

BOKO HARAM IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN AFRICA: REBUILDING STRATEGIES BY GOVERNMENTS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT: The Boko Haram terrorist movement, which started in 2000 onwards in North-Eastern Nigeria, entails humanitarian disasters and destruction of socioeconomic infrastructures and social structure. The origin of the movement started in the poorest regions of Nigeria with alarming socioeconomic indicators. The assumption of economic and Marxist causes of the insurgency seems relevant even though further driving factors might be outlined. The government's first reaction against terrorist conquest was military and humanitarian to try overcoming the emergency. During the war and at early recovery within concerned regions, even though each government set a pack of their strategies, some common strategies are being implemented inspired by neighboring policies. The significance and financial measures of implemented strategies for rehabilitation and social and physical rebuilding broadly fluctuate in the countries of study: Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. However, rebuilding sustainable peace in this region requires implementing significant socioeconomic development and enhancing population welfare.

Keywords: Boko Haram, peace rebuilding, socioeconomic indicators, rehabilitation, sustainable development, welfare.

Orta ve Batı Afrika'daki Boko Haram: Hükümetler Tarafından Yeniden İnşa Edilen Stratejiler

ÖZ: Kuzey Doğu Nijerya'da 2000 yılından itibaren başlayan Boko Haram terörist hareketi, insanlığı felaketlere sürüklemiştir. Ayrıca hem sosyo ekonomik altyapıların hem de sosyal yapıların yıkılmasına yol açmaktadır. Bu hareket Nijerya'nın en fakir bölgesinde yeşermiştir, bu yüzden esas nedenleri ekonomik ve Marksist görünmektedir. Hükümetlerin terörist işgallere ilk tepki, askeri ve insani olmuştur ve böylece acil durumun üstesinden gelinmeye çalışılmıştır. Savaş ve erken toparlanma sırasında, her hükümetin kendi stratejilerini belirlemesine rağmen, komşu politikarlardan esinlenerek bazı ortak stratejilerin uygulandığı açıkça görülmektedir. Açıkçası, Yeniden yaşanabilir hale getirme (rehabilitasyon) ve sosyal ve fiziksel yapıyı yeniden kurmak için uygulanan stratejilerin önemi ve finansal maliyeti ülkeden ülkeye yani Nijerya'dan, Kamerun ve Çad'a değişmektedir. Ancak bu bölgede sürdürülebilir barışın yeniden inşası, etkili sosyoekonomik kalkınmanın uygulanmasını ve nüfus refahının artırılmasını gerektirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Boko Haram, barışın yeniden inşası, sosyoekonomik göstergeler, rehabilitasyon, sürdürülebilir kalkınma, refah.

Introduction

The Boko Haram terror group has brought about the human disaster and costly damages to social, economic, and market infrastructures. Thousands of dead and injured, hundreds of thousands of displaced had been recorded. Many villages, localities, and communities have been destroyed. Infrastructure destruction was not the most worrying issue as social and economic structures had been deeply unbalanced or, at some point, had collapsed. Therefore, authorities took the responsibility to rebuild and keep peace throughout the affected regions, with the priority to end the war, manage the humanitarian crisis, and to improve the welfare. The authorities implemented social programs and ensured proper rehabilitation and resettlement schemes for displaced and affected victims by framing and implementing a salient framework of reconciliation and longstanding reconstruction of physical infrastructures and social landscape. However, the implemented programs might be doomed somewhat as insufficient due to inefficient consideration and implementation of post-conflict redevelopment driven policies.

Brief Presentation of the Conflict Zone and Theoretical Framework

Brief presentation of the conflict zone

Central Africa region comprises many countries; however, only two among them, Cameroun and Chad, are affected by terrorism. In West Africa Nigeria and Niger remain countries under the Boko haram threat even though other terrorist organizations are active over there, especially within the Sahel zone. Regardless of the country involved, Boko haram settles within the Sahel region, overlapping share of

central and western Africa. It should be noted that the Sahel region remains among the poorest in Africa with high discouraging socioeconomic indicators (OCHA, 2019). Currently number of terror groups is active over this region and at some places they have threatened seriously states' authority. More accurately, this article covers actions undertaken within 4 above aforementioned countries of Lake Chad Basin.

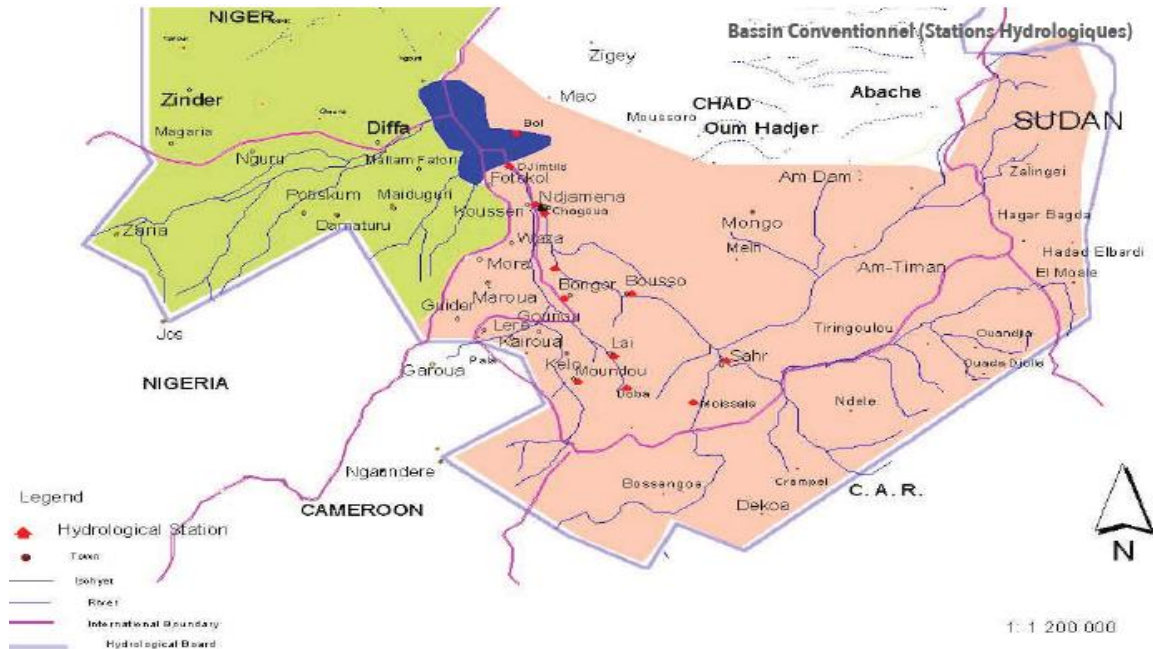


Figure 1. Lake Chad basin (African union report 2018)

Theoretical framework

Several theories are explaining the underlying causes of conflicts. Concerning the present article, Marxist theory and economic theories of conflicts are related to the Boko Haram context background.

Marxist theory of conflict

Broadly, despite being a disciple of Hegel, Karl Marx, a proponent of idealism, underpinned a materialist standpoint. The theory highlights that the system of production frames ideology in societies. Within capitalist society, the means of production' owners take over the working class's livelihood. The share of profit between capitalist who increasingly pulls up their gain, and workers would entail a society with endless conflicts due to inequality between both classes. Therefore the unique solution is grounded on revolution and violence that should bring about the elimination of bourgeoisie or capitalist by the working class hence shaping a new classless society cleared of conflicts (CAIRN.INFO, 2013).

The economic theory of conflict

The assumption is roughly leaning in the linkage between economic deprivations and conflict that is to say competition over control of scarce economic resources. Paul Collier (2004) one of proponents of this theory, underlined that competition of elites over controlling worthy natural resources' rent which leads to conflict conceals as collective grievance. Broadly, economic theory of conflicts advocates that poverty drives to conflicts. When a given group copes with a shortage or scarcity of livelihood means, there is a possibility of conflict (Charles & Osah, 2018). Public fund embezzlement worsened to a large extend population livelihood and deepen social inequalities in North-Eastern Nigeria.

Genesis and Underlying Causes of Conflict in North Eastern Nigeria

Genesis of conflict

Boko Haram is a sectarian organization founded by Mohammad Yussuf in Maiduguri, Borno state. The movement started up with a group of religion-based seminar students, unemployed, deprived, and deemed as socially excluded who established later on their headquarter within the rural area and tagged themselves as Nigerian Taliban and then by 1994 undertook organizing attacks against some police stations. Therefore they entangled religion with social deception and moved towards jihad. However, the phenomenon gained on notoriety in 2001, even though rejected by Muslim communities in Nigeria cause of misleading Jihad concept (Bintube, 2015).

However another stance sees in this movement not consequence of social, economic and political disturbances in concerned region but instead as local materialization of already existing global trend within Salafi panorama. This arrived at the time when Saudia Arabia were carrying out great battle against political Islam by condemning strongly democracy and election as ruling polotical system in a bid to overcome internal power challenges (Brigaglia, 2015). The newly move of Nigeria from military rule to democratic system was not working in favor of stable institutions.

Driving factors of conflict

Socio-economic factors

The North-Eastern region concentrated more on Nigeria's worrisome socioeconomic indicators: lower gross domestic product, weaker schooling rate and healthcare delivery, as well as highest extreme poverty rate culminating at nearly 70%. Unemployment in 2010 was higher than the national average, which was about 32% (Relief web, 2012). Additionally, deep-rooted corruption had fuelled unsustainable socio-economic inequalities as well as distrust vis-a-vis the state. Thus most Boko Haram members come from a lower social class.

Political factors

According to Bintube (2015) some political entrepreneurs led by greedy goal of conquering power had used private militias made up of idle youth that were abandoned by their masters after assignments 'completion. Aftermath they joined and strengthened army of insurgents and contributed to destabilize localities. Furthermore, the rejection of Western mind-oriented elites who had illustrated themselves towards ruthless rule, contributed in mobilizing sympathizers of Boko Haram. They were fully or somewhat favorable to insurgents considering them instead as freedom fighters.

Rebuilding Strategies by Governments

Aftermath of military response to halt the rapid and spread of Boko Haram and ensure confinement of its actions into limited areas, governments to buck this trend, launched further socioeconomic measures on reconstructing destroyed infrastructures and improving the living standard of the population. It should be noted that this article does not have the pretention to mention exhaustively implemented inherent governmental programs. Likewise, this research concerns merely 4 countries in western and central Africa, namely Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. Furthermore, several measures are common in implementation across different countries that had often coordinated their strategies to overcome cross-borders threats and to optimize their military, social and humanitarian intervention. Even though these countries collaborated efficiently, some strategies are carried out separately referring to countries' context and the large difference of disasters recorded on the ground.

In 2018 according to a report issued by African Union, governments had adopted common regional strategies ahead of former fighters' reintegration. In this regard, numerous national and regional planning workshops for consultation are organized. These strategies articulate mainly as follows:

- The first step concern mostly basic urgent assistance that is to say nutrition, health and psychosocial supports of victims and repented fighters;
- Then socioeconomic considerations follow throughout providing vocational training and un-depinning set of income-generating activities. In doing so, regional coordinated strategies for reintegration are framed and executed in favor of ex Boko Haram members, returnees, self-defense groups, victims as well as youth at risk.

It should be pointed out that national strategies are highly executed in accordance with regional framework. For in-depth insight, systematic explanation at national scale of strategies is necessary.

Cameroon rebuilding strategies

In Cameroon, following measures might be flagged.

Reconstructing of schools, hospitals, and further social infrastructures

Cameroon officially entered war with Boko Haram in 2014. The humanitarian support had been provided by international organizations and NGOs such as World Food Program, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration etc, and by national donors. Humanitarian unfolding played a salient role in assisting helpless displaced persons and refugees. At the initial stages of the conflict, the government assessed needed funds to alleviate poverty in that region. Projects like reconstructing schools, hospitals, and boreholes drilling were initiated (international crisis group, 2017). Indeed, construction of social infrastructures goes in line of fighting poverty deemed as driver of terrorism inasmuch as the region was recording low infrastructure's coverage before Boko Haram spreading and this was worsened by terrorist attacks leading to the destruction of already insufficient existing ones. Improving public services delivery remains widely accepted social policy in for poverty alleviation.

Socioeconomic reintegration of former fighters

Several Boko Haram fighters have surrendered after the government pledged to ensure their economic and social integration. Indeed, as farming activities are the primary tool of that reintegration program, 13 hectares of land had been acquired by administrative authorities. Moreover, the UN representatives contribute to enabling some former fighters to farm land and grant them fertilizers and seeds (Kinzeka, 2019).

Establishment of de-radicalization centers

De-radicalisation of former fighters is the first condition to reintegration based on the fact that some of them involved in an armed training program thus might represent a threat to society. Psychologists and psychiatrists' experts would implement de-radicalization's programs in centers and ensure that they rebound with a typical mindset far away from terrorist ideology. These measures are inspired by Niger's policies, where former fighters testified deep regret after their reintegration and socialization. However, the return of former fighters remains misunderstood by their communities where they had committed crimes such as killing, injuring and robbery. Communities are not always ready to welcome them either because of revenge feelings or because hosting them again might threaten their security (international crisis group, 2017).

Youth employment

The government is looking forward to implementing a new program called Youth Konnect to underpin youth self-employment by funding their reliable projects. Although this is a nationwide program driven by African continental policy, in Cameroun, the far north region remains more concerned due to its large young population (Pahai, 2019). Besides this, some programs are getting implemented for the same purpose at the local level by municipalities located in areas directly concerned by terrorism effects and the support of the United Nations.

Moreover, local administrations are carrying out projects supported by the European Union and other technical partners. This partnership including Agence de Developpement Francaise and Care international aims at carrying out a series of highly labor-intensive construction programs such as rural roads, well drillings, and other infrastructures. Indeed, fighting against idleness and poverty, is deemed a powerful tool to prevent youth from getting enrolled by terrorists. Hence, these programs are expected to create thousands of employment opportunities for marginalized social groups, especially youth and women. However, since these projects remain casual on revenue earnings, technical support is provided to workers to ensure that a part of their pay will constitute a saving enabling to undertake and fund sustainable projects later on (EU, 2017).

Fiscal and tax exemptions

Reducing poverty and inequalities for consolidated peace and social justice remains core response to radicalization. To that end, the government multiplies efforts to attract investors. Indeed, fiscal and tax exemptions over three years for enterprises willing to settle in regions concerned by terrorist phenomenon had been set as incentives (Lassad, 2019).

Niger rebuilding strategies

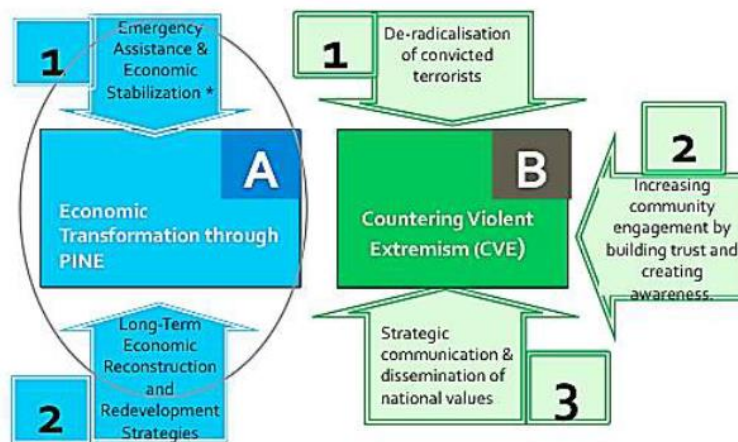
According to report issued by African Union in 2018, In Niger Islamic teachers are delivering lectures in Goudoumaria detention’s center for detainees. It aims at inculcating blessing values of Islam to former fighters. Given that their future reintegration in society depends highly of values and skills they own, they are recipient of civic and professional training schemes. Civic values attachments are compulsory for respect of institutional order while enhancing skills throughout mechanic, sewing or carpentry ensure minimum income for livelihood. However families are kept separated because at the starting their stay in the center witnessed arrival of newborn babies that entails concern of their wellbeing. Indeed, handling issue of children and minors within legal national and international frameworks in the context of terrorism fighting is huge challenge for authorities. In this regard, a children’s camp would be built with United Nations Development Program’s support near to their parents detention place and likewise minors released from jail after convicted for terrorism are benefiting of services supplied by an orientation and transition ‘s center where they are intended to stay for 3 months. Thus, the center is assigned to provide psychosocial support, mutual respect and tolerance-linked learning implemented practically towards therapy groups. However given that minors cannot be pushed out the center without any active guardianship, this period might be extended up until their respective families get property identified.

Those who have been detained transitionally in Goudoumaria center or who have been released after serving their sentences are doomed to get reinserted into society by authorities’ set committees. Indeed, these committees work on gathering them with their families and victims during protocol celebration called ARDIA that means Acceptation in a bid to ease their reintegration in their respective communities.

Nigeria rebuilding strategies

In Nigeria rehabilitation and reintegration’s process involves de-radicalization’s programs, psychological support and vocational training. During this stage, ex Boko Haram members must have a stay that might last at least 16 weeks in Gombe camp in the Northern-East that can be extended according to some external drivers. Obviously, it should be guaranteed to those who abandon terrorist activities that once they are outside of rehabilitation camp that their existence is not threatened by their formers peers or their communities for instance. However, women and children are benefiting of softer programs that last solely between 8 and maximum 12 weeks in Bulunkutu center (African Union, 2018).

The Soft Approach to Countering Terrorism in the North-Eastern Nigeria



[Source: PINE Emergency Assistance and Economic Stabilisation (EA-ES) Report, 2014]

Nigeria, as the epicenter of Boko haram, obviously recorded higher cost. Therefore, rebuilding the country required adequate proportionate responses. In 2018 according to a governmental report (FRN, 2018), the government set up a unique plan to first overcome and handle humanitarian and social urgency and then relocate internal displaced and rebuild the impacted regions.

The Immediate Comprehensive Relief Program

It concerns emergency actions at an early crisis made up of 3 main spheres:

- The Food Relief Materials Programme, consisting of providing to needed persons a minimum of sixteen food items (rice, maize, salt, sugar, milk, milo, etc.). This relief is doomed to assistance, which should last months and refer to security and nutrition standards.
- The Non-Food Relief Materials Scheme grounded on supplying a minimum pack of thirteen non-food items (mattresses, buckets, mosquito nets, antiseptic soap, sanitary pads, multivitamins, water purifying tablets, nylon mats, matches, wheelbarrows, etc.). The distribution is targeted to cover sufficiently months.
- The Unconditional Cash Transfers Scheme aims to ensure the allocation of cash to affected households to allow them to purchase additional items that are not involved in food relief and non-food relief materials.

Social stabilization and protection

Social stabilization stands as an essential condition for peace rebuilding and peacekeeping. Rebuilding peace needs social welfare delivery that should lead to reconstructing in a sustainable way the social structure destroyed during the insurgency. Therefore, the following actions had been undertaken by the government (FRN, 2018);

- Ensuring reliable protection to vulnerable groups;
- Urgent primary Health care ;
- Implementing favorable conditions for The Back to School;
- handling capacity building for efficient actions of main stakeholders on rebuilding peace.

With respect to social protection, key actions and programs are focused on:

-The Cash Transfer Program: which aims at guaranteeing regularly meet of needs of vulnerable groups in a bid to improving their wellbeing.

- The Psychosocial Care and Trauma Rehabilitation Support Program: people most severely impacted by the insurgency need psychological and trauma assistance as well as rehabilitation. Furthermore, the extension of these forms of assistance to capacity building appears as necessary, given victims' large number.

Reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resettlement

Nigerian government confirms 6.7 billion dollars for reconstruction, rehabilitation, and resettlement in the North East. Indeed, programs covering agricultural revitalization, health, entrepreneurship on self-employment, and infrastructures would be carried out. For instance, women affected by the conflict can access vocational training, which includes learning skills like hairdressing, bead and jewelry making, cosmetology, knitting, tailoring, bag and shoemaking, computer proficiency, recycling, catering, and more (Punch, 2018).

Reintegration of former fighters

It concerns supporting the reintegration of former fighters, civilian militia, and those associated with insurgent groups, broadly with a long-term view toward social healing and reconciliation. Following their release from rehabilitation centers, the ex-insurgents are issued certificates confirming their psychosocial normalcy before returning to live in local communities (Brechenmacher, 2019).

Chad rebuilding strategies

Until 2018, Chadian government did not engage any actions aiming at setting up rehabilitation programs. The priority in term of fighting terrorism is grounded on enhanced socioeconomic development by implementing policies to support foremost existing primary sector activities (African Union, 2018). As follows some set measures can be noted along the line of overcoming radicalization and improving people's livelihood.

Projects' development around Chad lake

The previous year, countries members of the Lake Chad basin gathered in Niamey. They assessed the needed fund at 100 million dollars for ensuring the improvement of basic services delivery and livelihood of local inhabitants threatened by Lake Chad dropping flow rate (Afrique panorama, 2019). Furthermore, authorities schedule several projects to leverage economic activities and enhance trade with neighboring countries (international crisis group, 2017).

Scholarships for some students

To prevent youth's frustrations who are mainly targeted by the terrorist group for recruitment, the government works to counter this situation by offering scholarships to some students living within the region under extensive threat of terrorism (BBC Afrique, 2019).

Conclusion

Despite that poverty and high inequality are not sole drivers of terrorism, Boko Haram insurgency occurs within the poorest regions of central and western Africa. Even though different governments redoubled efforts and commitments to neutralize and eradicate fighters with tangible and appreciable outcomes, currently, the terrorist group remains still active and deadly. The collapse of some states or regions such as Libya, Central African Republic or northern Mali contributes to strengthening terrorists groups that gain from the shortcoming of authority across the zone. In the middle and short term, better results might be obtained by stronger harmonization of reconstruction strategies at a regional scale and more relevant involvement of the international community, given that terrorist organizations tend to act as multinational companies transcending states' borders and continents. However, in the long run, inclusive growth and extensive welfare delivery stand as the sole condition of sustainable peace and security.

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