and non-governmental organisations. Thus, several initiatives that promote dialogue and negotiation have been undertaken by women in some communities. Defeating Boko Haram will require a fundamental shift in the government's strategy. It is true that to achieve sustainable peace, the government must consider all the parties involved, both men and women, who are affected by the insurgency. The government should also earmark funds for grassroots women's groups and civil society organisations to advance meaningful dialogue and negotiation works at the grassroots. Developmental partners should liaise with the government to ensure that more women associations are formed in the communities. This will help create safe places where women can freely deliberate on issues[affecting not just them but also society. The changing gender role of women in the region deserves greater attention. Women who have unexpectedly been thrust into the role of breadwinners and head of households should be supported and empowered to provide for their families, especially children and other dependents vulnerable to the insurgents' recruitment. Beyond military actions, the government must work with relevant actors to intensify efforts to address the conflict's underlying drivers.

WHEN RECONSTRUCTION DOES NOT BUILD COMMUNITY RESILIENCE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEARCH FOR NON-KINETIC PATHS TO ENDING THE INSURGENCY IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

Resilience building, as the name implies, is an action-filled activity that either enables or assists conflict-affected persons/communities to cope and overcome challenges. It is a practice by which affected people in a conflict situation withstand a myriad of challenges that pose an existential threat to them. As important as the concept is, it has also become a justification for some unwholesome practices that sometimes compound the woes of conflict-affected people in a conflict situation rather than solving problems that threaten those affected. Resilience building in a nutshell is all about impacted people taking actions that will enable or assist them to cope or being assisted to cope. This is quite different from initiating teleological actions that may be inimical to the very interest of the people or communities needing assistance or help in the name of reconstruction or resilience building.

Resilience building, based on practice, usually happens at two different levels. The first is at the level of the individuals who make up the community, and then at the community level. At the level of the individuals, it entails developing or being supported to develop capacities that assist the individual to cope in a conflict or war

situation. At the community level, it involves strengthening community bonds through the promotion of peace and the provision of structure, infrastructure, institutions, frameworks, programmes, schemes and projects that support the individual members of the community to cope and adapt to the conflict or post-conflict situation as the case may be. Often referred to as community resilience or resilience building, it is the sum total of actions taken to restore to the communities those things that were lacking which led to the disruption of peace in a given community, as well as the restoration of what was destroyed in the course of the conflict.

At other times, individual members of conflict-affected communities are known to have taken steps to devise their survival strategies or schemes, especially when reconstruction and rebuilding of conflict-affected communities are not building the resilience of the affected population. These survival strategies or schemes could be positive or negative. Once the schemes evolved by the affected population as coping measures are positive, they will feed into any other positive actions by government or donors. This leads to peace, stability and progress; that is, what is usually referred to as durable peace, social cohesion or resilience (see Nextier SPD, n.d). If negative, they will assist to build the peoples' resilience; only that the negative consequences of such schemes will undermine the peace process. Both types of actions are discernible in Northeast Nigeria.

It is important to note that building resilience is not all about bouncing back after conflict, as if it is something that is automatic, requiring no action from the affected people at all as Aall and Crocker (2019), Bousquet et al (2016) and Menkhaus (2013) would want us to believe. Resilience building is an action-filled activity that must be seen as such. It could be through activities or a series of actions undertaken by individuals, groups or outsiders to support people who need help. It takes the actions and activities of the

triumvirate of individuals, groups, and an outsider to build resilience anywhere in the world, including Northeast Nigeria. In the final analysis, it is the people that can build their own resilience and that of their communities because it is their actions and inactions that either enhance or undermine their own resilience and that of their communities.

Unfortunately, reconstruction and rebuilding in Nigeria, over time, has never built the resilience of the people and their communities (see Yusuf and Kanabe, 2019; Brechenmacher, 2019).[201] Even when it does, it usually leaves much to be desired after a lot of resources must have been expended on such a course. A case in point is the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Southeast Nigeria after the Nigerian Civil War. While it is on record that the Federal Government of Nigeria embarked on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the region, 51 years after, the people believe that the reconstruction failed to build their resilience, especially the policy of giving twenty pounds (£20) to a person irrespective of his/her savings with a bank before the war. The people consider this as a deliberate attempt to enslave them. Be that as it may, that was the closest Nigeria came to ideal reconstruction since Independence to date. Other efforts that followed were mired in corruption and different kinds of abuses. Therefore they failed to build the people's resilience.

Another example worth mentioning is the rebuilding of the Niger Delta after many years of youth restiveness and economic sabotage.

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[201] The reconstruction of the South East aftermath of the Nigerian civil war is currently marred in controversy. While the government continued to insist that it reconstructed and rebuilt the South East after the civil war, the people continued to claim that their region was never rebuilt. A nation that is known for using every disaster or challenge to justify looting of public resources in the name of catering for the needs of its citizens cannot be said to be building the resilience of the same citizens whose names are being used to justify the looting committed. The same thing is currently happening in the Niger Delta, South South of Nigeria. All efforts to reconstruct and rebuild the region are currently failing as a result of corruption and abuse of public office by those charged with the responsibility of rebuilding the region.

Despite several years of federal government intervention in that area, poverty remains high as well as crime as a result of corruption and abuse of the agency charged with the rehabilitation and reconstruction, especially the Amnesty Programme and the Niger Delta Development Commission. The question the chapter seeks to answer is: why has reconstruction failed to build the resilience of the people and their communities in the Northeast to achieve peace through non-kinetic pathways?

To answer this question, the study is divided into six (6) parts. Part I introduces the research and observations that guided the direction of the research. Part II, III, IV, V and VI deal with methodology, findings, discussion of findings, recommendations and conclusion respectively.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted leverages on the existing body of work done in this area before proceeding to collect data on definitions of resilience, through literature review, and interviews with selected stakeholders that comprised the conflict-affected people of the Northeast, members of some of the organisations whose statutory responsibility it is to build the resilience of the people and their destroyed communities, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force, Vigilante and Hunters whose activities enhanced peoples' resilience, and some international organisations who are working in the Northeast on humanitarian grounds, to get their views on what resilience building is. The aim is to comprehend peoples' understanding of what resilience truly is and their coping strategies/mechanisms and build on them.

The research is guided by the theory of resilience-building advanced by Aall and Crocker (2019), which sees resilience building as support to domestic institutions, encouraging social inclusion and supporting good leadership. This viewpoint is similar

to that of Lallau and Droy (2014), who advised that resilience building should be studied in its trajectories which, according to them, include survival (avoiding the household's destitution), adaptation (organising to face the consequences of a shock), and resilience (successfully rebuilding the household's most important assets). The challenge with most theories of resilience building is that they tend to discount the will of the affected population to act in a certain way and their right of choice. Most conceptions of resilience usually follow this pattern.

Secondly, most theories of resilience are not all-encompassing, that is, they do not combine the building of the resilience of the individual members of the society affected by conflict with that of their communities. Although, it is increasingly becoming obvious that while it is important to build people's resilience, it is equally important to build community resilience. This has led to what has emerged as a new way of working which seeks to integrate community resilience building with humanitarian interventions that build the resilience of the individuals affected by conflict.

In the course of the literature review, a wide range of literature was consulted to develop inclusion and exclusion criteria. Literature that shed light on what constitutes resilience were included as part of the literature to be reviewed as well as those that inform us about what is currently happening in the Northeast region after twelve (12) years of consistent resilience building to determine whether resilience was built over time or not. Included were resilience-building literature that sees it as action-filled activities that empower the people to act in ways that do not undermine the peace process rather than the imposition of predetermined sets of interventions or avenues for the embezzlement of resources meant for the resilience building. Others were included because of the insight they provide into why people resist resilience-building interventions or take to negative coping strategies that undermine the peace process just to survive the challenges of war situations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resilience

Resilience as a concept has been subjected to many definitions, re-definitions and varied usages to the extent that its true meaning is almost lost (See Bousquet et al, 2016). Resilience is a concept that conveys man's ability to remain resolute in the face of any challenge or threat. It is therefore safe to conclude that being resilient is the same thing as being able to resist forces that are up against one by refusing to break down. If this is resilience, it follows that not only materials and objects are endowed with this ability and quality as many scholars want us to affirm. It is even more of a human thing than material. Man's ability to cope in adverse conditions and life-threatening situations has been well documented. Arendt (1998) noted that one of the qualities of human beings that has remained a mystery is man's ability and capacity for a new beginning even when all hopes seemed to have been lost. This is the best description of the resilience of man in his environment. Though he is sometimes overcome by the forces he is determined to resist, yet his power of resilience remains unparalleled.

For example, the people of Nigeria are known to be resilient in the face of bad governance, corruption and poverty. Appropriated resources meant for service provisioning for the people hardly gets to them. Most of these resources are frittered away through acts of deliberate mismanagement or outright embezzlement. Education and empowerment, which are ways through which peoples' resilience are built and strengthened have been neglected. People are left to their own devices as they struggle to survive. In other words, people are allowed to devise their own means of surviving. The implication of this has been the rising crime rate in the country. Today, the country is at the mercy of corrupt government officials, armed robbers, kidnappers, bandits, cattle rustlers, conflict merchants and organised criminals. The Northeast of Nigeria is not spared either. The region furnishes incentives for crimes

(Brechenmacher, 2019) as it also furnishes opportunities for resilience building and change (The Buhari Plan, 2016).

The Buhari Plan, which is one of the authoritative documents on the reconstruction of the Northeast, made a case for resilience building through the inauguration of public works that will empower people with skills and resources to rebuild their communities in a proposed self-help programme to be undertaken by the Presidential Committee on the Northeast Initiative. Unfortunately, this never happened, thereby opening room for self-help initiatives that are inimical to the peace that is so much desired in the region. Literature are beginning to emerge on the corruption and abuses that have gone into the reconstruction of the Northeast, as well as the emergence of war economy, which shows that the reconstruction is not building the resilience of the people, hence their resorting to self-help. In her survey of the efforts at the reconstruction of the Northeast region, Brechenmacher (2019) found that the region reconstruction is being used by the ruling elite to demand for more resources that may end up in the pockets of the same elite. Magrin and de Montclos (2018) expressed the same fear when they warned that the Northeast should not become another Niger Delta where the leaders of the region would demand for more resources that would be looted.

In an ideal situation, reconstruction is supposed to build the resilience of the people and their communities in a way that strengthens and equally empowers same people to act in a positive direction that will assist the peace process. Until recently, most resilience-building literatures have never made a case for community resilience building, forgetting that the community is as important as the individual. The individual needs the community to survive just as the community needs the individual to function and protect it. Thus, community resilience building in an organised society is very important to the survival of all persons living in such communities. It is in light of this that the new way of working as being promoted by the donors and development partners is very

important to resilience building, both at the level of the individual and conflict-affected communities.

RECONSTRUCTION AND RESILIENCE BUILDING

Resilience is a term used to describe all activities undertaken by individuals or groups to survive in a conflict situation or by outsiders that are willing to support victims of a conflict to overcome shocks, as well as to cope and survive the adverse effect of a conflict situation and effectively adapt and, at other times, even innovate (Maxwell, Stites, Robillard and Wagner, 2017). It should be noted that resilience building is not the same thing as aiming to change the genetic composition or way of life of a people affected by conflict or natural disaster of any kind. It is not also the same thing as aiming to change governance institutions or century-old social relationships by an outsider. Most resilience rebuilding efforts have been resisted in the past as a result of this. The American-led efforts to rebuild Iraq and Afghanistan are being resisted because of the deliberate attempt to reshape governance institutions, beliefs systems and attitudes towards liberalism as suggested by Jabareen (2013) who argued that reconstruction should lead to the liberalisation or westernisation of states. Conceptualisation of reconstruction and rebuilding of conflict-affected states or nations as conceived by Jabareen will naturally lead to resistance from the beneficiaries as it is being witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq because liberalism or westernisation of the reconstruction process recommended by Jabareen would elicit resistance of the people. If resilience building is the sum total of actions taken by individuals or groups in a bid to survive and cope in a conflict situation, it should conform to their needs, aspirations and worldviews or risks being resisted.

Resilience building as already indicated is at two levels. At the level of individuals, is a form of strategy to cope and adapt to a new situation however unpalatable (Monguno, 2017). This includes all

the positive or negative actions taken either individually or collectively to overcome such a situation. Therefore, what has been accepted generally as community resilience are mostly positive actions individually or collectively undertaken by people impacted by conflict or disaster to overcome their common challenges. When this is done consistently over time, it becomes resilience and resilience building either by individuals or communities.

In his study of resilience and resilient communities in the Northeast, during the insurgency, Monguno (2017) found that some communities were more resilient than others. He cited the case of Gwoza and Biu, two communities with a considerable number of Muslims and Christians, which reacted to pressure differently. Religion, which he said led to division in Gwoza and facilitated its fall to Boko Haram, was a source of unity that became the strength and source of resilience for the people of Biu against the insurgents. He also found that some of the internally displaced persons showed more resilience compared to others, just as some communities were more resilient than the others too. This differences in reactions, according to him, has to do with the nature of the people and the locality they are coming from.

Most researches on resilience and resilience building often emphasise social capital as what conflict-affected persons needed most to overcome the challenges conflict often impose on them. Monguno (2017) found that although social capital was helpful to the internally displaced persons in the host communities in Maiduguri, the choices the displaced persons made in their determination to cope in the host communities accommodating them also matter. While some took to crime which led to the surge in crimes and other criminal activities that continued to affect the peace process negatively, other IDPs undertook activities that built their resilience and enhanced their freedom, thereby contributing positively to the peace process, rather than becoming criminals or accomplices to crime. Negative activities such as those Monguno

(2017) noted contribute in no small measure to the emergence of a coping economy in which conflict-affected people undertake activities that lead to the perpetuation of the conflict as a means of survival. In their discussion of a coping economy, Eaton et al (2019:4) believed that the coping economy:

> …is a system of producing, mobilizing and allocating resources to sustain competitive and embedded violence, both directly and indirectly. The coping economy comprises the numerous survival-based economic interactions that occur during armed conflict, primarily involving the poor and most vulnerable.

It is this conflict and coping economy that has developed into a monster that Avis (2020) argued is prolonging the war in the Northeast; a fact that a lot of researchers are finding irresistible presently. The emergence of the coping and conflict economies in the Northeast is a pointer to the reality that the people have been surviving, employing negative coping strategies that are negatively impacting the reconstruction and resilience building in the Northeast region of Nigeria.

Non-Kinetic Paths

There are two major ways of tackling conflict. The first is the use of kinetic force which involves the deployment of the military arsenal at the disposal of a government, and the non-kinetic form of interventions meant to win the hearts and minds of either the people or the rebels or insurgents, as the case may be. In the case of Northeast Nigeria, both measures have since been deployed. They include the deployment of the military to the Northeast and the establishment of a federal government agency charged with the responsibility of reconstruction and rebuilding of the Northeast.

Twelve years later, not only that some of the non-kinetic paths failed to prevent the insurgents from recruiting (except for modest efforts of Operation Safe Corridor meant for the de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant Boko Haram

members), they have also not been able to win the hearts and minds of the people. This is because the non-kinetic paths have not been able to substantially build peoples' resilience and those of their communities to warrant support for the peace process.

In a recent evaluation of the impact of non-kinetic interventions on the lives of the people of the Northeast, Brechenmacher (2019) found that the reconstruction process is heavily laced with corruption. And, as we all know, corruption distorts reality, facilitates and entrench perpetual abuse of the system and process, while denying targeted beneficiaries their due benefits. The challenges associated with non-kinetic paths to peace and development in the region currently have nothing to do with the concept of resilience or resilience-building or even the reconstruction of destroyed areas/facilities. The challenges are closely associated with the idiosyncrasies of those charged with the conception and implementation of the non-kinetic interventions meant to build the resilience of the people and also win their hearts and minds. Brechenmacher (2019) noted that the Presidential Initiative on the Northeast (PINE), one of the federal government organisations charged with the responsibility of rebuilding the region, through which the resilience of the people and their communities are to be rebuilt, could not account for $8.7 million.

In the same vein, six of the directors in NEMA, another Federal Government Agency responsible for catering to the needs of the displaced persons in the camps across the Northeast region of Nigeria, were indicted and suspended for misappropriation of funds meant for the well-being of IDPs (Avis, 2019). Brechenmacher (2019) and Avis (2019) concluded that the rebuilding process furnishes opportunity for corrupt enrichment. The Buhari Plan, a supposedly comprehensive plan for the rebuilding of the Northeast prepared by the Presidential Committee on the Northeast Initiative (PCNI), detailed one of the most eye-catching contents on reconstruction and rebuilding that

integrated security with safety, peacebuilding, social cohesion, elaborate infrastructural delivery and socio-economic development, all of which naturally ought to support people's resilience. Implementation, however, left much to be desired.

Shedding light on plans and their implementation in Nigeria, one of the leading academics knowledgeable about the reconstruction of the Northeast region interviewed noted that there is a dichotomy between plans and their implementation in Nigeria. He argued that the problem with Nigeria is not national plans or any other plans for that matter. The problem, according to him, is implementation; this is where the challenge lies. Speaking further, he noted that it was and still is at the implementation stage that corruption interrupts the process. To him, it "is not only about stealing the resources meant for a particular purpose as we daily witness in this country [Nigeria] but also the corruption of the entire process that often affects implementation which eventually changes the envisaged projects and process outcome." In the same vein, one of the IDPs lamented how their names are being used to get funds, while they lack basic needs at the same time. A staff of one of the federal government agencies interviewed also accused the IDPs of insincerity, noting that IDPs are fond of telling each successive visitor to their camps that they are neglected, to gain sympathy and attract more food or other items they may likely end up selling for profit. The truth is one often gets confused when discussing these issues, because who takes the blame? The IDPs? Or government officials? The fact, however, is that institutions charged by the government to rebuild the Northeast have oftentimes failed the people.

For instance, SEMA, a state government agency also saddled with the responsibilities of catering for the needs of the displaced, was found to be embroiled in corruption, too, just like other government agencies (Brechenmacher, 2019). The exception was the Borno State Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and

Resettlement (RRR) created to rebuild the destroyed communities. This ministry, with the support of the Victims Support Funds (VSF), rebuilt Bama, Monguno, Marte and a host of other communities that were destroyed. Today life is back in these affected Local Government headquarters. Apart from supporting the ministry to rebuild destroyed communities, the VSF also embarked on the delivery of integrated resilience-building activities that included livelihood and recovery support programmes, research and peacebuilding initiative, agriculture, education, foster care programmes, health financing for the victims of bomb blasts, animal husbandry, and infrastructure delivery such as the rebuilding of schools, prisons, courthouses, police stations, palaces and local government secretariats, aimed at restoring civil authorities in the affected Local Government Areas (LGAs) as the three states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. These are some of the interventions that have not led to any controversy or corruption accusations either from the people themselves, the state governments or any other stakeholder for that matter, probably because the VSF is unlike government agencies in the way it is being run.

Explaining the reason for the choice of livelihood support and recovery, a staff of the VSF noted that "a people devastated by conflict who have lost all they ever had in their lives needed to be supported to live before they can be supported to perform other life's functions and other life-supporting activities." He further averred that every other activity embarked on is to allow peace to return so that people can carry on with their life's functions and activities. This is in tandem with Lallau and Droy's (2014) three trajectories of resilience: survival, coping and resilience. The Victims Support Fund's interventions were meant to assist victims to achieve these trajectories.

Different Survival Strategies Adopted by the People of the Northeast to Cope and Survive the Insurgency

As earlier argued, resilience is not a state of being in itself. It is an outcome of a chosen action before it becomes a state of being. Most definitions of resilience make it look as if it is a state of being in itself (Aall and Crocker, 2019; Bousquet et al, 2016; Menkhous, 2013). It is not. It is an action-induced state of being which is sometimes understood as such or as the person defining it wants us to comprehend it. In the case of the Northeast, the people have shown resilience in the face of the insurgency the same way the insurgents have also shown resilience in the face of the military, and the military in the face of the insurgency. The war has refused to end twelve years after because a coping economy popularly known as war economy has emerged, and nearly all the people of the Northeast region irrespective of their status are benefiting from it, providing the conflict-affected population with some level of resilience.

Some researchers are beginning to look into the resilience of the war itself and the role of conflict and coping economies in the process (Avis, 2020; Freeman, 2019; Ewi & Salifu, 2017a; Ewi & Salifu, 2017b). What is being referred to as conflict and coping economies are economic activities people continue to undertake from the beginning of the conflict to survive. These activities are both positive and negative depending on who is interpreting them. Monguno (2017) highlighted some of such strategies employed by some of the displaced persons to cope (developed resilience in the face of the insurgency) with the challenges of destroyed shelters, villages, hamlets, means of livelihood, lack of food or food shortages, safety, and insecurity the insurgency imposed on them. Part of such strategies of the affected people, according to Monguno (2017), was to take to petty trading, butchering, and tricycle operations. This is just one aspect of peoples' resilience strategy in the face of the threat Boko Haram posed to them and their communities.

Avis (2020) focused on actions taken by all actors in the conflict area (that is, Northeast) to maximize their interests. This, according to him, includes soldiers extorting protection fees from people and traders, businesses and traders taking advantage of the conflict to make unprecedented profits they are not likely to make in peacetime, citizens paying taxes to Boko Haram or joining the sect because it is more profitable to do so, and those charged with the responsibility of bringing the conflict to an end embezzling funds meant for such a purpose (Avis,2020).

In 2017, the sum of 43 million dollars found in an apartment in Ikoyi that was directly linked[202] to Ayodele Oke, the Head of Nigeria's Intelligence Agency at a time Nigeria was fighting Boko Haram (Ibrahim, 2017) and another $20 million was linked to Babachir David Lawal (Alvis, 2020:11), who is responsible for supervising the most elaborate non-kinetic efforts being explored at that time, by the Federal Government of Nigeria through PINE, goes to show that while some persons took actions considered to be negative which assist to fuel the conflict, others took positive actions that did not stoke the conflict. The word linked is being used because these cases, though established, are still marred in controversy as usual just to cover up the truth. What is instructive from the two cases, however, is that peoples' resilience to the entire Boko Haram conflict is diverse and varied.

In a study of resilience to the insurgency in the Northeast facilitated by the Centre for Information Technology Development (CITAD), it was found that most communities with greater social cohesion before the insurgency, persevered and held out against the insurgents compared to communities with weak social cohesion (Yau and Bagu, 2017).

Aall and Crocker (2019) argued that there is a reciprocal

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[202] Linked is used here because the issues are mired in controversy with the accused denying that they knew nothing about the said amount of money.

relationship between community resilience, peacebuilding and social cohesion. According to them, peacebuilding produces social cohesion, which further produces resilience among people who cooperate and interact across wide-ranging areas of common interests. It is this common interest that produces common benefits for all, responsible for the binding commitments to one another and the community to always do things that will enhance social relationship, not to undermine it. It, therefore, means that resilience on the part of an individual, groups and communities is dependent on actions taken or not taken by individuals, groups or communities. Aall and Crocker (2019) believe that the presence or absence of community resilience is dependent on the presence or absence of five features that help foster resilience. These include recognition/rejection, belonging/isolation, legitimacy/illegitimacy, participation/non-involvement, and inclusion/exclusion.

Part of the coping strategies adopted by the people of the Northeast at the peak of the insurgency was to remain in their settlements even as insurgents roamed the streets of these settlements until their communities were liberated by the military and taken to available IDP camps. This strategy was adopted by many that were not able to flee their communities before, during and after being invaded by the insurgents. They remain with the insurgents living as safely as possible and in austerity, making do with little or what is given to them by the insurgents, until such a time they are freed. Most people adopted this strategy in many communities just as many fled to safety in other places, including Cameroon and Niger republic.

People choose what works for them. While some people embark on activities that build their resilience and those of their communities, others took to illicit drug business or prostitution for food, sexual and gender-based violence, intelligence gathering for the insurgents, providing the insurgents with logistics support in exchange for cash payment or any other favour, which led to the emergence of a conflict and coping economies (see

Brechemancher, 2020; Avis, 2020).

Another coping strategy adopted by the youth and the elderly was to form themselves into various security outfits to, first of all, insulate themselves from being branded as Boko Haram members or supporters, protect their communities from Boko Haram attacks and continue to work closely with the military to identify Boko Haram members, including insurgents training camps and hideouts. In Adamawa, for instance, hunters who were mostly youths performed this function. In Borno, it was the Civilian Joint Task Force that took over the responsibility of the police and, at other times, the judiciary. While in Yobe, it was, and still is, the vigilante doing the same to preserve peace in the affected areas. Their combined activities were responsible for the resilience of some of the communities, in addition to the determination of the people to brave the challenges of Boko Haram imposed on them. These challenges include insufficient food, shelter and other social infrastructure occasioned by the destruction Boko Haram wrought on the affected communities.

Unfortunately, despite valuable patriotic services these people rendered to their communities and, by implication, their various states and the nation, which is the very reason some communities have not evacuated, they are not being supported as they should be. Families of those that lost their lives in the process of protecting their communities are not adequately supported and taken care of as they should be. "Their kids are out of school," said one of the members of the Civilian Joint Task Force. One of the vigilantes lamented that the wives of some of their members killed by Boko Haram are eking out a living from engaging in "petty business that involves their children dropping out of school to hawk." Asked why they are still risking their lives if the families of their slain comrades are suffering, one of them noted that "we are doing what we are doing because we love our people and we feel we should protect them in the absence of the police."

Another commented, "Only the Borno State Government is supporting us." Although he said they appreciate the little the state government is doing for them and their families, "it is insufficient." He also noted that most donors do not support them and that without them donors will not be able to operate in the Northeast. According to him, donors are not supporting because of what they (the donors) referred to as the principle of neutrality. The hunters in Adamawa indicated that the past government under Murtala Nyako (2007-2015) and some individuals supported them. But their patriotic deeds were not recognised or adequately rewarded.

FINDINGS

Resilience: one concept, different interpretations

Most literature treats resilience like an abstract concept that explains how people and communities should be rebuilt by aid workers (Aall and Crocker, 2019; Menkhaus, 2013). Better still, resilience is being reduced to a practice that is devoid of the very human whose resilience is to be rebuilt and whose actions over time lead to resilience. Whereas it is the actions of men and women, young and old, that produce and continue to produce resilience in them and the community they live in (Kessel, MacDougall and Gibbs, 2015), what obtains is that its implementation is often outside the entity producing it (humans). So that the human element as the actor and author of resilience becomes neglected (Aall and Crocker, 2019; Bousquet et al, 2016; Menkhaus, 2013).

In actual sense, however, resilience and resilience building are natural to man, so that what is often observed as resilience in man or the community in which he lives is a product of an observable pattern of behaviour he has exhibited over a period of time, which oftentimes help reveal how he is coping in the face of a threat over time. It, therefore, stands to reason that what we observe as resilience is not some abstract happenstance that is independent of

man. It is the product of the determination of man to overcome threats to his life and to survive. This determination may come in different ways. It may include criminal activities on the part of the affected population who are striving to survive or depending on others such as donors, government or private sector entities for help, which is mostly the case in every conflict situation.

While dependence could be another form of resilience, it is not sustainable in the long run. Hence, the need to transcend it. Therefore, for resilience building to be reckoned with, it is necessary that it ensures survival and coping amongst the affected population whose resilience is being rebuilt in the long run. It should lead to self-reliance before adaptation. In the case of the communities, social infrastructure that supports life processes are also to be rebuilt. Though activities of all actors intervening in the Northeast could be referred to as resilience-building activities, yet the affected people are still living in IDP camps and host communities without any real capacity to cope other than taking to criminal activities, which are responsible for the emergence of coping economy that is criminal in nature in the region's otherwise war economy – a development that is undermining non-kinetic pathways to peace and the peace process itself. An academic who crave anonymity interviewed lamented that:

> For us, the true test of resilience building in the Northeast would have been how many people left the camps as result of enhanced capacity to cope and how many destroyed communities have been rebuilt or existing ones that have been expanded and fortified. Most of the IDPs that left the camps did so because their expectations were not met, not because their capacity has been built or enhanced.

The major challenge now for those of us in the Northeast, according to the same academic "is that we don't know when the war will end because everyone seems to be benefiting from it. So many are okay with it, occasionally paying lip service to peace."

Neglect of the People and the Emergence of a War economy

Human beings are capable of the good, the bad and the ugly, depending on what is at stake. The people of the conflict-affected states of the Northeast region of Nigeria, left to their fate, decided to devise their own means of survival. Some of these survival strategy include negative activities and actions that are undermining peace, stability, recovery, and development as documented by Avis (2020) and others. Although, one has no way of measuring the most dominant of all actions taken by the people, be they positive or negative actions, the fact that the conflict refused to abate twelve (12) years after shows that something is fundamentally wrong. And this is what Avis and Brechenmacher brought to light. Both agreed that corruption is playing a major role in undermining the reconstruction process. Knowing the impact of corruption on anything positive, especially its power to deny a people their dues, it is obvious that the emergence of the war economy in the Northeast as argued by Avis (2020) was a direct consequence of the failure of the reconstruction to empower the people and their communities to become resilient. This denial led people to devise their own means of survival. Apart from becoming a hub and market for arms and ammunition, the Northeast is also a huge market for drugs and recruitment by Boko Haram.

The emergence of the war economy in which every actor tries to maximise their interest as against collective interest of the majority, further undermines the peace process necessary for resilience building. For instance, some youths join Boko Haram for money (Ewi and Salifu, 2017). Freeman (2019) noted that the war persisted because too many people are earning income from it. Avis (2020) was right when he argued that a war economy has emerged in the Northeast just as others are pursuing their legitimate means of income which promotes peace and resilience (Monguno, 2017). Those saddled with the responsibility of using kinetic force to subdue the insurgents are using their position to extort the people,

traders, and even communities, including pilfering the salaries and allowances of soldiers by their superiors (see Freeman, 2019). It seems in the conflict-affected communities, the drive to survive by maximising the opportunities the war provides has led to activities and practices that are undermining peace and resilience building as a result of the persistence of the war and the war economy. "As it is now, we can do anything to survive since people and government are not willing to help, enthused one of the IDPs, Falmata Bukar, interviewed.

The emergence of Conflict and Coping Economy is a Pointer to the Failure of Reconstruction to Rebuild Community Resilience

Rebuilding of the conflict-affected areas is supposed to simultaneously accomplish two things: the rebuilding of the resilience of affected communities and job creation that will also build the resilience of the individual members of the communities. The Buhari Plan, a document that detailed the rebuilding of the Northeast and how the rebuilding will be used to create job opportunities for the people of the affected communities, failed in this respect. PINE, the predecessor of the Presidential Committee on the Northeast Initiative, rebuilt destroyed schools, police stations and hospitals before it was undermined by corruption and the establishment of the Presidential Committee. In terms of infrastructure delivery, PINE was ahead of the PCNI. Though the PCNI built Bama General Hospital and trauma centres in the three affected states, it concentrated more on humanitarian interventions instead of implementing humanitarian and developmental interventions espoused by the Plan.

The PCNI settlement regrouping project, as well as transitional justice, and peacebuilding programme that would have helped to build the resilience of the people and their communities, came a little late. They came towards the end of its allotted time. These are

interventions that would have built the resilience of the people and their communities. Yet they arrived late, denying the people a major source of resilience. What we often fail to understand in reconstruction is that building the resilience of the affected communities entails the building of infrastructure and institutions most needed by the people to facilitate their survival and resilience as Aall and Crocker (2019) advised. These infrastructure and institutions include, but are not limited to, shelter, hospitals, markets, schools, police stations, courthouses, roads. It also includes supporting peace dialogue and providing the people with means of livelihood as conceptualised and delivered by the VSF.

The Borno State Government did establish the ministry of RRR charged with the responsibility of rebuilding destroyed communities, just like the VSF which took it upon itself to rebuild palaces, police stations, courthouses, destroyed communities, local government secretariats, and schools, and empowered the people through agriculture, health financing for victims of bomb blasts, livelihood support and foster care programmes. In the same vein, the Adamawa State Government also established a Peace Agency responsible for peacebuilding.

Notwithstanding, building the resilience of communities involves building the resilience of the people because it is the people that can (re)build their resilience and those of their communities no matter how hard outsiders may want to try to help. Without the resolve of the people to give such an outsider a chance, it will not work.

The Northeast, especially Borno State, has enjoyed the three principles of resilience as advanced by Aall and Crocker (2019) in the past – which are support to domestic institutions, inclusion and good leadership. Dangote Foundation, in partnership with Borno State Government, built 200 units of houses (https://www. premiumtimesng.com/regional/nnorth-east/272816-dangote-donates-n2-billion-all-inclusive-200-housing-units-to-boko-haram-victims.html) while Indimi Foundation, on the other hand,

built 100 housing units (https://www.blueprint.ng/shettima-commissions-100-units-of-houses-for-idps/) for the displaced persons without attempting to engineer behavioural or institutional change. General T.Y. Danjuma, in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria under former President Goodluck Jonathan, set up the Victims Support Fund (VSF) to deliver support to the victims of the insurgency in the Northeast. The fund evolved from providing support to victims for building their resilience without any abuse recorded against it thus far to one of the few intervening agencies to be reckoned with.

As for inclusion, it is not obvious what is being done by government representatives apart from gender mainstreaming. But as for the support for good leadership, the current Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum is enjoying massive support presently as a result of his commitment to the well-being of his people, young and old including his Yobe State counterpart, Mai Mala Buni.

Notwithstanding, the emergence of conflict and coping economies in the Northeast is a pointer to (i) failure of the reconstruction and rebuilding of community resilience in addition to the resilience of the people as envisaged by the Federal Government of Nigeria in the Buhari Plan (ii) the impact of corruption on the process (iii) an insignificant number of communities and people that have been reached, and (iv) the insatiable greed and corruption of those responsible for the rebuilding. All these are tenable in the Northeast. Else, the communities and the resilience of the people ought to have been rebuilt considering the amount of funds sank into the region. The people are left to their fate. Other than food and non-food items being provided by federal government agencies, which some of the IDPs interviewed noted that they are inadequate as a result of corruption; the restoration of civil authority, which is a step towards community resilience was not given priority attention, except by the Borno State Government and Victims Support Fund.

The continued dependence of victims and internally displaced persons on support also showed that the capacity of the people to cope and adapt has not been rebuilt.

"Sometimes we don't know whether to cry or thank government for the little they are doing. We are not being taken care of regularly. …If not for some international NGOs, some of us would have starved to death," lamented one of the IDPs interviewed. She concluded, saying that "things are changing with the peoples' Governor who has made the welfare of the people of Borno State his priority."

Non-kinetic Pathways to Peace are Being Undermined

The non-kinetic pathways to peace are activities that are to be carried out in a bid to accomplish what war fails to achieve. For instance, war does not build houses. Neither does it provide people with means of livelihood or sustenance, nor facilitate dialogue, transitional justice or community resilience. The basic underlying principle of war is destruction, whether total or partial. The Northeast has witnessed and continues to witness destruction either by Boko Haram in chase of the military or the military in chase of Boko Haram, thereby affecting all life-supporting activities such as farming, trading and food security – survival. It is a fact that whatever threatens human survival is a threat man is ready to contend with however fatal it is. This is how resilience is born. The different strategies adopted by the conflict-affected population to survive, cope and develop resilience has already been discussed above and does not need repeating. Suffices to add that when the desirable is not available, the available becomes desirable, especially when survival is involved.

Reconstruction and rebuilding in the Northeast should have offered the people alternatives as far as earning income is concerned. One of the major causes of the insurgency identified was youth unemployment and poverty (The Buhari Plan, 2016). The fact is both are interlinked. They are inseparable since they lead

to inequality that is capable of radicalising the people and making them available for recruitment as documented by Avis (2020), and the Buhari Plan (2016). The only way to overcome them and the challenge they pose to society is through empowerment and job creation. This is what the reconstruction ought to have done: empower the people with knowledge and capital to rebuild their petty business, provide livelihood support, as well as business supporting infrastructure and institutions.

Though, some organisations, both local and international, did some of these, yet they were not sufficient enough to cater for the number of people and communities in need. The outcome was desperation on the part of the people to survive. In the process, they were taken advantage of by the very people and the society that ought to protect and take care of them. Their plight became an instant source of income to many during their struggle to survive (see Brechenmacher, 2019; Avis, 2020; Freeman, 2019). Local NGOs feasted on the conflict-affected peoples' suffering (Freeman, 2019). They were left with no option other than to look out for their interests which include joining the Boko Haram sect or providing them with logistics support; a path that is prolonging the war and undermining the peace process. What this reveals is that reconstruction did not provide the people with the much-needed alternative in terms of job creation and empowerment that rebuild their resilience. Notwithstanding, the war economy did. The people grabbed it and it has become one of Nigeria's Achilles heels presently in the fight againstt insurgency in the Northeast Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It is clear from the foregoing that the concept of resilience has been subjected to many interpretations depending on the perspectives of the users of the term. The perspective of aid workers defining the concept of resilience building is different from the perspectives of academicians who are not aid workers . Even among practitioners,

perspectives also differ. It suffices to say that resilience and resilience building are products of man's determination to survive and cope in the face of imminent threats to his life. These threats could be conflicts or disasters. This being the case, it means that resilience and resilience building are not to be imposed on victims of disasters or conflict because resilience building is the outcome of man's determination to live and the social interactions and relationships they usually produce. They could be positive (see Monguno, 2017), or negative (Avis, 2020; Freeman 2019). That resilience building as being defined or interpreted variously will not take away the fact that it is a product of man, his actions and inactions as well as his idiosyncrasies.

Furthermore, resilience building as a conscious effort to overcome a threat or challenge usually takes place at the level of individuals, groups or communities affected in a conflict before outside help arrives. The determination to survive a conflict may come from outside help. But as we all know, outside help is not automatic. It takes time to arrive. Therefore, resilience building starts from the conflict onset during which families are cut off from essential supplies. This is the point at which people develop resilience and continue to build it through conflict phases up to when outside help can reach the affected population. Lallau and Droy's (2014) resilience trajectories come to mind here.

The development of resilience according to them usually commences with survival, coping, and then resilience, in this order. This means that the process begins with the affected population. Aall and Crocker (2019) are right when they noted that resilience-building should be in the form of support rather than tailor-made interventions that are not in sync with the needs of the people who are either surviving or coping, depending on the stage they are at. What Aall and Crocker (2019) failed to add to the support package is livelihood. They agreed that resilience should support domestic institutions like markets, hospitals and justice institutions,

inclusion and good leadership. But they failed to add the most critical element – livelihood support. Without this, coping becomes difficult and people will be disposed to doing anything to survive.

Although, some agencies added livelihood support to their interventions, it was either not implemented as was the case of PINE and PCNI, or it was too insignificant to make any impact. Added to this is the widespread corruption that denied the people the much-needed support that will sustain their hopes, aspirations and doggedness – resilience. In the absence of this support, they were left to their fate, which led many to crimes that have compounded the challenge Boko Haram posed to the people of the Northeast in particular, Nigeria, and the entire Lake Chad region in general. What would have stopped this from happening was a reconstruction that empowers the people through the promotion of skills acquisition, agricultural revitalisation programmes, loan schemes, food provisioning and job creation.

While The Buhari Plan acknowledges this as the panacea to the challenge of poverty the people have been plunged into as a result of the insurgency, implementation of the Plan focuses more on humanitarian assistance rather than the developmental aspect, which ordinarily would have built the resilience of the people or sustained their resilience as the case may be. This is because by building the communities, peoples' resilience is being rebuilt directly or indirectly since jobs will be created. In short, there is no way the resilience of the people will not be rebuilt if developmental interventions were focused too. It is by rebuilding affected communities that the resilience of the people is built ot rebuilt.

Resilience building as indicated above is a twofold situation: the rebuilding of the resilience of a conflict-affected population or the rebuilding of their destroyed communities. There is no difference between people and their communities – they are symbiotic in nature and even in the way they interact; a people make their

communities, just as they can mar them, too. This was clear from the contrasting analysis of the Gwoza community which was torn apart by religious differences and of Biu that was resilient despite the Boko Haram threat. Both are inhabited by human beings. The only difference is their actions and inactions. While negative actions led to the fall of Gwoza, positive actions saved and preserved Biu (See Monguno, 2017). This is what is currently happening with the reconstruction of the Northeast region. Failure of reconstruction to build communities' resilience left the people with no alternative than to devise their means of survival, whether negative or positive. In the case of the Northeast, the negative seems to outweigh the positive; hence, the emergence of the war economy that is undermining the non-kinetic paths to peace as a component of the general framework to defeat Boko Haram in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal Government of Nigeria

To reverse this ugly trend, the Federal Government of Nigeria should ensure that whatever plan it intends to implement in the Northeast must, as a matter of urgent requirement, rebuild peoples' resilience as the VSF is currently doing. Resilience building is all about the people. Any plan beyond this will only push the people to adopt negative means of survival that will continue to undermine the quest for peace because the determination to survive would naturally trump everything else including morality that is expected to guide peoples' conscience and choices. Secondly, the systems and plans put in place for resilience building must be devoid of corruption and abuses that continue to deny the people what is meant for them. Allowing corruption to continue to deny the people their dues is to drum it into their conscious or sub-conscious minds that government cannot help them to overcome their poverty and hopelessness. And that they are at liberty to look after their interest using any means possible – a situation that is

responsible for the emergence of the war economy that is undermining the quest for peace in the Northeast currently. Thirdly, practical steps should be taken to provide the people alternative means of earning income to dissuade them from participating in the war economy, however lucrative it may seem. They should be made to understand that their continuous participation in the war economy will continue to sustain the war, which invariably will also continue to undermine the road to peace, stability, growth and development.

State Governments

State governments should focus on people's development while combating the corruption that has been denying them what is due to them. Minus corruption, the people have the chance of recovering very fast. If there is anything that is sapping their energy and resilience, which has made them resort to devising their negative survival strategy, responsible for the emergence of the war economy that has further compounded the war on insurgency in the Northeast, it has a lot to do with corruption. Corruption and its power of denial often leads to desperation on the part of the cheated who have no other positive alternative except opportunities with negative consequences. What has been referred to as rising criminal activities in the Northeast, such as selling of banned substances/drugs, providing logistics support to Boko Haram for financial gratifications or protection, and cattle rustling are crimes committed out of desperation to survive, by a people whose traditional sources of income has been destroyed or denied them. It has been alleged that soldiers have taken over the traditional businesses of the people. Yet, governments interventions do not get to these people that are in need of them. And even when it eventually does, they are either grossly insufficient as a result of corruption or diversion of supports that are meant for those that are in dire need.

Non-state Actors

Non-state actors intervening in the Northeast should conceptualise their interventions to impact the victims and communities in ways that support the survival, coping and resilience of the people. The example of VSF is striking in this regard. VSF conception of resilience building combines humanitarian support with social and infrastructural development of the affected locations in the Northeast. This speaks to the two entities requiring resilience building: the victims and their communities, because they reinforce each other to produce what we often refer to as resilience, durable peace or social cohesion. It is important to note that both cannot do without each other. The fact is, people cannot recover if one aspect of the interventions needed is excluded. Inclusive recovery requires inclusive interventions which are in line with the new way of working. The new way of working seeks to integrate humanitarian and development interventions (See Bousquet et al, 2016). This is the panacea to the war economy; interventions that address the needs of the people as well as those of the communities.

Northeast Development Commission (NEDC)

The NEDC should learn from the resilience-building strategy of the VSF. The resilience-building strategy of the VSF is highly innovative because it places the people and the communities at the heart of the rebuilding process as against the suggestion of Aall and Crocker (2019), which equates resilience building with investment in domestic institutions, inclusion and support for good leadership. The question that arises from this contention is: what then becomes the fate of the people that are in desperate need of help? This is where the VSF model stands out.

CONCLUSION

Every action begets its opposite reaction, especially when survival is involved. The reconstruction in the Northeast seems to have failed

to rebuild the resilience of the people, as well as their communities, as envisaged. If it has, it is insignificant. This fact is confirmed by the endemic presence of corruption and the emergence of the war economy as reported by Avis (2020), Brechenmacher (2020), Freeman (2019) and Ewi & Salifu (2017). What is to be done to reverse the trend is already adduced above in the recommendations section for the consideration of policymakers, drivers of the reconstruction process of the Northeast region, as well as donors, if we desire to reverse the negative impact of a reconstruction that failed to successfully rebuild the resilience of the people and their communities. The very people and communities who are most impacted by the conflict must become the focus of reconstruction or rebuilding in order to overcome the negative impact of the war economy that has already emerged.

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CHAPTER 8

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF NONVIOLENT RESOLUTION OF INSURGENCY IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

Y.Z. YA'U

INTRODUCTION

The insurgency by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, has lasted for more than eleven years now. During this period, 37,530 people have been killed, more than 2 million displaced internally, and created 244,000 refugees as a result of the insurgency.[203] Several communities have been completely destroyed and travel constrained in the region. In fact, up until 2016, the insurgents controlled several local government areas in Borno State. Moreover, the insurgency disrupted economic activities in many parts of the Northeast, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States.

There have been various efforts by the government, international community and other actors to bring the insurgency to an end. The Federal Government has deployed two complementary strategies, a military onslaught on the insurgents and a soft strategy which focuses on winning the minds, especially of young people, from the insurgents as well as de-radicalisation and reintegration of repentant former Boko Haram members.

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[203] https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html

1. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are presented according to the main research questions as follows:

4.1 The Current State of the conflict

There is no doubt that the military has succeeded in containing and rolling back the insurgents as many territories previously in the hands of the insurgents have been recovered and the insurgents flushed out of many of those places. They have, as government and military officials keep saying, technically degraded the insurgents. The onslaught has also contributed to the divisions that have occurred within the Boko Haram. Major towns in the region such as Maiduguri, Bama and Mubi, among others, have seen a process of restoration of normalcy, even though there are still pockets of attacks.

However, the insurgency is far from being defeated. The end of the conflict is still a posibility, not a reality at the moment. In spite of military successes recorded against the Boko Haram insurgents, the conflict has continued to linger with spells of attacks. This stage of the crisis is unsettling and more insidious given that many of the insurgents who have been flushed out have somehow become embedded in communities, which makes it easier for them to spring surprising attacks. These sporadic attacks have made it difficult to resettle displaced people and restore normalcy in the areas and communities deeply affected by the insurgency.

Attacks, although with less frequency, still occur with human causality and destruction. Resettlement in a number of communities has been impossible as the insurgents have either direct control of these communities or they control the roads to these communities. Economic activities, without which normalisation cannot occur, are still not possible in some places. In some cases, the Boko Haram insurgents have strategic control of

some of the economic resources and activities. For instance, in the Bama and Lake Chad axis, they control fishing and fishing trade. They were able to create new fish markets in Kusiri market in Northern Cameroon and another in Kinchandi in Niger Republic, thus effectively neutralising the biggest fish market in West Africa, the Baga Fish Market.[204] They have also redirected fish traders from Kano and Jigawa States to alternative markets in Niger Republic, thus squeezing out Maiduguri of commercial activities. They have continued to abduct humanitarian aid workers, villagers and others. They have continued to attack communities, killing many more people, including civilians and soldiers, and blocking highways, making inter-city travel, especially in Borno State, dangerous. For example, on November 1, 2020 the town of Chibok was attacked by the insurgents who killed 12 people and abducted seven others, in addition to burning several houses and looting food stores.[205] Earlier in October 2019, they had attacked a group of soldiers in Doska, Dambao LGA, killing seven of them.[206] But the most audacious attacks were on the convoy of the Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum. The first was on July 29, 2020 when his convey was attacked in Baga town where he had visited.[207] Several people were either killed or wounded in the Governor's convoy. Again, on September 26, 2020, his convoy was attacked a second time on its way to the same Baga town (Aljazeera, 2020).

The divisions within the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad have, instead of weakening the insurgency, opened up new fronts of engagement for the military, thus further stretching their forces. In spite of the number of insurgents killed, detained or those

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[204] Salkida, Ahmed, 2020: "How Boko Haram Sustains Operations Through International Trade In Smoked Fish", *Humanagle*, April 26, 2020, https://humanglemedia.com/how-boko-haram-sustains-operations-through-international-trade-in-smoked-fish/

[205] https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/11/02/boko-haram-kills-12-chibok/

[206] https://www.thecable.ng/seven-soldiers-killed-as-troops-get-tricked-by-boko-haram

[207] Campbell, John, 2020: "Borno Governor Survives Boko Haram Attack in Nigeria", *Africa in Transition*, Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.cfr.org/blog/borno-governor-survives-boko-haram-attack-nigeria

who have repented, the various factions of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad have continued to recruit new members, meaning that their recruiting grounds have not been destructed.

But bringing the insurgency to an end and a closure is imperative for Nigeria. How do we hasten the process of bringing the insurgency to an end? It is clear that military action alone cannot end the conflict. That means that military action will have to be complemented with a broader non-kinetic approach to winning the battle. Finding a solution to it will require a deeper understanding of the current state of the crisis, unearthing the factors that frame the continuing conflict and developing a framework within which a solution can come.

There is a simple assumption that there are only two parties to the conflict. This assumption makes it difficult to see the interest and fears of other actors that are not visible in the conflict arena but active behind the scene. Even within the Boko Haram, it is easy to assume that there is a homogenous movement with the same vision and goal. But in fact, there are various insurgents with allegiances to different factional leaders; there are supporters, profiteers and even associated criminals. All these are part of the conflict complex. A more nuanced understanding of the conflict and the position of different actors (seen and unseen) within the conflict complex map and what interests they have in the continuation or otherwise of the conflict is needed. We need to identify the factors that make the conflict resilient and what can be done to address these factors in such a way that the resilience of the conflict can be undermined and broken. We need to understand what interests each of these actors represents in shaping a post-conflict era. We need to know what they fear to lose if the conflict is ended and what can be done about these fears and how to address the post-conflict dynamics of reconciliation and justice.

The nature of the conflict has changed due to the military offensive against the insurgents, as well as the internal dynamics of

factionalisation among the insurgents themselves. At the height of the conflict in 2015, there was a single central organisation and authority within the Boko Haram structure. With its factionalisation in 2016, there is now not one single, central authority and leadership, but competing factions sometimes at war among themselves, and at times cooperating with each other in attacking their targets. With this break up in leadership, there are also now, possibly, other unallied groups who act on their own and are more or less independent of any of the factions, at least, at the level of command. This context has also given opportunity for criminals to appropriate a franchise without any link to any of the factions of the insurgents, operating and acting against targets and making it appear as if these were Boko Haram attacks.

Although, the insurgents are pushed to small rural areas territorially; nevertheless, some of them are still embedded within communities and working with those in the formations to coordinate attacks. Those embedded within the communities are responsible for generating information and intelligence gathering, identification of soft targets, handling logistics such as food supply, movement of ammunition, and other supplies that the insurgents need.

There is a decline in large-scale attacks, even as the insurgents' capacity to launch minor, incessant attacks on various locations and highways continue unabated. It has been observed that the frequency of attacks has recently increased. There is also a decline in the frequency of suicides and IEDs attacks, and disruption of their supply chains. However, rural areas remain relatively insecure. In addition, the Boko Haram has control of upper Borno North in local governments such as Abadan and the Lake Chad area. They are embedded in rural communities along Maiduguri-Damaturu Highway, and in Tarmuwa LGA of Yobe State, as well as in Kaga Local Government of Borno State. Boko Haram is still in control of most of Madagali local government area, except Gulak the local

government headquarters and a few other towns like Bebel, Vigirik, Vokolos, Vorkotok, Visik, which are considered as relatively safe. Many towns like Gubla, Sukur, Daurawa, Kamburu, Mazawa, Vengo, Borkoto, Hidik, Yibango, Makshe, Humshe, Jaje, Gatha, Chakama, Mandaka, Waga, Barngwaza, Gubla, etc. are considered as no-go areas because the insurgents control those areas.

4.2 Assessment of the government's efforts to win the battle

The military offensive embarked upon from 2015, along with the effort of the Multinational Joint Force against the insurgents, has been uneven. At the beginning it recorded successes, not only in halting the advance of the insurgents but also retook territories that were in the control of Boko Haram. Virtually all the areas in Yobe were retaken by the military, and much of the areas of central Borno occupied by Boko Haram were purged of the insurgents; similarly, they were pushed out of occupied areas in Adamawa State. In partnership with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the insurgents were flushed out of Maiduguri and most urban settlements in the Northeast. Those pushed out of the cities and urban centres moved to rural areas where they camped and are operating from, usually attacking communities for food, medication and money. The result was that the insurgents are holed up in isolated patches such as in the northern fringe of Borno and around the Lake Chad area, where the ISWAP operates, and in the Sambisa forest and in the border region between Borno and Adamawa States where the Shekau faction controls, as well as in the areas around Kaga LGA in Borno, and Tarmuwa LGA in Yobe State along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway.

The strategy of the military at that time was to take the battle to the insurgents as a result of which the military created many small units that were dispatched across a large terrain in control by the Boko Haram insurgents. With the collapse of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), the military power appeared weakened and the insurgents exploited this, attacking these small units, killing

soldiers and taking over their weapons, ammunition and equipment. This weakened the morale of the soldiers leading to a change in strategy. In July, 2019, the President Muhammadu Buhari announced that the military was changing its strategy of engaging the insurgents. Subsequently, in August, 2019 Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, the then Chief of Army Staff (COAS), speaking at the COAS combined second and third quarter conference in Abuja, explained that the new strategy was essentially about creating what they termed super camps. The super camps entail the concentration of weapons, equipment and personnel in small number of large military formations. All the previous small units were thus disbanded and withdrawn and the personnel were posted to one of the super camps. While the military explained this as responding to change in the war, it was clear that this was a move to protect as well as safeguard itself against the hijacking of military equipment and ammunition by the insurgents. Lt Gen Buratai revealed that "so far, 20 Super Camps have been established in the northeast with more platforms deployed to support the initiative/strategy."

Unfortunately, this created a new problem. With only a few super camps, many of the areas became totally with no military presence and thus became exposed to attacks by the insurgents. It was this that the insurgent groups capitalised upon and mounted a number of new attacks. For example, when they attacked both Magumeri and Gubioon 21st August, 2019, these areas had no military cover and the insurgents operated for many hours, looting and burning property. The success in this emboldened the insurgents who began a series of more daring, frequent small-size attacks. The most notorious was the attack at Auno, along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway on September 25, 2019,[208] in which over 30 people were killed, and large number of people abducted. The most audacious was the attack on Biu LGA on the 23rd of December 2019 where

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[208] Aljazeera, 2020: "Several killed in attack on security convoy in northeast Nigeria", Aljazeera, 26 Sep 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/26/several-killed-in-attack-on-security-convoy-in-northeast-nigeria

Boko Haram insurgents overran two villages but was repelled before gaining access to the town itself.[209] However, they launched a second attack on same Biu within 24hours. They also launched a deadly attack on Garkida in Adamawa State.

The general perception from the discussion with stakeholders is that the military successes that were recorded in the 2015/2016 are now been rolled back and that the insurgents seem to be gaining grounds. While the military has repeatedly said it had "degraded" the capacity of the insurgents, the insurgents have proven resilience in confronting the military. As it is now, there are clear signs of stalemate and majority of respondents across categories are convinced that military action alone cannot defeat the insurgents or bring the conflict to a closure.

4.4 Dialogue and reconciliation as option for resolution

From the survey, respondents believe that the following can help to promote dialogue and reconciliation:

1. Community and Religious Leaders: A broad consensus in the findings indicate traditional and religious bodies play a central role in dialogue because of their historical roles in conflict resolution as more trustworthy and acceptable citizens to all stakeholders.

2. Community members are ambivalent about negotiations: While they understand the place of negotiation in finding lasting peace, they feel too aggrieved to easily forgive the insurgents, but nonetheless believe there cannot be sustainable peace without the involvement of the military in peace negotiations.

3. Military: The military does not consider dialogue and negotiation as an option. The military considers its role as to

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[209] https://www.csw.org.uk/2020/07/03/press/4712/article.htm

fight and win the war and not to negotiate or dialogue with Boko Haram. They do not see the need to dialogue with terrorists.

4. Governments: The Federal Government has severally said it was willing to negotiate and indeed, a number of times has negotiated with the insurgents to seek the release of some abductees. However, the message about willingness to dialogue with the insurgents is feeble and appears contradictory. This contradictory stand is attributed to the lack of a trusted mediator which is acceptable to the leadership of the insurgents. The state governments, while not opposed to dialogue and negotiation, think that responsibility for that lies with the Federal Government.

5. Youth and other non-state actor combatants such as the Civilian Joint Task Force: The CJTF and vigilante both indicate willingness to support dialogue with BH if it will bring an end to the conflict. Although in Adamawa, they appeared to be skeptical about dialogue and reconciliation with the insurgents.

6. Elders, including ethnocultural groups such as the Borno Elders: Most respondents among this category of stakeholders agree that dialogue is an unavoidable process that must be undertaken if the final goal is to end the crisis and obtain sustainable peace.

7. The Insurgents: The insurgents are no longer a homogenous group. They are divided into factions, and even within the factions, along different hierarchies. Respondents think that ISWAP appears more willing to negotiate than the JAS as indicated by ISWAP's tendency to announce abductions or capture of civilians. But within the factions, there is a hierarchy with the top leaders and others who are ideologically committed and not interested in dialogue, while the

opportunists and the foot soldiers who are at the lower rungs of the hierarchy are amenable to dialogue.

8. Women and girls: As victims, they feel the need for retributive justice to take its cause so that a closure could be brought to the pains they endured. This group is not predisposed to dialogue.

4.5 Agency for promotion of dialogue and reconciliation

Respondents believe that there are four groups of people who are best placed to promote dialogue and reconciliation. These are:

1. Religious and traditional leaders: As these are respected, they can be relied upon to help with the campaign and not to only address the negative perception of the population about dialogue and negotiation. They should also enlighten the public that negotiation and dialogue are not to placate the insurgents. They will be listened to because they are respected and trusted by their communities. They are seen as custodians of religious knowledge, mentors and role models. They exert influence on their followers and command loyalty, respect and followership. They are a dependable medium of information dissemination through weekly sermons and daily preaching. With respect to religious leaders, a selection could be made from Friday Mosque Imams as they have influence with their congregations and also a wide network that could enable them to reach out to insurgents. In general, the imam from the Izala sect from which the Boko Haram sect germinated from would be more acceptable to the insurgents in terms of getting them to the negotiating table. For traditional rulers, the lower end (that is, maianuguwas, ward heads, etc) are either too compromised in the eyes of the citizens or too feeble to make impact. On the other hand, leaders at the top such as the Emirs are far removed as to have means to reach out to the insurgents; the middle level such as district heads should have the agency in getting their citizens to listen, as well mobilise networks from within their

communities to reach out to the insurgents. Farmers and people in the rural areas have better chance of reaching out to the insurgents.

2. NGOs/INGOs/Humanitarian Organisations: These can help to reach potential parties for dialogue, as well as talk to the parties that are either ambivalent or are outrightly opposed to dialogue. A number of INGOs are particularly considered by the NSAGs as neutral and reliable as they were involved in the past negotiations for the release of the abducted "Chibok" and "Dapchi" school girls which is seen by most respondents, to a larger extent, as successful.

3. Youths and Civilian Joint Task Force: Over the period, these have acquired influence and prestige among youth. They are an influential voice within the communities. They can be relied upon to promote dialogue among members of the communities. Youths will play an important role in convincing the skeptical population about the importance of dialogue and negotiation in finding sustainable peace.

4. Government: Ultimately, the government has not only the resources but also the responsibility for working to ensure the restoration of peace. It has influence on the military without which respondents think there can be no dialogue.

4.6 Stakeholder engagement approaches

Regarding the best approaches of engaging the actors, the study found that:

1. The people and organisations that will promote dialogue are not adversaries in this case, in which case, it is easy to approach them. However, the government which should be the one to make the approach must be clear about what it wants from these groups.

2. An approach can be made by convening stakeholders' consultative meetings to discuss the possibilities and challenges of dialogue as a possible option for bringing the conflict to closure. All the groups should be identified and invited. These meetings should then discuss the subject matter and arrive at their own conclusions before the government takes further action. Once the meetings agree through consensus on dialogue, there should be further discussion on who should promote and set up a committee for this purpose.

3. As part of the preparation, the government should establish a dialogue and reconciliation committee and co-opt repentant Boko Haram members into the committee.

4.7 Feasibility of competing demands of major actors

There are basically four competing sets of demands that would require tradeoffs and balancing. These are:

1. Communities are demanding for justice/accountability and the need to bring the leadership of the insurgents to justice: The insurgents have committed, and indeed are still committing atrocities for which natural justice requires that they be made accountable. Those who have lost their loved ones and those who have suffered emotional, psychological, physical and other forms of torture in the hands of the insurgents or as a result of the activities of the insurgents will want those who perpetrated these crimes to be brought to justice. On the other hand, dialogue and negotiation will at once seem to legitimise what the insurgents have done. It will imply some form of amnesty. **In this respect, it is important that as part of the Dialogue and Negotiation Framework, there is a firm post-conflict Justice Mechanism that should be arrived at through an inclusive consultation process.**

2. Short-term versus long-term peace: Military action would

bring short-term victory to specific communities and would appeal to the public sense of justice, that the insurgents have been adequately dealt with. However, this short-term victory cannot guarantee long-term peace as both history and the reality of experiences with the Boko Haram show that insurgency is hardly ever defeated militarily. Thus, while they can suffer defeats, the insurgents could still hold residual power to inflict violence on the society. A long-term peace on the other hand has to be negotiated. This may require a ceasefire with no guarantee that the other side will respect all the terms of the ceasefire.

3. Resources for IDPs and Resettlement and reconstruction or for payoff to negotiation and meeting negotiation conditions: It is clear that dialogue and negotiation will have to come at a cost. That cost may mean proportioning resources for the welfare and safety of IDPs, as well for reconstruction and resettlement, to facilitate the conditions for dialogue and negotiation. How do we strike the balance? How will the Negotiation Framework deal with the perception that resource is being used to reintegrate killers while victims are not adequately cared for?

4. The political agenda of the insurgents: Although there is no coherent political agenda within the wider membership of the insurgents, the ideological layer of the insurgents has a vague idea for the establishment of an Islamic state in the region. Such an idea clashes with the inviolability of the borders of Nigeria and the principle of secularity that guides the unity of the country. This demand cannot be met by the country and cannot be a point of negotiation. It will be a difficult point.

4.8 Risks of promoting dialogue

The study identified some risks that have to be anticipated and mitigation strategies proposed in prompting dialogue with the insurgents. These include:

1. Dialogue is largely seen by the population as rewarding insurgency. The notion that people who have committed atrocities could be invited for dialogue is an incongruous conception to the people who lost loved ones as a result of the insurgents' actions.

   Mitigation: Conduct an effective and sustained public enlightenment and educative campaigns to make the people appreciate the need for peace and price required for peace.

2. Most citizens are not willing to accept and live with de-radicalised insurgents in the same communities where atrocities took place. This has the risks of pushing repentant and surrendered former insurgents to return to the insurgent groups.

   Mitigation: It is important to involve all to understand that, ultimately, peace is more important than the need for getting our pound of flesh. We need to consider all, the insurgents inclusive, as victims. This would require sustained stakeholders engagement.

3. In the current stage of the conflict, there are many factions of the insurgents. Will negotiation be with multiple actors or will it be a series of parallel dialogues with different factions? This presents a series of unmanageable scenarios, as well as the fact that there is no guarantee that internal conflicts within the factions will undermine negotiation process.

   Mitigation: A diligent study of the factions of the insurgents to proceed the articulation of the dialogue strategy. The study should be made to evaluate the various factions, their relative strengths, their leadership, and what areas they control or are operating in; as well as their links with external actors and their dispositions to dialogue, and what they can bring to the table.

4. Also, following its factionalisation is the mushrooming of independent groups which are not under the leadership of any of the factional leaders. While claiming to belong to some faction, these microcosmic criminal groups act independently and without authorisation. The leaderships of the factions have no control on this criminal infringement. Such groups would create a problem to negotiation.

   Mitigation: Intelligence work must be done to understand the interface between criminals operating under the cover of insurgency, and the operation of the insurgents, and draw a line between the two.

5. The insurgents may demand for amnesty as a precondition for dialogue and negotiation. There is no guarantee that their members who they want released and granted amnesty will not renege and refuse to negotiate.

   Mitigation: Amnesty should not be a one-off precondition for the negotiation; instead, it should be built along, on the basis of milestones and outcome. Each step or stage in the negotiation should have proportionate amnesty attached to it.

6. Interest groups associated with the war economy in the region will work to frustrate dialogue.

   Mitigation: The government must find strategies to deal with corruption in the counterinsurgency efforts

7. The military leadership seems to be opposed to dialogue and negotiation even as solders themselves are war weary and fatigued, and welcome dialogue. The risk is that if not properly taken on board, the military may take actions that can undermine dialogue efforts.

   Mitigation: The Commander in Chief should play his role once the government is committed to negotiation and rein in

any dissenting voice and deal with any infraction to the negotiation process.

8. Insurgents may see an opportunity in dialogue to extract additional demands from the government. In addition, there are elements of possible betrayal, vengeance, threat to life and personal safety.

   Mitigation: The safety of informants and negotiators must be paramount as part of the Negotiation Framework Document.

9. People who may provide entry point to the leadership of Boko Haram will be reluctant to do so for fear of being branded or even identified as Boko Haram supporters. There are also those who expressed concern over the possibility of being stigmatised by community members.

   Mitigation: Adequate public enlightenment and protection mechanism will address this.

4.9 Reaching out to the Stakeholders

The general perception is that dialogue has to be as broadly inclusive as possible. In this sense, virtually all stakeholders have a role to play. These include:

1. Communities: in addition to direct contact through state governments, the media should be deployed here to mount sustained enlightenment on the need for negotiation.

2. Repentant insurgents: government agencies responsible for their rehabilitation, as well as development partners and CSOs, can be relied upon.

3. Professional negotiators: the government, development partners and media contacts, as well as community leaders should be deployed for this purpose.

4. The army: The Legislature at the national level should engage the army as part of their oversight function with a view to getting them to accept the imperative of dialogue and negotiate with the insurgents

5. Armed non-state actors: state governments, which have been supporting and regulating these groups are better positioned to reach out to stakeholders.

6. Youth groups: state governments acting through their ministries for youth development and working with CSOs and development partners working on youth issues can make the approach.

7. Women groups: Women can be reached through local women associations, as well other CSOs and development partners working on women and peace issues.

8. Religious and community leaders: these can be reached using a variety of means. The government can lead, but CSOs can also make independent approach. Approach by the government can be in the form of consultative meetings, while CSOs can reach them through sensitisation and peace meetings.

9. Local Political Leadership: this can be accessed through state governments in the three states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe.

10. Leaders of Insurgents: The insurgents can be approached through the NGOs and INGOs; in fact, the government has already used this medium to secure the release of abductees in the past.

4.10 Pre-conditions and steps for negotiation

Dialogue, especially over matters that have led to the killing of many people, will be delicate, painful and slow. For this reason, adequate preparation must be made and the assurance of different

stakeholders of their preparedness and acceptance to dialogue must be established. The following steps are suggested as pre-conditions:

1. The government engages communities to understand and appreciate the need for dialogue as critical to lasting peace.

2. The government needs to deploy resources and demonstrate results in the resettlement of IDPs as many respondents argued that a central element to defeating the insurgents is the return of IDPs to their original homes because it will enable the military to move further away and occupy more space thereby squeezing the insurgents into a tight position.

3. The military should fine-tune its military strategy to ensure that there is adequate military cover and protection for both rural and urban communities against attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents since attacks will undermine the confidence of communities in any dialogue.

4. The government has to find ways to address the excesses and arbitrariness of the military which make citizens unwilling to cooperate with them. In particular, without engendering a better civil-military relation, communities are not likely to contribute effectively in undercutting the recruitment base of the insurgents.

5. Effective measures must be in place to address corruption and self-serving interests that have become embedded in the counterinsurgency architecture of the government

6. It is important for the process to be transparent, coordinated and context-sensitive, while, simultaneously, empowering local communities to strengthen their participation

7. It is important to understand the diversity and positions of the various stakeholders – of victims and perpetrators, and identify

where the red line lies and what happens to those who cross the red line.

8. The government must find a way to deal with corruption (both perceived and real) in the war against the insurgents, which undermines the morale of soldiers and the confidence of the communities in the capacity of the military to protect them.

9. There should be transparent monitoring of the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant insurgents to ensure that they do not relapse. This is to win the confidence of communities that rehabilitation is actually not a negative option.

10. Dialogue should be carried out with open-mindedness, fairness, and with the utmost privacy and security of parties involved. And all agreements reached should be honoured by both the government and the insurgents.

11. Finally, an element that will push the insurgents to the path of dialogue is depleting their number through surrender, as well as making it difficult for them to recruit new members. In this sense, both efforts to win more surrenders should be pursued, while strategies to undercut further recruitment through enticement or forceful abduction must be in place.

4.11 The proposed dialogue process

As a first stage, community members drawn from various groups and supported by the government are to engage in a community healing and counselling process to prepare them to understand and accept the long-term logic of the dialogue that encompasses both victims and perpetrators. The role of traditional and religious leaders in facilitating this phase is critical to the success and sustainability of the wider dialogue process.

Negotiation must be multi-layered, deployed at various levels and

in stages. It is proposed that the negotiation would take the layering form as follows:

- ❖ a "thin" version (a simple agreement between former enemies to live together and use other means than violence to resolve conflicts);

- ❖ a "thicker" version (where former enemies agree to not only live together in peace, but also interact in areas of common interest with mutual respect for each other); and

- ❖ an even thicker version of reconciliation would involve a process of mutual forgiveness and healing.

At each level, the Negotiation and Dialogue Framework of the government must be explicit regarding expectations, in terms of the level of peace that can be achieved, what forms of transactions should take place, and what challenges to anticipate to therefore propose mitigating strategies.

CONCLUSION

There are a few contextual differences across the three states – of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe – which have helped in shaping attitudes that are positively disposed to dialogue and negotiation. The traditional rulers in Adamawa are willing and ready for reconciliation, while those of Borno and Yobe have made it clear that they do not want reconciliation. There is also the fact that whereas Boko Haram activities were/are more widespread covering large number of communities in Borno, while in Adamawa, it was limited to a few communities in three or so local governments. Yobe falls somewhere in between. Additionally, there have been more abduction of people by the insurgents in Borno than in the two other states. All these have created a more hardened feeling against the insurgents in Borno than in the other states, making the Borno people to, generally, think negatively about engaging in dialogue

and negotiation with the insurgents. Not only that, they are also unwilling to have repentant Boko Haram elements in their communities, a fact that has seen the success of the Operation Safe Corridor relatively more successful in Adamawa than in Borno. There is also the fact that while Yobe tends to be more religiously homogeneous, in Borno there have been sustained operations in minority Christian communities as well as among new converts to Islam, a fact that tends to complicate matters. This is even more obvious in Adamawa where the operations have been in areas of mixed religious communities, with the result that often, Boko Haram operations have contributed in creating disunity and undermined collective community action. Nevertheless, these differences are not fundamental as to either make negotiations in some places possible, and impossible in others, or even to result in markedly different outcomes.