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Insecurity and the political economy of Borno state, Nigeria

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Abstract

The gross inability of the government to enthrone political security, economic security, and social security deeply reflects a major disconnect of the people from the political economy of Borno State. The abdication of government duty posts in effective wealth distribution has since enthroned insecurity as a cash cow to all involved stakeholders from State armed actors, non-state armed actors, and the civilian population. It was against this background that this study engaged State fragility Theory to investigate insecurity and the political economy of Borno State. This study deconstructed political economy into the emergence of ungoverned spaces as a political failure and the emerging socioeconomic gap as an economic failure on the part of the government while the terror cell groups are the bastion of insecurity. This study employs qualitative research with reliance on related academic publications, government reports, and available archive documents. Findings from this study showed that the emergence and sustenance of ungoverned spaces by terror cell groups in Borno State positively influence the menace of terrorism. The study also submitted that the ability of terror cell groups to access tax levies collection, willfully given by residents, greatly promotes the disposition of insecurity in Borno State. This study recommends that Nigeria should evolve a community-driven policy that dislodges all ungoverned spaces from the terror cell groups and lease the same out for value-chain agro production to prospective Arab farmers. The government should approach the hearts and minds of the Borno residents with good governance to counter ill governance narratives against it by terror cell groups.

Keywords: Economic Security, Political Security, State Fragility Theory, Terror Cell Groups

Introduction

There is no denying that certain societal indicators motivate people to crime and criminalities and terrorist ideas and then to practical actions. Most of these indicators emanate from social, economic and political domain; high social inequality could trigger isolation, government official seen in corruption while citizens battled poverty, could stimulate frustrated aggression that may occur in frequent violent conflicts and terrorism (Ola, 2018). When government as seen in absolute opulence, is not seen at her duty post of catering for the welfare of the citizen but demanding for citizen to be obedient in discharge of their civic duty, such could push citizen into the net of criminalities and where religious fundamental are involved, terrorism could evolve.

The apparent abdication of governance responsibilities by all tiers of government had long provided an environment where violence extremism organisation; Islamic State of West African Province (ISAWP) and

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Boko Haram Group (BH) have freedom to operate and build influence. While federal, state and local level political actors use ethnic and religious differences to divide populations amidst unabated corruption practices, terror cell groups grow in leaps and bounds winning the sympathy of the locals among whom they operate. The grip of the terror cell groups has since threatened the political economy of the state with penetrating hold on the socioeconomic activities and the sprawling ungoverned spaces in the State.

Such abdication of duty by government has the tendency to erode trust, threatened legitimacy of government, produce hatred, and anxiety towards the government. The emergence of an alternative to the State, which is the government and her representatives are widely seen in corruption. The discrepancy could manifest within economic, social, cultural, political and religious spheres as these issues form the micro level of analysis that could be regarded as the structural background conditions operating at individual level. Apparently, insurgencies and terror cell groups as seen in Borno State could therefore be linked to perceived discrepancy between the preferred way of life; as seen in lifestyle of government officials, politicians, and the actual state of their existence (with their resources being plundered by the others outside their control) that influence the dissonance (Alao et al., 2015).

There exist empirical evidence of links between insecurity and ungoverned spaces of both physical and nonphysical spaces (Bernard & Daful, 2021; Olaniyan & Akinyele, 2017). Ungoverned spaces are not limited to Africa but a global phenomenon that ranges from the ungoverned cyberspace to space that is devoid of State capacity or weak political will to exercise control. Such territories are remote, rugged and littoral areas not effectively monitored by a sovereign state (Lenshie, 2018). Such then serves as safe havens for terror cell groups to plan, train, and indoctrinate, secure access to weapons and equipment, engage in transnational organised crimes to generate income, and the benefit they can derive from the existence of staging grounds and transit zones. This apparent grip on ungoverned spaces could be seen extended to socioeconomic activities of Borno State.

The affront displayed by terror cell groups to control farm settlements, villages, towns and local governments; sacking all government structures and levying taxes upon the residents while providing security and other services translate a disconnect between the government and the political economy of the State. The ability to engage in wanton killings, arson, bombing and shooting with focus on vital public places; police stations, barracks, markets, churches, mosques, schools and both private and public owned facilities with a kind of guerilla tactics, further consolidated their ability to collect taxes and set the laws of areas under their jurisdiction (Aju & Aju, 2018).

This study is situated in Borno State, which is located within the Lake Chad; it shares national boundaries with Adamawa, Gombe and Yobe States and international boundaries with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Borno State is fertile for agricultural activities which serve as the main pre-occupation of its people as over 80% of the population is engaged in crop cultivation, animal husbandry and fishing is the major activities of the residents (Lawal, 2018). Due to its closeness to international boundaries, there is no gainsaying that the political economy of Borno state is more tilted to transnational border activities and not, to the far flung federal capital territories in Abuja, whose presence in Borno State are relics of ungoverned spaces.

There is a political economy that precipitated every criminal activity, which determines the reasons why people are motivated for these activities. The immediate causes of terrorist attacks vary on a case-by-case basis so their determination is not generally possible. However, it is possible to identify and analyze factors, which create preconditions for the emergence of insecurity and terrorism. Empirical studies suggest that poor structural social conditions, economic deprivation and security political instability situations create frustration, which in turn makes terrorism more likely. Social factors; social inequality, standard of living, level of citizen's education, economic factors (GDP, unemployment, inflation) and political factors; corruption, criminality, political instability, government ineffectiveness, war, violent conflict, and emergence of ungoverned space which potentially generate future terrorist activities (Břeň et al., 2019).

The unregulated transnational trades along porous borders on the Nigeria Northeastern border has firmly created trade routes for all illicit business of drug trafficking, foreign terrorist fighters, gun running, cattle rustling, illicit artisanal mining and banditry. Corruption is other factor where is no consensus as there is evidence of a long-term correlation relationship between corruption and terrorism (Boussiga & Ghdamsi, 2016). The proximity of Borno State and the war impacted Sahelian countries also increased the vulnerability of the State to terrorism, particularly the death of Momar Ghadaffi of Libya, whose death gave criminal unbridled access to proliferated Small Arms and Light Weapons (Mungadi et al., 2021).

This study is guided into achieving study's objective by providing answers to the following research questions:

i. What is effect of terror cell groups and the ungoverned space of Borno State?
ii. How do the terror cell groups influence socioeconomic activities of Borno State?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section ii presents a review of the literature on the concept of political economy, concept of security, the ungoverned space, and socioeconomic activities. Section iii briefly discusses the empirical review in the paper. Section iv describes the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Section v presents the methodology adopted by the study. The final section provides concluding remarks and recommendations

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Political Economy

Political economy is the study of how economic systems of markets and national economies and political systems of law, institutions, government are linked (Hacker et al., 2021). Political economy in its modern form is considered an interdisciplinary field, drawing on theory from both political science and modern economics (Bladen, 2016). The earliest works of political economy are usually attributed to the British scholars Adam Smith (Mill, 2009).

Political economy was thus meant to express the laws of production of wealth at the state level, quite like economics concerns putting home to order. It is a branch of social sciences that focuses on relationships between individuals, governments, and public policy. It is also used to describe the policies set by governments that affect their nations' economies.A good example of political economy is the concept of wealth distribution within a country. Wealth distribution is defined as how a country's goods, investments, properties, and resources, or wealth, are divided amongst its population (Mill, 2009).

In some countries, wealth is distributed quite evenly, whereas in other countries, wealth is distributed unevenly. Countries with uneven wealth distribution are more susceptible to political tension as some groups often feel they have been denied their 'fair share of the pie'. Similarly, political economists look at how the market affects the state and its society. For example, market forces can force elected politicians to change their perspectives.

Political economy when unmanaged or wrong managed by the public to reflect the welfare of the people, such can send wrong signal to the populace and create disconnect between the governed and the government. The narrative of insurgencies against the government is the apparent bad governance which the terror cell groups are campaigning against in the territories under their control. Terrorist provide security for the populace in exchange for a fee of levies and taxes and such is provided without harassing the public, something which is found among Nigeria law enforcement agencies

Concept of Security

Security is often considered to be an essential human need, a fundamental requisite for the continued existence, livelihood and dignity of people (Weisbrod, 2006). It is argued that security, when embedded in people's lives brings about senses of belonging, stability and direction (ILO, 2004b) and gives people the

power of self-control, which is necessary for real freedom and independence. Security is also understood in terms of national survival needs, i.e. protecting boundaries and citizens from external attacks (Standing, 2002).

Security, in sum, by equipping people with social agency and by providing them with suitable environments to act not only enables them to participate in the decision-making process, but also enhances their capabilities to influence policies in the direction of their own interests (Commission on Human Security, 2003). Security is now beyond State centric approach beyond guns and ammunition and now situated into human security hence security could be triggered of by fears, lacks and wants that threatens the welfare of an individual from food to economic to environmental.

Terror Cell Groups and Insurgencies in Borno State

Insurgencies in Borno state is dominated by Boko Haram and splinter group of ISWAP, the recent trend depicts that Boko Haram are collapsing into ISWAPS after the death of BH leader, Shekau (Global Terrorism Index, 2022). The terror cells groups are deeply involved in banditry, security protection at illicit mining sites in the North west, kidnapping, cattle rustling and drug trafficking. While insurgency today follows state failure, and directed at taking over a functioning body politic, while dismembering or scavenging carcass, or contesting an "ungoverned space' (Kilcullen, 2009).

Investigations reveal how some factors contribute to escalation of crimes such as terrorism, rape, banditry and violence. These include lack of education among youths, communication gap between the government and the governed, lack of awareness, injustice among ethnic and religious followers in the country (Ukanwa, 2022). More - over, some religiously motivated insurgencies as seen partly of IWASP have political aim; the very act of insurgency may be seen as earning God's favour. However, the establishment of a Middle Eastern 'caliphate' by ISIS gives credibility to this as ISWAP is seen setting out rules and laws regulating territories under their control (Kilcullen 2009).

In contrast to their rivals al-Qa'ida, ISIS to which both BH and ISWAP have sworn allegiance, made a determined effort to gain and hold territory rather than just carry out terrorist attacks against opponents. In establishing (or in their terms restoring) a 'caliphate' in Iraq and Syria ISIS morphed into an insurgent group that set up Sharia law systems, restored sanitation services and regular food delivery and generally provided an alternative (but brutal) State. In taking territory, ISIS also created a clear target for counterinsurgents to attack and has suffered significant loss of territory since then (Jones et al. 2017).

The tactics employed by insurgents were – and still are – necessitated by their military weakness; they could not confront the opposing power directly and therefore attacked vulnerable points and then retreated among the local population, so that they were hard to detect and punish. These insurgent tactics were hard to counter. Attempts at mass punishment of populations in response to insurgencies had the counterproductive effect of alienating the local population from the authority trying to maintain its power and legitimacy.

The Ungoverned Space

Ungoverned areas are physical or nonphysical areas where there is absence of state capacity or political will to exercise control. Ungoverned territories are generally rugged, remote, maritime, or littoral areas not effectively governed by a sovereign state. As an emerging and contested area of discourse, ungoverned space resonates constant global debate being an issue surrounding global security challenges (Lenshie, 2018). Rabasa (2007) refers to ungoverned space as an area of abdicated governance. Abdicated in situations when a government, either by choice or force, abandons its control leaving an area relatively lawless (Menkhaus, 2007).

The resulting ungoverned space may remain partially governed, or ineffectively governed (Olaniyan & Akinyele, 2017). In such a situation, the government abdicates to some degree and still maintains the intent to govern (Whelan, 2006a). Alternatively, an adversarial group, such as criminals, a terrorist organization or an insurgent group, may take up governance of the area resulting in contested governance (Rabasa, 2007). Whatever the outcome, ungoverned space can be seen in most instances as a failure of capacity by a sovereign state to exercise effective control over a geographic area within the state. It is an apparent abdication of duty post by government and government representative and such vacuum is being occupied by insurgents (Forest, 2010).

Empirical Reviews

Terror Cell Groups and the Ungoverned Space of Borno State

Bernard and Daful (2021) engaged mixed research method to establish the nexus between insurgency activities and the ungoverned spaces in the Borno State, Nigeria. The study employed satellite data, population data and data on insurgency attack in the study area. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, percentage rise in slope analysis and reclassification were used for the satellite data processing, while Geographically Weighted Regression models for data analysis. Results from study's analysis showed that LGAs in the central and the southern parts of the state are more vulnerable to insurgency attacks, while the central and far northern part of the state with more vegetal cover, influenced high incidence of insurgency

attack. Study submitted that the high incidence of insurgency attack (145) observed in Gwoza LGA, is largely attributed to the presence of the Gwoza Mountain, which is one of the main strong holds of the insurgents in Borno State. Study only captures ungoverned space which is political while this study captures socioeconomic activities disconnect to investigate insecurity and political economy of Borno State.

Ojo (2020) thematically examined the dominant narrative of ill-governed or ungoverned territories in the northern region of Nigeria where informality and socioeconomic deficit fashioned the mannerism of everyday life. Particularly in the areas unkempt by the state. The study was a qualitative approach and spatial network analysis using Geographical Information System (GIS). The paper argues that the primordial negligence of ungoverned areas with limited state surveillance or unharmonized state presence, controlled by informal networks and hybrid arrangements creates an enabling environment for warlordism, religious fanaticism and tribal self-defense forces. It further demonstrates that governance failure in these regions stimulates illegal movement of arms and ammunition, the raw material for bombs, illegal drugs and foreign machines, and becomes abodes for Boko Haram jihadist and non-Boko Haram armed groups. The study submitted that ungoverned spaces could be morphed into a production site for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by the terrorists in the near future. The study was a region wide study hence the need for a State specific study on Borno State

Terror Cell Groups and Socioeconomic Activities

Lawal (2018) investigated the uncommon alliances among bokoharam terror cells, internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Illicit Money economy. The study engaged desktop research approach with reliance on extant literature and academic publications. Findings from the study showed that terror cell group activities have caused havoc on the socio- economic activities of the state. The study submitted that good governance of jobs creation, empowerment of women and youths to break out of the vicious cycle of terrorism. Study did not explore the political economy nexus with insecurity which this study does using thematic reviews.

Břeň et al. (2019) in a cross countries study, engaged quantitative research design to interrogate the nexus between social, economic, and security-political factors and terrorism. The study employed Spearman's correlation coefficient as the statistical method, leveraged on links between individual social/economic/security-political factors and terrorism. The study gathered relevant indexes and indicators, which express individual social/economic/security-political factors) in 162 countries in the year 2017. Results that emanated from studies confirmed that social inequality, GDP, current war conflict, corruption and political instability have increased the terrorist threats throughout the world. The study was conducted outside Northeast Nigeria particularly Borno and result gotten cannot be generalised, hence the need for

this study using ungoverned spaces and socioeconomics activities to measure insecurity and the political economy of Borno State**.**

Theoretical Review

The State Fragility Theory

The fragile state as articulated by Sara (2008) is the term used for countries facing severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, unemployment, poverty and low level of economic development. It is a theory that describes how extreme poverty is concentrated in a given state, how low level of human and social development are linked to weak institutional capacity, governance and to internal conflict, all of which undermine the capacity of the state to deliver basic social and infrastructural services and offer security to citizens. State fragility is defined as deficiencies in one or more of three core functions of the state. These functions include state authority, state capacity and state legitimacy. Authority refers to the state's ability to control violence. Capacity refers to the state's ability to provide basic public services (Bertocchi & Guerzoni, 2011).

Fragile and conflict-affected States (FCS) are defined as countries trapped in cycles of low administrative capacity, political instability, conflict, and weak economic performance (IMF, 2015). These structural problems preclude the formation of robust governing systems and hinder institution building. The legacy of weak governance and conflict has locked FCS into a dysfunctional but stable equilibrium, or “fragility trap” (Collier, 2020). Given the complexity and multi-dimensional aspects of fragility, which interact and reinforce one another in a vicious circle, transition out of such equilibrium would be inherently difficult.

Empirical literature suggests that state fragility is highly persistent, with high risk of relapses. Dynamics of state fragility do not always move in a linear manner. For example, FCS can start off in conflict/disaster, move to post-conflict/post disaster, then fall back into conflict. The probability of remaining fragile could be higher than that of exiting from fragility, because a country trapped into state fragility would find it very difficult to improve on all fronts—including economic performance, governance, political stability and institutional quality—at the same time. Also, different factors could affect entry into and exit from fragility in a different way

More fundamentally, a fragile state is the one that is trapped in a vicious circle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource curse; others face a legacy of not providing the most basic services to their citizens. Such basic services include among other things, good health facilities, good roads, quality education, electricity, good water supply etc. Slater (2012), a leading proponent of this theory has observed that a fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its subsystems. According

to him, a fragile state is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal shocks as well as domestic conflicts. This implies that in a fragile state, institutional arrangement embodies and perhaps preserves the conditions of crisis both in economic and social terms. In economic terms, this could be institutions, importantly property rights that reinforce stagnation or low growth rates, or embody extreme inequality in wealth, in access to land or access to the means to make a living.

In social terms, institutions may embody extreme inequality or lack of access altogether to health or education. In fragile states, statutory institutional arrangements are vulnerable to challenges by rival institutional systems be they derived from traditional authorities or devised by communities under conditions of stress that see little of the state (in terms of security, development, or welfare).

Methodology

This study adopts exploratory research design; it examines the nexus between political economy and insecurity in Borno State. The study relies solely on secondary data. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning the insecurity, political security, economic insecurity terror cell groups of Boko Haram and Islamic State of West African Province, and counterinsurgency operations. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

Discussion of Findings

The review of literature showed that the emergence and sustainability of ungoverned spaces by terror cells groups in Borno State positively influences the menace of terrorism. The moribund Forest Guard services and the near comatose operation of Nigeria Forest park and the subsequent taking over of these areas by criminals further justifies the term of ungoverned spaces. This finding aligns with the previous works of Bernard and Daful, (2021), Ojo, (2020)

The result gotten from empirical literature is that there exist a weak Study also submitted that ability of terror cell groups to levy taxes and fines on community, such willfully given taxes by residents, greatly promotes the disposition of insecurity in Borno State. This also could confirm that community that pays such levies are enjoying reciprocal services from terror cell groups and criminals. This finding is consistent with the findings in the previous work of Břeň et al. (2019); Lawal (2018)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made;

i. That the Federal government in synergy with regional and international bodies should assist the Borno State government to evolve a policy that dislodges all criminality from ungoverned spaces

from the grip of terror cell groups and lease same out for value-chain agro production to prospective Arab farmers with the Locals at the centre of such agreement.

ii. That government should approach the hearts and minds of the Borno residents with good governance in a bid to counter the mis-governance narratives leveled against it by terror cell groups. The government should not rationalize the apparent acceptance of the locals to the terror cells but should engage the locals with good governance.

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