



Research Article

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The Root Causes of the Crisis in Northeast Nigeria: Historical, Socioeconomic and Environmental Dimensions

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Abstract

Nigeria is confronted with numerous conflicts throughout the country. In the northeast part, a humanitarian crisis has been playing out for the past ten years, mostly caused by the insurgency of the Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. In this paper, we examine the root causes of the crisis based on its historical, socioeconomic and environmental dimensions. We examine available literature and draw conclusions and recommendations based on interviews that we conducted with experts in Nigeria. The results show that even though poverty may constitute a strong reason for many youths to join the insurgency, it is not a sufficient factor to explain the conflict. Furthermore, the results also show that the historical legacy of northeast Nigeria as well as the socioeconomic neglect of the region and its harsh environmental conditions may have created favorable conditions for the current crisis. We recommend a reinforced education system that significantly increases school attendance and that aims at educating young individuals on the historical legacy of the region. The identification of the various conflict actors in order to better understand the reasons behind their involvement is also recommended. In conclusion, the causal link between poverty, environmental change and past history contributing to the region's crisis is not easily drawn, but the evidence suggests that the lack of economic opportunities and the lack of education may contribute to the development of the conflict that leads to the crisis.

Keywords: Crisis, Conflict, Insurgency, Historical, Socioeconomic, Environmental, Nigeria, Climate Change, Poverty

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, northeast Nigeria has been subject to a humanitarian crisis that has caused millions of people to seek humanitarian assistance (WHO, 2018). The states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe are the most affected (UNHCR, 2018). Since September 2018, based on UNHCR estimations, 1.8 million people were internally displaced, and further 5.8 million people were in need of assistance. Furthermore, over 80 % of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were in Borno State, the epicenter of

the crisis and over 60 % of them were living in host communities, exerting pressure on the already-stretched resources of these communities (UNHCR, 2018). These numbers of IDPs have been constantly increasing since 2014 as it has been impossible for them to return to their communities (Sydney and Onwuemele, 2019). The study by Sydney and Onwuemele (2019) found that around a third of IDPs in northeast Nigeria had tried to return to their homes, only to be displaced again by further violence. The UNHCR (2018) further reported that from November 2017 to mid-August 2018, nearly 153 000 new IDPs and 36 000 returnees were numbered in Adamawa and Borno states, keeping the overall population of IDPs in the region on the rise.

In this paper, we seek to examine the root causes of the crisis in northeast Nigeria. Such root causes include the historical legacy of the region, its socioeconomic conditions and the gradual environmental degradation in the region. We consider lessons from past studies and provide recommendations for policy makers. Such policy may seek to address the root causes of the current crisis, which will prevent future crisis in the region. We draw on the results of qualitative interviews that we conducted with research experts in Nigeria, and supplemented by a review of available literature to validate findings.

The crisis in northeast Nigeria owes its origins mostly to the insurgency of Boko Haram, a terrorist group responsible for attacks on local communities across Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger (UNHCHR, 2015). The activities of this terrorist group and the counter-insurgency by the Nigerian state caused the worse humanitarian crisis in the history of Nigeria (Hamid et al, 2017). The precarious socio-economic conditions of this region caused by its sensitive climate conditions and neglect by the central government are suspected to have created a fertile ground for Boko Haram to prosper (Rizzo, 2015). The strategic location of the area occupied by Boko Haram's troops did not only provide them with shelter away from state security forces, but also available manpower from the desperate youths that struggled to make a living. Boko Haram recruits its members mainly amongst disaffected youths, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to northern Nigeria (Onuoha, 2014).

The debates on the underlying causes of the rebellion have revolved around climate and environmental issues, poverty, Islam, community allegiance, poor governance, and corruption (Magrin and de Montclos, 2018). Furthermore, although the work by Magrin and de Montclos (2018) failed to reach shared conclusions, it has largely inspired the responses of civilian and military authorities, including at international community level, where antiterrorist experts have opted for a religious interpretation of the conflict by promoting a “deradicalisation” strategy to get Muslims back into mainstream Islam. It is believed that the history of the region occupied by Boko Haram today played a key role in the genesis of the crisis and that Boko Haram draws, among other things, upon historical references to the Islamic empire of Dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century (Cold-Ravnkilde and Plambech, 2015) which is said to have introduced and institutionalized Islam in northern Nigeria. To a certain degree, the emergence of Boko Haram can be traced back to the historical antecedent of a Muslim state controlling northern Nigeria during the 19th century (Torbjörnsson and Jonsson, 2017).

Northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin in general once hosted a kingdom that served as the center of trade in the region and where a pure form of Islam was practiced (Hiribarren, 2016; Doi, 2006; Seignobos, 2015). The fall of this kingdom marked the end of its long-lasting influence over the region and somehow the end of good Islam practice as it was claimed by its successive leaders (Seignobos, 2015). It is therefore important to understand the role that the historical legacy of this region along with environmental and socioeconomic factors played in the current crisis.

While violence in this region is still causing a lot of harm to the local populations, there is very little research available on the causes of violence in the region. Several studies have previously assessed the environmental change in the region and its socioeconomic condition, while many have also narrated the history of the region and its influence up until the 19th century. So far to our knowledge, only few studies have attempted to link the historical legacy of the region to the current crisis. In this study, we attempt to create a link between the daily living conditions of the people in

the region in relation with their socioeconomic and environmental conditions, and the history of the region to the current crisis.

2. Historical Dimension

Northeast Nigeria was once home, or rather partially home to one of the longest-lasting and influential empires Africa has ever known, the Kanem-Bornu Empire. First known as the Kanem Empire (700 AD – 1617 AD) and later came to be known as the Kanem-Bornu Empire (1617 – 1893 AD), this empire existed over a thousand years (Singh, 2017). The Kanem-Bornu was extended on the areas belonging to today's southern Chad, northern Cameroon, northeast Nigeria, eastern Niger, and southern Libya.¹ A royal artefact of the Kanem Empire called the 'Girgam' has provided a written historical record of the Empire, which includes the names of Kings and Queens, the length of their reigns and the major events within the Empire. The Girgam claims that the Kanembu people, the main tribe in the kingdom, moved from their land to the land around Lake Chad for two key reasons. First, the lands around Lake Chad were fertile unlike their previous lands, which suffered from dryness and second, because there was political pressure. The lands around Lake Chad were also attractive because of the existing infrastructure and walled cities that belonged to the Sao civilization (Singh, 2017). The Kanem kingdom was first ruled by the Sayfwa dynasty for 771 years, the longest known reign in the history of the empire (Bilow, 2008).

Throughout its existence, the Kanem-Bornu or the Kanem Empire shifted geographically quite significantly. These shifts were triggered by events such as war or changes in environmental conditions. Between c. 700 – 1376, the empire occupied an area corresponding to Chad, Nigeria and Libya (Sindima, 2017). The Sayfawa Dynasty and their subjects later fled to Birnin Gazargamu when the Bilala or Bulala people attacked them (Abubakar, 2017). Birnin Gazargamu remained as capital even after the reclaiming of the city of Njimi in the 16th Century. However over the years, towns and cities like Monguno, Kukawa, Dikwa, Old Maiduguri and now Yerwa (Maiduguri) were all capitals of the Kanem-Bornu Empire at different times since the last 1000 years back (Abubakar, 2017).

On its socio-economic structure, the Kanem-Bornu gathered agriculturalists and pastoralists, from various ethnic groups and ruled by the Duguwa, an aristocracy who chose a king among themselves (Hiribarren, 2016). The Kanem-Bornu became very powerful due to its strategic location at the crossroads between northern Africa and Sub-saharan Africa (Hiribarren, 2016). In the 13th century, due to deteriorating climate conditions and the continued progress of the Sahara Desert, the center of the empire shifted from the north of Lake Chad to the west of Lake Chad in the Bornu, where the land was more fertile. The Bornu was already the economic center of the empire by the 14th century despite the fact that the Sayfawa still reside in Njimi, north of Lake Chad. They will finally leave Njimi in the second half of the 14th century after this old capital being captured by the Bulala warrior aristocracy (Hiribarren, 2016).

Table 1 summarizes some of the major events and achievements in the Kanem-Bornu Empire between the 11th and the 19th century. Such achievements and events illustrate the economic, religious and military domination of the empire over the region and subsequently its downfall. It is later shown how such events relate to the current crisis in the region.

¹ Kanem-Bornu Kingdom: New World Encyclopedia http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Kanem-Bornu_Kingdom Retrieved 05 April 2019.

Table 1: Major events and achievements in the Kanem-Bornu between the 11th and the 19th century

| Period | Major event/achievement |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| End of the 11 th century | Islam was accepted for the first time by the Kanem ruler, Umme-Jilmi, through a scholar named Muhammad B. Mani, credited for bringing Islam to Kanem-Bornu (Doi, 2006). |
| Around 1460 | Ali Gazi, the leader of the Bornu, traditionally called the <i>Mai</i> , after a major victory, built a fortified capital at Ngazargamu, to the west of Lake Chad at present Nigeria (Lovejoy, 2011). |
| 16 th century | The Sayfawa had conquered the Bornu and reconquered the Kanem, hence the name Kanem-Bornu (Lovejoy, 2011). |
| Late 16 th century | The Sao merged with the Kanembu giving birth to the Kanuri tribe that became the largest tribe in the Kanem-Bornu (Hiribarren, 2016). Today, the Kanuri still form the majority ethnic group in northeast Nigeria. |
| Early 19 th century | The practice of pure Islam was subject to controversy and conflict in the region. In 1808, Osman dan Fodio who was the sultan of the Sokoto caliphate, carried on a Jihad that failed to conquer and integrate Bornu within the Sokoto caliphate (Hiribarren, 2016). |
| Late 19 th century | The Kanem-Bornu Empire had the reputation of a powerful Islamic empire, known for religious piety and unity. Its remarkable cohesion over a millennium is said to partly have been forged through a commitment to Islam (Hiribarren, 2016). |
| 1893 | The influence of this long-lasting empire ended after its invasion by a Sudanese warrior. The kingdom was then divided between Cameroon that was under German administration and the British colony of Nigeria (Hiribarren, 2016). |

The Agence France Presse (AFP, 2015) reports that Boko Haram in its propaganda sometimes mentioned the legacy of the empire to justify attacks on targets that were considered to be un-Islamic. Boko Haram claims to embody the authentic legacy of the early Muslim community (al-salaf al-salih, or “pious predecessors,” the phrase from which the term “Salaf-ism” derives) and as such, they reject several aspects of mainstream Sunni identity, such as adherence to recognized legal schools, which refers to western civilization (Thurston, 2016). Although the kingdom of Bornu has disappeared, its symbolic grandeur and founding pedestal, namely Islam, remains unique in a largely animist world (Seignobos, 2015).

P. Gwaza, a researcher from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Abuja interviewed by the authors on May 15, 2019 states that *‘the area where Boko Haram mapped its caliphate corresponds almost perfectly to the area occupied by the ancient Kanem-Bornu empire’*.

This correlates with the assumption that Boko Haram leaders are driving towards the formation of the old Kanem-Bornu Empire. Furthermore, most Boko Haram soldiers are recruited from the Kanuri tribe, the same tribe that was dominant in the Kanem-Bornu Empire. Testifying on the complexities of the genesis of Boko Haram, P. Ochogwu also from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution interviewed on March 21, 2019 argues that *‘societies in northeast Nigeria are formed on a specific social networking system generated from the Kanem-Bornu Empire and conflict evolves from this traditional networking system which is different from the modern networking system that we understand’*.

The Kanuri intellectuals and the Kanembu-Kanuri in the broader sense had earlier dreamt of a Bornu Empire, reinvigorated by a new wellspring of faith around Lake Chad that could encompass the former Bilad al-Sudan to lead the *Umma* (all Muslims) (Seignobos, 2015). Seignobos (2015) further argues that the Kanuri and the Kanembu-Kanuri experienced a kind of religious surge, a veritable conflagration of which Boko Haram is only the most visible and violent component.

3. Situation Analysis

3.1 Socioeconomic dimension

In Nigeria, income inequalities between rural communities and urban communities are suspected to be very high. Agriculture as the main source of income in rural communities is today not a thriving sector due to the fact that oil has taken over the economy of Nigeria (Ucha, 2010). As such, uneven distribution

of natural resources, difference in climate across the country and a weak institutional capacity all contributed to inequalities between regions of the country (Raheem et al., 2014). Furthermore, Raheem et al (2014) explain that regional problems get manifest through several symptoms such as difference among capital development, access to education, property acquisition and so on.

A study by Akpoilih and Farazibi (2012) found that the northeast of Nigeria had the highest poverty index in the country of about 49%. Meanwhile, the south presented the lowest poverty rates in the country between 21.5 and 26.6%. Such disparities between regions of the same country can partly be explained by the uneven distribution of natural resources in the country (Raheem et al., 2014). Also, the role of education on development especially for a highly populated country like Nigeria cannot be dismissed. Ada and Ojone (2018) state that education certainly is one of the ways through which a nation develops. One of the objectives of education is to adequately equip learners with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for effective participation and contribution to national development (Chima, 2006). Northeast Nigeria is characterized by a very low access to education. According to the Nigeria National Population Commission (NPC, 2016), the literacy rates were 56% for secondary school attendance in 2015 for the whole of Nigeria, and 31% across the northeast states (Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Taraba, and Adamawa). Northwest (32%) and northeast (31%) show the lowest national school attendance ratio.

The correlation between education and poverty cannot be dismissed. Statistics on employment in Nigeria show categorization of unemployed persons on the basis of age groups, educational qualifications and occupation (Danaan, 2018). Unemployment according to Danaan (2018), has a strong correlation with poverty. This may explain the fact that in northeast, northcentral and northwest Nigeria where education rates are very low, the poverty rate is higher (JICA, 2011). With regards to the analysis, it is safe to assume that the rate of poverty in a region at least for the Nigerian case, is a function of the education attendance ratio.

Based on an economic analysis report of the World Bank (2016), it can be noticed that in 2004, northern Nigeria was the poorest region of the country, widening the gap between north and south in the last decade (2006-2016) (World Bank, 2016). Within the same period in the northeast, poverty reduction stagnated, while poverty levels remained particularly high at 47.6% (World Bank, 2016). It is also noticed by the World Bank (2016) that 75% of households that are in chronic poverty reside in the north, while only 25% are found in the south. Furthermore, chronic poverty is very rampant in the northeast at 22.2%, making northeast the second highest in the country followed by north central (19.3 %). Meanwhile, all southern regions show much lower chronic poverty rates, below 10% (World Bank, 2016).

Peace can be achieved by addressing the structural imbalances in the socio-economic conditions of the people (Hettne, 2010). Furthermore, Katsina (2012) emphasizes that root causes of conflict such as inequality and poverty should be identified and removed from the society. To establish a clear nexus between development and security, there is a need to remember that it is impossible to establish peace and order in any society in which there exists fundamental contradictions in its economic structure (Katsina, 2012). Such contradictions are suspected to sustain feelings of alienation, marginalization, frustration and resentment among the poor class of the society, with the potential of translating into anger, radicalization and violence (Oyeshola, 2005). While the latest statement may still be subject to argument among researchers, the evidence suggests that economic factors (such as poverty and low income) that lead to rebellion have a greater impact on the occurrence of conflict than those associated with political grievances (Braithwaite et al., 2014). Among causes of terrorism, poverty and unemployment have frequently been identified (Ayegba, 2015). However, several studies have found no link between poverty, unemployment and terrorism (Krueger and Maleckova, 2003), the general belief is that people who are economically disadvantaged are more prone to resolve to violence as a way to express their grievances (Adelaja et al., 2018). A. Garba, a senior officer at the Ministry of environment in Nigeria, interviewed by the authors on May 7, 2019 stated that ***'while the government has not been comfortable talking about issues related to youth allegiance to Boko Haram and poverty in northern Nigeria, civil society organizations have been able to put to light such issues. It then came to light that many people join the insurgency because of the poverty level'***.

The demography of northern Nigeria is also seen by some experts as a factor contributing to the poor socioeconomic conditions of the region and to the crisis. Dr S. Onazi from the ministry of Labor in Nigeria, interviewed by the authors on May 6, 2019 addresses the demographic pressure in northern Nigeria in the following terms: ***'Nigeria is highly populated. According to the World Bank, poverty indices in Nigeria indicate that the poorest people in Nigeria are in the north. As such, poverty can be considered as a push factor for the crisis'***.

The CLEEN Foundation (2014) argues that the sympathizers of the Islamist group in northeast Nigeria are usually unemployed youths who live in hostile environment and suffer economic, social, and political deprivations. A study by Ewi and Salifu (2017) also shows that most Nigerians believe that many youths join the insurgency in the northeast of the country for financial reasons. Basically, they do so as they lack economic opportunities and want to make money by all means. Ewi and Salifu (2017) found that the majority of those who joined Boko Haram voluntarily were significantly influenced by financial incentives, and not by religion. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Adelaja et al, (2018) found that the leading personal causes for joining terrorism in Nigeria were poverty, unemployment, extreme religious ideology and ignorance. Socioeconomic factors with their potential to trigger conflict can be accentuated with poor environmental conditions leading to resources scarcity which in turn will have direct implications for the functioning of the economy and the cost of essential products (ISSA, 2014).

3.2 Environmental dimension

In Nigeria, the majority of rural populations are employed in the agriculture sector and as such, the dominant role of agriculture makes it obvious that even minor climate deteriorations can cause devastating socioeconomic consequences (Olaniyi et al., 2013). The Sahara Desert is observed to be expanding to all directions with an annual expansion of 1-10 km, engulfing the Sahelian region of Africa (Odjugo, 2010). This makes northern Nigeria the most climate sensitive region in the country. Northeast Nigeria therefore faces the issue of how to reduce desert encroachment that renders most land unusable for agriculture (Agbebaku, 2015). These challenges directly impact on the activities of the local populations that are either forced to migrate or to seek for alternative sources of income. C. Nwanelo from the National Commission of Refugees, Migrants and Internally displaced Persons, interviewed by the authors on April 4, 2019 declares: ***'desertification is approaching faster and wider into northern Nigeria. The side effect is that drought hits these communities and in terms of sustaining themselves, they would embark on gradual movement from one community to another community. This movement could also be international in the sense that this region of Nigeria shares borders with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and some of them could easily cross borders and sometimes becoming asylum seekers in these countries'***.

Crop production in northern Nigeria is heavily vulnerable and affected by climate change through droughts (Dahiru and Tanko, 2018). The World Bank Group (2017) estimates that the regional concentration of poverty in northern Nigeria is likely explained by factors such as the poor climate condition characterized by low rainfall and high temperatures, distance from the sea, and poor and dilapidated infrastructures. It was also found that migrating sand dunes have buried large expanses of arable land, thus reducing viable agricultural land and crops production in northern Nigeria (Odjugo, 2010). Scarcity of land and water in areas where agriculture is the principal activity and source of income can have direct impacts on the quality of life. Dingyadi, (2012) estimates that over 154,725 people in five frontline states in northern Nigeria lost their farm land within seven years. Local populations consisting mostly of farmers and nomad herdsmen largely depend on these land and water. As a result of resources scarcity, the young generation is despondent and frustrated, hence abandoning farming for alternative activities (Nwokoema and Kingsley, 2017).

In response to environmental degradation, young people in northeast Nigeria begin by migrating from rural to urban areas in search of a better life (Onyia, 2015). However, their lack of formal education and skills necessary to integrate the urban life system, added to the poor institutional capacity and sovereignty across the country makes it quasi impossible for them to gain

employment in the blue collar sector (Onyia, 2015). The induced poverty according to Onyia (2015) forces them to turn to mosques and their resident imams who provide them with basic needs, including shelter, food and clothing, thus presenting themselves as their only hope for survival. This fortunate situation presents ample opportunities for discontented religious bigots to indoctrinate these poor people with anti-state, anti-western semantics (Onyia, 2015).

A Garba, believes that *'as northeast Nigeria is characterized by high humidity and lower rainfall due to global warming, agriculture as the highest employing sector in the region has become less and less rentable. As a result, young people involved in agriculture tend to abandon this sector to join the Islamic insurgency to reduce their poverty level'*. Furthermore, P. Gwoza emphasizes that *'across northeast Nigeria, impacts of environmental change are visible through animal's carcasses and dryer land, which deems many people jobless and turning many into street beggars'*. These people, according to S. Onazi, *'easily fall under the temptation of making some money by joining Boko Haram as farming is no longer profitable'*.

4. Discussion

4.1 On the historical dimension

This study found that in northeast Nigeria, the historical past of the region coupled with the strong Islamic ideology portrayed by the insurgent group may have contributed to the current conflict situation. It was also found that the charismatic leader of the Boko Haram group Abubakar Shekau at times exploited the legacy of the former Kanem-Bornu Empire to reinforce his ideology. The region's Kanuri language born from the merge between the Sao and the Kanembu in the Kanem-Bornu has also been used by the leader of Boko Haram as a tool for his propaganda. P. Gwaza goes a step further and emphasizes that *'when Abubakar Shekau took over the leadership most fighters were recruited among the Kanuri tribe to which he belongs himself'*.

Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group has carried out most of its attacks in a region that corresponds to the territory of the former Kanem-Bornu Empire (Barkindo, 2018). Furthermore, Barkindo (2018) argues that Abubakar Shekau presented the Kanem-Bornu Empire as a perfect Islamic state, governed on the principles of sharia, equity, and justice. He further emphasized the socio-economic and political dominance of the empire and constantly referred to the influence of the Kanem-Bornu's Islam outside the empire. It can therefore be strongly assumed that the historical legacy of the region as claimed by Boko Haram is relevant in the context of the current crisis, even if the relevance is limited to a propagandistic level.

4.2 On the socioeconomic dimension

This paper showed that northeast Nigeria being the poorest region of the country with underdeveloped and decaying infrastructures, has a high concentration of unemployed youths. This region also presents low school attendance rates among male and female household members. While the nexus between poverty and conflict is very complex, areas with most people living under the poverty line can be more vulnerable as the survival instinct may create tendencies of violence. Braithwaite et al. (2014) finds a causal relationship between poverty and conflict. Sub-Saharan Africa is quite illustrative with many conflict frontlines. In 2002, 38 low-income countries identified in sub-Saharan Africa were all curiously involved in conflict (Draman, 2003). In Somalia for example, Somali clans had often clashed over resources such as water, livestock and grazing land, long before Somalia became a sovereign country (Lewis, 2002). In the Horn of Africa in general, the spatial distribution of conflict indicates that poverty and youth unemployment are predominant in areas with conflict (Mengistu, 2015). Although, poverty may not be the only reason behind radicalization in northeast Nigeria, the evidence suggests that poverty may have played as an important factor for young people's decision to join the insurgency, given the subsequent financial reward.

4.3 *On the environmental dimension*

Opinions on the nexus between climate change and the resulting impact on resources and conflict or instability are still very variable. While media and NGOs have easily proclaimed such a link, none of the studies finds a simple causal link between climate change and societal instability. However, this paper showed that in northeast Nigeria where most youths are uneducated and depend on agriculture for survival, environmental change that rendered most of their land unusable and water unavailable can actually be a push factor for them to seek for other sources of income. In an area with less economic opportunities, these youths can easily become soft targets to Islamist ideologists who offer them small stipends in exchange of their manpower. This may explain why the insurgent group in the region managed to enroll a large number of fighters (Ewi and Salifu, 2017).

The causal link between environmental change through its economic effects and conflict is often dismissed by many scholars, arguing that poverty may lead to conflict when other factors are present and that poverty alone is not a sufficient condition for conflict (Goodhand, 2001, Ganepola and Thayasingam, 2004, Scheffran et al., 2019). A two-way causality between poverty and conflict exist in the sense that poor countries have a greater disposition to conflict and poverty is also a probable outcome of conflict (Ganepola and Thayasingam, 2004). This is because different factors matter in different regions of Africa and the overall link between climate change (and the adjacent poverty) and violent conflict in Africa is likely to be indirect, complex, and related to multiple political, economic and social factors (Scheffran et al., 2019).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to determine whether the history, the socioeconomic status and environmental changes in northeast Nigeria significantly contributed to the development of the current crisis in the region. The causal link between poverty, environmental change and past history as factors of conflict in this region is not easily drawn, but the evidence suggests that the lack of economic opportunities and the lack of education may contribute to the development of conflict hence accentuating the crisis. It is often argued by scientists that the reasons for joining arm groups are usually external, rather than internal to the individuals and that a reason why people join conflict may differ from county to country. In the case of northeast Nigeria, it is safe to assume based on findings in this paper that the historical heritage of the Bornu, the low socioeconomic standard of the region and the existing poverty may have created a good breeding ground for an insurgent group.

The findings in this paper also highlighted the opportunistic nature of the Boko Haram group. They are opportunistic in the sense that even though the historical heritage of the region might not have been the principal cause for their radicalization, they make use of it in a propagandistic manner to indoctrinate young people. They are also opportunistic in their ability to enroll economically vulnerable people in their troops in exchange of small stipends. Finally, in an area where school attendance is the lowest in Nigeria, Boko Haram found uneducated youths that can easily be manipulated and indoctrinated, and given weapons to fight for a reason they often do not understand themselves. This may explain why most attacks by this group have been turned against local communities, churches and mosques alike.

The need for further studies in understanding the driving factors of insurgency in Nigeria and around the world arises. A throughout assessment of the various conflict actors can significantly contribute in giving a better understanding of the conflict drivers and its root causes. In addition, the following policy recommendations can be essential in preventing future crisis of the same nature in the region:

- Education: the education system in the region needs to be improved significantly in order to increase attendance among young men and women. This can be achieved through the creation of schools in all local communities. The education system should be able to educate young pupils on the historical legacy of the region.

- Agriculture: a throughout transformation of the agriculture system is necessary, given the current environmental conditions in the region. New crops with a shorter cycle should be introduced and local communities are to be trained on new farming techniques. It is also very important to create seed banks where farmers will deposit their seeds for the next sowing season.

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