

**Exploring the Role of ECOWAS's Conflict Prevention Framework in the Light
of a Terrorist Insurgency: The Case of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria**

by

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Abstract

The emergence of Boko Haram has generated profound attention since 2009 when the group launched a military campaign to fight for Islamic rule in Nigeria causing millions of deaths and suffering as a result of its activities. Many local and foreign terrorism and insurgency scholars have drawn attention to Boko Haram's ethnoreligious contest for political power as a major source of violent insecurity in the region. These commentators link the Boko Haram insurgency to the Maitatsine upheaval of the 1980s, yet the violent ideologies of this group have taken a transnational dimension making it one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world. This study challenges the Nigerian federal government and ECOWAS's heavy-handed and militarised responses towards the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. Using a qualitative grounded theory methodology, the study explores the perceptions and experiences of a broad range of participants from the grassroots as well as workers from Civil Society Organisations through face-to-face one-on-one semi-structured interviews across four states in northern Nigeria. The analysis of the participants' narratives and stories validates a major gap in the government's counterterrorism strategy. Drawing on the everyday experiences of the people from communities within northern Nigeria, the study finds inherent local capacity for community-led demilitarised peacebuilding programs and development with a focus on youth engagement, women empowerment, and interfaith dialogue. Hence, the prevention of violent extremism in West Africa's Sahel region requires a rethink, redesign, and creative implementation of conflict prevention practice, in which local ownership is omnipresent. To this end, a context-level approach to northern Nigeria's insurgency crisis must include peace solutions that are embedded within critical and emancipatory peacebuilding practices.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family - My lovely wife, Halima, and my precious children Safina and Sufyan.

Glossary of Terms

ACSRT	- the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism
AFISMA	- Africa International Support Mission to Mali
AIRCOP	- Airport Communication Project
AMISOM	- African Union Mission in Somalia
AMU	- Arab Maghreb Union
APSA	- the African Peace and Security Architecture
AQIM	- al-Qaeda in the Maghreb
AU	- African Union
CEN-SAD	- Community of Sahel-Saharan States
CJTF	- Civilian Joint Task Force
CLP	- Contextual Level Peacebuilding
COMESA	- the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CSOs	- Civil Society Organizations
DDR	- Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
EAC	- Eastern African Community
ECCAS	- Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMOG	- the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWARN	- ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Mechanism
ECOWAS	- Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	- ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EDCUDF	- ECOWAS Drug Control Unit and Drug Fund
EEC	- European Economic Community
ERS	- Early Response System

EU	- European Union
EWS	- Early Warning System
FARC	- the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GCCP	- the Global Container Control Programme
GDP	- Gross Domestic Products
GJSF	- Global Joint Security Force
ICISS	- International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IDPs	- Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	- Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	- International Monetary fund
ISWAP	- Islamic State West African Province
JTF	- Joint Task Force
LCBC	- the Lake Chad Basin Commission
MASSOB	- Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MEND	- Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNJTF	- Multinational Joint Task Force
MUJAO	- Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NEMA	- National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	- Non-governmental Organizations
NNPC	- Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation
NPFL	- National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OPC	- O'Odua People's Congress
PACS	- Peace and Conflict Studies
PCNI	- The Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative

PIRA	- Provisional Irish Republican Army
RECs	- Regional Economic Communities
RUF	- Sierra Leone's United Front
SADC	- Southern African Development Community
UN	- United Nations
UNICEF	- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNOWAS	- UN Office for West Africa, and the Sahel
USAID	- The United States Agency for International Development
WAJO	- West African Joint Operations Initiatives
WANEP	- the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WAPCCO	- the West African Police Chiefs Committee

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1. Introduction

The term terrorism has assumed ambiguous interpretations over the years, due to differences in context and application. It has been understood as an instrument of liberation in cases of ethnic nationalism where people seeking to assert self-determination from an already established state apply the use of violence and armed conflict to cause socio-political and economic disruption to draw attention to their grievances.

While terrorism is believed to have permeated the socio-political landscape of Nigeria from the precolonial era to modern times (Ekpo, Odey, Tobi, & Omopo, 2018), the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has significantly changed the country's modern security landscape, due to the reach and protracted nature of its current application within and beyond the borders of the federation. Since 2009 there has been a military campaign against Boko Haram yet the group has moved from being a mere fanatical religious group that emerged in the early 2000s to become Nigeria's deadliest terrorist group (Eji, 2016). By 2015, terrorism had become Nigeria's greatest security challenge and the government's strategy to counter the threat shows little or no prospects for eradicating the menace in the near future. Similarly, the Boko Haram insurgency poses a huge threat to Nigeria's neighbors such as Cameroon, Mali, Chad, and Niger.

However, while there has been much focus on conflict intervention in the region, the heavy-handed military responses by the Nigerian Military and regional efforts through the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS)

Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have failed to bring peace to northern Nigeria and the sub-region.

These emerging threats and the responses that have followed them provide a compelling indication that the Boko Haram insurgency would require more than the use of militarized force. This fact becomes more obvious considering the seeming lack of a coordinated approach by Nigeria and ECOWAS against the terrorist group. Consequently, this exploratory study considers the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework's role in curtailing the deadly violence perpetrated by Boko Haram across West Africa by exploring 40 interviews with citizens in four cities of northern Nigeria.

Since Boko Haram's terrorist activities are transnational, it is important to contextualize responses to the group's continued acts of terrorism beyond Nigeria (Onapajo, Uzodike, & Whetho, 2012:337). The conflict prevention discourse is aimed at revisiting ECOWAS's transnational policy and strategy in unraveling the root causes of violent terrorist extremism that has bedeviled northern Nigeria and is spreading to neighboring countries within West Africa.

The idea and concept of terrorism is amorphous and demands some clarifications and operationalization. Krueger (2018, p. 14) rightly points out that terrorism is a notoriously difficult concept to define. In addition, Charles Kegley (1990, p.12) noted that definitions remain vague because meanings are stretched to cover desperate actions and actors spreading across "rebellion, street battles, civil strife, insurrection, rural guerilla war, coup d'état and a dozen of other things" Shanahan, (2016) reported that terrorism could be subjectively defined such that, like beauty, it lies entirely in the eye of the beholder. The definitional complexity of the concept is further accentuated by Vergani (2018, p. 9) who compared the attempt at defining

terrorism to opening a Pandora's box of contrasting positions, ranging from political to ethical dimensions. Krueger (2018), also notes that the concept of terrorism is problematic because it is a tactic so that it is a very difficult one to define. Moreover, Erlenbusch-Anderson (2018, pp. 2-3) suggest that terrorism could be best understood by linking three different but overlapping approaches i.e., a descriptive approach (describing qualifying labels), a classificatory approach (categorizing acts of political violence), and a normative approach (focusing on goals). This conceptual challenge led Krueger (2018) to suggest that the term terrorism could be replaced with the phrase "politically motivated violence." Hence, Krueger defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated by substate organizations and individuals with the intent of influencing an audience beyond the immediate victims" (2018, p. 14). I align with the above definition because it seems to capture the nature, operation and effect of the Boko Haram insurgency.

1.2 Purpose, significance, and rationale for the study

This research is concerned with the terrorist insurgency in Nigeria and the complex echoes of violent extremism extending beyond Nigeria's northern borders. During a book launch, titled "my transition hours" hosted by former President Goodluck Jonathan in November 2018, former President Olusegun Obasanjo said that 'Nigeria has responsibilities beyond its borders'. He noted that such responsibilities would impact West Africa, the African continent, and indeed the black race all over the world.

Boko Haram extremists have exploited West Africa's porous borders and fused itself to the external terrorist movements (de Montclos, 2014; Osumah, 2013). This lies in stark contrast to the resource-driven agitations of such groups as the Movement for

the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the O'Odun People's Congress (OPC), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with localized conflicts in Nigeria. Boko Haram's peculiarity is also seen in the clandestine nature of its funding and membership, combined with the group's ability to exploit the state's institutional weaknesses for over a decade (Marc-Antoine, 2014:4). Having evolved into an internationalized terrorist network, the Boko Haram insurgency must be collectively tackled through a multi-level approach of deliberate action and policy response. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) is yet to make any meaningful impact on West Africa in line with Boutros-Ghali's (1994) notion of early warning, preventive diplomacy, and confidence-building measures against armed conflict. While the rationale behind the ECPF lies in the backdrop of armed conflict within the West African sub-region (as recorded in , Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Cote d'Ivoire), and its destabilizing effects in less than two decades , member states have largely been unsuccessful in preventing the escalation of conflicts within the sub-region.

Since preventing the escalation of conflicts is a rational approach to take, scholars have tasked governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in West Africa to actively engage the idea of conflict prevention, and in adopting solutions to the recurrence of violent conflicts (Olonisakin, 2004; Picciotto, 2010; O'Brien, 2010). The ECOWAS security framework provides for early warning and the early prevention of violent atrocities, however the dimensions of peacebuilding practices in West Africa shows an apparent gap that this study aims to investigate. The widening Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) discipline points to the fact that peace means different things to different people so that there is a need for flexibility towards the implementation of certain policies. Peace has to be created with this broad picture in mind.

Consequently, this study aims at exploring the effectiveness of the ECPF in northern Nigeria in the light of various peace perspectives. One of the criticisms of the ECOWAS framework is its failure to incorporate indigenous views into the various interventions it carries out. There have been situations where projects were implemented which seemingly solved the problems faced by communities, yet they turned out to be irrelevant to the supposed beneficiaries in the long run. For instance, BBC News reported that Nigeria has 10.5 million children out of school, and out of this number UNICEF estimates that 60 percent of the children not attending school live in the northern part of Nigeria (BBC News, 2017). While this is true of child education in northern Nigeria, the solution is far from funding as the international community would like to think. Hence when ECOWAS or other international partners intervene in northern Nigeria, investing infrastructurally, without recourse to the root causes of the problem, they mostly end up as failures. The international community may find it difficult to realize that the educational deprivation in northern Nigeria is not driven by poor funding per se but by various factors, including socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage formal education, especially for the girl child. Therefore, a sustainable response to the education crisis requires an understanding of the cultural context and normative factors in order to implement real positive change for the people in the affected communities.

The above view also nuances some of the reasons several interventions aimed at addressing violent extremism in northern Nigeria has failed. Northern Nigeria's case of violent extremism has structural problems that are peculiar to it, and these must be carefully assessed and factored into any intervention, if such an intervention is to be a success. . This indicates that every stakeholder's notion of peace and their narrative of the causes of violent extremism are important and should form an integral part of any

peacebuilding intervention. This study aims at an understanding of the participants' narrative and perceptions with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria Nigerian as well as the various levels of intervention since the conflict began. The thesis explores through the interviewee's stories the level of success of various governments', ECOWAS, and non-state actors' interventions carried out in the region. The study also provides some recommendations in the conclusions chapter.

1.3 Overview of the Chapters

The thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1, the Introduction, identifies the key actors in the insurgency crisis of northern Nigeria. Chapter 2 provides a context for violent extremism in northern Nigeria and its extension to parts of West Africa. I express concern over the military's efforts in quelling the violence and call for more subtle peacebuilding interventions, which should be embedded in institutional frameworks that understand the quotidian experiences of the grassroots victims of Boko Haram's insurgency. Chapter 3, the Conceptual Framework, organizes the key concepts and models that underpin the empirical data about the causes of violent extremism, as well as peacebuilding through conflict prevention strategies and regional security interventions. I discuss a plausible peacebuilding concept labeled 'context level peace' as a critical and emancipatory approach that pushes for reflective practice in northern Nigeria. This approach synthesizes a variety of ideas related to transformative peacebuilding, paying attention to the idea of real local ownership of peacebuilding programs.

Chapter 4, the Research Methodology, explains the grounded theory qualitative research techniques used to access, triangulate, and present the study's participants' experiences and perceptions. The qualitative approach used, relied on face-to-face semi-structured interviews, to find out the respondent's relevant explanations, critiques,

and suggestions that might strengthen future peacebuilding practice in West Africa. The use of a grounded theory approach is particularly helpful in situating the participants's experiences, perceptions, and ownership of peacebuilding for the direct victims of the conflict. Exploring conflict prevention in violent and protracted ethnoreligious conflicts, this thesis fulfills the aim of (a) highlighting what is relevant for the peacebuilder/actors to know in designing peacebuilding programs (b) accessing the people's experiences and perceptions, organizing data, and analyzing methodologies; (c) allowing the narratives of both the peacebuilders and northern Nigerian victims to shape the explanatory constructs with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency through interview data; and (d) integrating the current peacebuilding practice with research procedures and concepts that help to explain peacebuilding practices related to the theme of grassroots ownership (see Lee & Özerdem, 2015).

Chapter 5 is the first of three empirical chapters that present the research findings and evolving grounded theory. The chapter reveals a multitude of dilemmas and catastrophes caused by the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency. More specifically, the structural conditions that breed violent extremism, and the tendency for extremist groups to grapple with full-blown terrorism were uncovered and the urgent call for non-militarized reforms in northern Nigeria was discussed.

Chapter 6 explores peacebuilder narratives from the Nigerian government and civil society actors intervening in local communities in northern Nigeria. To this end, the chapter investigates the peacekeeping interventions and the distinct struggles that have emerged in implementing peace for local communities ravaged by Boko Haram violence.

Chapter 7 mirrors the previous chapter in exploring the people's experiences and perceptions of ECOWAS and its capacity to prevent violent extremism in West Africa. The respondent's discussion of ECOWAS's peacebuilding focuses on the claim that ECOWAS is transitioning from being an institution of states to an institution for the people.

Chapter 8, the Conclusions, summarizes the study's overall key findings and highlights the significance of the grounded theoretical concept in synthesizing the research data. Within this chapter, I acknowledge some limitations of the study and identify areas for future research as well as illustrating the implications for the new understandings generated from the study.

1.4 Conclusion

This study takes into account the different perspectives held by the people and their perception of the various peace actors attempting to restore peaceful coexistence in northern Nigeria. ECOWAS has a mandate to ensure the facilitation as well as nurturing conditions to forge a peaceful sub-region in which human dignity is paramount. Sustainable peace has to do with people having their rights respected. Here, I explore the various approaches to delivering peace across Western Africa and northern Nigeria in particular.

The thesis also explores everyday people's understandings of what peace means to them. Whatever their understanding of peace might be, the overarching connotation of peace is the ability of people to live harmoniously in a manner that is mutually inclusive rather than exclusive. The study focuses on how the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework reflects this overarching notion of peace in the fight against Boko Haram's violent extremism in Nigeria.

Chapter 2 -Terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria

2.1 Introduction

The emergence of an anti-state, reformist religious network itself is not an unusual development in the nation's history of insurgency and dissent. However, no other group in the history of Nigeria has executed such broad and audacious savagery as Boko Haram. During its existence, we have witnessed the group's capacity to exploit conditions in the Lake Chad region, and the Nigerian government's inability to engage in counterterrorism to end the disturbance.

There are core issues that come to mind in contemplating Boko Haram's relative success in inflicting this high level of violence in the northern region since its founding. These include peculiar features in the group's composition that aides in its ascent and in determining which among those factors are either exogenous or endogenous.

Contrasting accounts were provided to clarify the rise and changing nature of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, especially as it relates to its capacity to maintain the momentum of its revolt for over ten years. One argument about the origin of the group is a strand of history that goes as far back as the era of the Karnem-Bornu Empire. The Karnem-Borno Empire covered a significant area of what was to become modern Nigeria, with Islam as the dominant religion among the population. However, the expansion of state Islam in the territory was slowed down by the settlement of Christian minorities. Some have noted that the growth of these minority ethnoreligious groups necessitated the reintroduction of what is considered pure Islamic teachings to the younger generations (Geertz & Darnton, 2017). This measure is believed to avert the tendencies of losing that young generation to new emerging religious systems. This ideology and teachings found expression under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf,

the first known leader of Boko Haram before its radicalization and final descent into terrorism.

Boko Haram's real name is *Jama'atu AhlisSunnaLidda' AwatiWal Jihad* (the Sunni Community for the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). It is a radical Islamic group founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in northern Nigeria. The group is also active in other geographically contiguous states, which include Cameroun, Chad, and Niger. Estimates put its membership between 600 and 10,000 (The Guardian, 2014). Although Boko Haram has been linked with al-Qaeda over the years, it expressed support for the Islamic State (IS) in 2014 and pledged formal allegiance to the group on March 7, 2015.

In its early days, many observers saw the group as a social movement articulating the collective interest of the poor (Olagunju, 2006). Although it was not a violent movement at its inception, it killed more than 5,000 civilians between July 2009 and June 2014. This includes, at least, 2,000 citizens in the first half of 2014, in a series of coordinated attacks predominantly in north-eastern and central Nigeria (The Guardian, 2014; Sergie & Johnson, 2014). The evolution of Boko Haram is a response to the socioeconomic flux borne out of a combination of decades-long government mismanagement and pervasive corruption in Nigeria. Perhaps, this explains the group's adaptive nature as well as why it is fixated on using the poverty method for recruiting members. This has allowed multiple descriptions of the group to endure, bridging different narratives with regards to terrorism, insurgency, and criminality, where different drivers of conflict and instability have converged (Marc-Antoine, 2014).

While it could be argued that the history of Nigeria is replete with the activities of Islamic sects, it is a fact that a multiplicity of domestic actors and interests combine

within Nigeria's complex political environment to sustain the philosophy of these groups. For example, the criminality that drives the sectarian agenda of Boko Haram grew out of its confrontation with the Nigerian state. Thus, the group's mutation into a radicalized violent insurgent group with shades of cultist and criminal motivations was due to a prolonged period of uncoordinated and nonstrategic responses by the Nigerian security forces in its military actions.

Boko Haram was originally a small group with a grassroots appeal that acted as a cohesive unit that avenged the killing of any of its members. Its posture was largely cultic and mafia-like. For this reason, and for its rejection of Western education, the group is often compared to the Maitatsine movement of the 1970s and 1980s in northern Nigeria. The Maitatsine group, led by Mohammed Marwa condemned the reading of books other than the Quran. Marwa claimed to be a prophet in the image of Usman Dan Fodio. In contrast, Boko Haram's founding leader, Yusuf passed as the leader of the underprivileged. Nevertheless, some analysts view the group as an extension of the Maitatsine movement (Adesoji, 2011; Thurston, 2018). This stems from the belief that its ideology was inspired by a determined commitment to the eradication of heresies and the implementation of Sharia legal codes in Nigeria. To achieve this aim, Boko Haram believes that it requires a change of Nigeria's political regime because it perceives that its democratic and secular constitution is an affront to the laws of Allah.

Boko Haram conducted its operations relatively peacefully during the first seven years of its existence. Although there were repeated warnings about the potential danger of the group to the government, and these warnings were ignored partly because the group was once used as a political tool in the election of then Borno State Governor, Ali Modu Sheriff (Iyekekpolo, 2019)

The metamorphosis of Boko Haram into a terrorist group started with the investigation carried into its activities by members of the Nigerian police force in 2009. The investigation was codenamed “Operation Flush,” and on July 26 of the same year, security forces were permitted to arrest nine Boko Haram members and confiscate their weapons and bombmaking equipment. Consequently, a joint military task force operation was launched against the group and by July 30, more than 700 people (mostly Boko Haram members) were killed and police stations, prisons, government offices, schools, and churches were destroyed (Adesoji, 2010). Subsequently, the leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf was arrested; he was to eventually die in custody.

The Nigerian military repression of Boko Haram in the July 2009 uprising and the emergency rule imposed since 2012 by the government in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states in north-eastern Nigeria certainly contributed to the intensification of violence and the group's transformation into a terrorist organization. In addition, the extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf in police custody in July 2009 led to the enthronement of the more radicalized members of the group headed by Abubakar Shekau. The security forces killed those that were initially interested in negotiating with the Nigerian government in the effort to crush the group entirely. This attempt by the federal government sent the group underground while its leadership went into exile and contacted foreign Jihadist groups (Bodansky, 2015).

Boko Haram carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno state in January 2010 claiming the lives of four people. In June of the same year, its new leader Abubakar Shekau instructed members of the group to commence retaliatory actions against the security forces and suspected traitors but it was to spare civilians. This dramatic turn of events was the watershed of a chain reaction of suicide attacks that extended beyond

Borno State for the first time. In September, Boko Haram broke 105 of its members out of prison in Maiduguri along with over 600 other prisoners. This later resulted in the targeting of several areas of northern Nigeria in deadly attacks (Idahosa, 2015; Rasak et al 2018; The Guardian, 2012). Since then, Boko Haram has increased the frequency and intensity of its attacks using suicide bombings and assassinations.

Many believe that Boko Haram is leading an armed insurgency against corruption, abusive security forces, and economic disparity in northern Nigeria and it is feeding off of tensions that have existed between the Muslim dominated north and the Christian dominated south of Nigeria (Thurston, 2018). In 2011, Boko Haram improved its operational capabilities and launched a series of attacks against both soft targets and security posts, an attack in June of that year resulted in the deaths of 6 police officers at the Abuja police headquarters. However, the group's attack on the United Nations building in Abuja in which 11 UN staff members and 12 other citizens died, with more than 100 injured, seems to suggest that the group's ambition is broader than initially believed (Richmond, 2012). The group carried out 115 attacks in 2011, killing 550 persons. At the end of 2011, Boko Haram maintained a steady rate of attacks with individuals, groups, security forces, and religious leaders as prime targets.

The implementation of emergency rule in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states marked a turning point in the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. A few days after the state of emergency was declared, the group embarked on a series of small-scale attacks on Christians and 'strangers' (non-indigenes) residents in northern Nigeria. Members of the police force drafted in by the government to protect fleeing 'southerners' became prime targets. In Kano, the Boko Haram group was recorded to have carried out a deadly assault on a police building killing over 190 people (BBC News, 2012). Given

the upsurge in the military success recorded by the group against the security forces, many began to question the loyalty of the members of Nigeria's security forces. This came to a head on January 8, 2012, when the Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan announced that Boko Haram had infiltrated the army and the police, as well as membership of the government.

Although Nigeria remains the main theater of military operations for Boko Haram, the insurgency has since become a cross-border enterprise. It is centered in Lake Chad, which borders so many countries in the region. Cameroun, Chad, and Niger have witnessed increased attacks by Boko Haram in recent years. The group has also made inroads into Mali, the Central African Republic, and Libya through other terrorist networks creating routes that have become a passage for light weapons. These light weapons find their way through some of these countries, wrecking the lives of harmless citizens along the line despite the Multinational Joint Task Force set up by ECOWAS to curtail the mobility, speed, and reach of Boko Haram (Crisis Group Africa, 2020)

Since 2009, attacks by Boko Haram and related groups have become even more frequent and daring than they were before the constitution of the Multinational Joint Task Force. Coordinated attacks now appear to be carried out across the different countries in turn in such a manner that if a Boko Haram attack is carried out in Nigeria today, there will also be a bomb blast in Niger the following day and in Cameroun or Chad the day after.

The rise and actions of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria has been actively debated across various media discourses and strategic conferences and policy formulators have attempted to find a way out of the situation. These analytical efforts have sought to understand the genuine intentions of the group, its development, and

motivations, especially its terrorist disposition under the Presidency of Goodluck Jonathan..

Remarkably, Boko Haram's escalation of terrorist activities took place during President Jonathan's administration. Since 2009, the Joint Task Force (JTF) was deployed to northern Nigeria to quell Boko Haram violence. Unfortunately, the role of and abuses by this security force conspired to worsen the dire security situation in the area. In addition to the failure of the JTF to protect lives and property, it lost the trust of the people; this is an important factor in the battle against the insurgent group, as communities were also abused by the armed forces. Furthermore, the high handedness with which the members of the JTF prosecuted the fight against the insurgency helped to transpose the membership of the group from urban centers to the rural areas, thereby, ensuring the increase of collateral damage.

The year 2013 witnessed the introduction of a new dimension to Boko Haram's insurgency. Early in the year, the conflict spilled over the national borders into 11 four geographically contiguous countries in the sub-region namely, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In addition, Boko Haram in association with its splinter group, Ansani, was linked to several kidnappings. The group kidnapped on different occasions, seven Frenchmen in the north of Cameroun, and in February 2013, a French priest and eight other French citizens were abducted, ransomed, and subsequently released (Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2014). Further, increased insecurity in northern Nigeria led the government to extend the state of emergency in May 2013. This development was met by increased tension in the three states affected the most (Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe) as Boko Haram heightened the tempo of its insurgent activities. As such, the total

number of internally displaced persons increased from 250,000 to 650,000; an increase of 309 percent as thousands of others fled the country (Adrian, 2014)

Boko Haram's most notorious act so far took place in April 2014, when 276 girls from Chibok town in Borno State were kidnapped. Although 50 managed to escape, the incident brought the group's pervasive violent activities to global attention. The girls' plight featured on "Bring Back Our Girls" posters all over the world. Within the same period, Boko Haram announced the formation of the Islamic Caliphate, which included Gwoza, a strategic town in northeastern Nigeria. The town of Bama, 70 kilometers from Maiduguri was also captured increasing the reach of the 'new caliphate'. Despite the Nigerian security forces aggression directed against Boko Haram and its suspected collaborators since 2009, the group continues to recruit new members. The upward trend in violence since that time suggests that the more security forces have intervened, the worse the crisis has become.

Capitalizing on the fragility of Nigeria's state institutions and using obvious instruments such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and fundamentalist teachings, enabled Boko Haram insurgents to recruit foot soldiers and maintain a full-blown guerrilla war with the Nigerian federal government. In the face of the battle carried out by the government's security forces to save the soul of the Nigerian state, the insurgent group improved on the lethality of its bombings around northern Nigeria including the Federal capital territory in order to declare the Islamic State Caliphate. This was an example of what could then be described as territorialization in the face of government pressure. Several local government areas, particularly in the states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe were brought under the control of the insurgents. They hoisted the caliphate's

flag to indicate its control of conquered territories, and its expansion of its warfare against the Nigerian state into the sub-regions of neighboring countries (Ibrahim, 2014).

The sensational report surrounding the terrorist attacks in Yobe, Kano, Bauchi, Borno, and Kaduna with hundreds of citizens being killed shows the severity with which Boko Haram overran communities in similar raids across the region (CNN News, 2014). While these attacks are in themselves brutal incidents to recount, many displaced people from communities across northern Nigeria provided similar accounts of the insurgents raiding villages, setting buildings ablaze, and engaging in the mass slaughter of civilians.

The territorialization and spread of the insurgency across national borders into Chad, Niger, and Cameroon attracted attention from other countries in the region, eventually resulting in the revival of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in January 2015 (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017). The MNJTF at present is a partnership between Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin, and it was originally founded in 1998 to counter smuggling and transnational crime between Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. The 2015 efforts to repurpose the MNJTF, with African Union approval, was an attempt to legitimize and harmonize ongoing military responses to the insurgency by the countries in the Lake Chad Basin (Crisis Group Africa, 2020). However, this multilateral endeavor has faced a multitude of challenges related to logistics and funding. Authority and responsibility within the group are fragmented and uncertain, and integrated battalions are nearly impossible to control, as each country's forces remain within their respective borders.

Boko Haram, which has its roots in Borno State in northeastern Nigeria, has made inroads into countries around the Lake Chad Basin while extending its grip on Central African Republic (Gaffey, 2015). This defies the heavy military efforts

mounted by the Regional Task Force mobilized to curb its activities. The Multinational Task Force made up of soldiers from Nigeria, Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Benin have redoubled efforts in the vested aspiration of eliminating Boko Haram military activities within the region. Despite these efforts, Najat Rochdi, the UN Resident Coordinator in Cameroon reported that Boko Haram had intensified its daily suicide bombing attacks in the region (Gaffey, 2015). Rochdi further expressed his fears that Boko Haram is still making inroads eastwards towards the conflict-ridden Central African Republic where it is agreed that its presence is exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis there. The murder of 70 persons in Fotokol in Cameroon is part of the crusade by the group to take over Cameroun as it did in parts of Niger (Adam, 2015). Its attacks on Ngouboua and its neighboring towns in Niger indicate the fast-spreading activities of the militant group. It has been reported that about 1000 Boko Haram members crossed from the West to the North into Libya to fight for the IS group there (Adam, 2015). It does so by way of a special smuggling route from Nigeria to Libya and it is also attributable to its efforts to take over Africa (Adam, 2015). This is perhaps part of its effort to fulfill its avowed role to represent the IS as its West African province.

The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (2017) explained its strategic conflict assessment of Nigeria indicating that Boko Haram's insurgent activities in the north affect both Nigeria as well as proximate countries including Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, as a result of the close interactions between them. The linkage approach is appropriate in deepening our understanding of the effects of Boko Haram's terrorist activities on the interactions between states in the northern expanse of Nigeria and among her neighbors especially Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Therefore, while Boko Haram aggravates the security challenges in Nigeria, on the one hand, it also contributes to the failing security situation in neighboring countries, on the other hand.

The non-policed Lake Chad, the rugged expanse of land and dense forests as well as the mountains in the remote parts of the Sahel region provide safe havens for Boko Haram and other international terrorist organizations enabling them to establish links with local terrorist groups (Ibrahim, 2014). These ungoverned spaces also make it conducive for criminal activities to thrive (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, 2017). Also, it has contributed to the rise in the smuggling of goods, drugs, weapons as well as the illegal crossing of non-nationals in and out of Nigeria. The successful attempt by Boko Haram to take over Sambisa forest in 2009 speaks volume of the danger such ungoverned spaces constitute for the security of nations in the region

Considering the insurgency in northern Nigeria today, officials as well as ordinary people on the ground noted that Boko Haram became what it now is because of the militarized response by the Nigerian state that further provoked the group. The Nigerian military's excessive use of force used on the group initially can only win the war but weapons alone are unlikely to bring peace for the people of northern Nigeria (Foucher, 2016). To win the peace, there is a need for governance reform because the fundamental fuel for the conflict and recruitment drive embarked upon by Boko Haram was poverty and poor governance so that people linked their poverty to bad governance. In a society with few industries and factories, where those who are elected into political offices become instant millionaires and billionaires overnight. The corrupt political system is bound to create an albatross because those at the bottom of the ladder will always feel that their misfortune was caused by the wealth of those that are leading them and that are amassing their fortunes illegally. In a political system where there are grievances and people cannot get redress, it is easy for individuals, especially young persons to become radicalized and wish to get even with the state.

The mandate of organizations like ICRC is to ensure that the military operates professionally in dealing with the Boko Haram insurgency.

Following the historical background of the group from its establishment as a nonconformist religious network to its present state as a transnational uprising, it has become clear that Boko Haram has benefited from the long period of economic neglect of the inhabitants of the northeast of the country. Hence, to provide a context into the emergence, activities and responses to Boko Haram insurgency, I will specifically discuss the following; (1) inter-religious coexistence in post-colonial Nigeria, (2) the post-military era and power struggle in northern Nigeria, (3) Boko Haram's early ideology, (4) Goodluck Jonathan's Presidency that was a turning point in the spread of terrorism in northern Nigeria, (5) territorializing in the face of government pressure, (6) Boko Haram becoming West Africa's new threat, (7) the Multinational Joint Task Force's (MNJTF) trends and patterns, (8) implementing ECOWAS's counterinsurgency strategy, (9) the violation of peoples human rights, (10) the state's arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life, (11) the inhumane prison and detention conditions, and (12) ECOWAS's policy on conflict prevention and early warning interventions.

2.2 Interreligious coexistence in postcolonial Nigeria

A notable feature of the Nigerian state is the co-existence of various religious followers. While most communities were only distinct geographical settlements of people with different cultural and religious systems in the pre-colonial era, the multicultural and religiously diverse environment in post-colonial Nigeria has overtime proved to be the strength of her nationhood (Batolotta, 2015).

However, in the recent era intolerant behavior has arisen from within this multi-religious and multi-ethnic national setting. This has paved a way for the rise of militias across the country and particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria. Most notable among these militias are the activities of the religious sect Boko Haram which was built on fundamentalist and reformist religious resentments of a few individuals within the Nigerian Muslim community (Adesoji, 2011).

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious state with more than 400 ethnic nationalities and numerous religious systems (Aghemelo & Osumah, 2009). Since the 1920s, Nigeria has encountered many ethnoreligious clashes in its northern and southern territories whose causes have been attributed to the colonial policy of amalgamating a multifaceted cluster of cultures without giving critical thought to the eventual consequences of bringing all these ethnoreligious groups (Adetula, 2015).

2.3 Post military era and the power struggle in northern Nigeria

Nigeria's political system has been severely challenged by ethnicity, religious bigotry, cut-throat politics of excessive favoritism, and corruption. Ethnicity forms a central theme in Nigeria's postcolonial politics and particularly within the North. These identities and communal contentions have been prominent features in many political power plays by recalcitrant leaders leading to the instability of the contemporary Nigerian state. The outlandish political behavior of Nigeria's politicians necessitates one to have a deeper understanding and a broader conception and reflection of its flawed politics. People in northern Nigerian have come to view politics as essentially composed of a struggle between two religions namely Christianity and Islam. However,

scholars and observers alike have stated several times that these distinct entities brought together arbitrarily by British fiscal interests set the foundation for present-day ethnic conflicts (Ugwu, 2015). It is not a matter of conjecture that the relationship among the dominant ethnic and religious groups is based on mutual suspicion and distrust.

Since the 1951 elections, Nigeria's ethnic groups, especially the elites of these groups have sought to build Nigeria's socio-political system on the fear of political dominance. The fear of domination has created a great divide between the North and South, and among the respective ethnic nationalities. This singular issue has been the basis for the entrenchment of nepotism in the Nigerian constitution under the guise of the 'federal character'. The fear of ethnic domination helped to increase mutual suspicion among the different groups and remained even after independence in 1960. For example, with the departure of the British colonial power, northern Nigeria felt that southern Nigeria will dominate the political space in Nigeria because of the notion that the people from the south were wealthier and better-educated (Campbell, 2013). Even though some datasets seem to show that the school enrolment rate varied between the north and the south before the colonialist scramble for Africa (Frankema, 2012).

Today, the fear of ethnic or religious domination by the northerners plays out unfettered in the federal government's distribution of resources and political favors. Northern Nigeria is largely dominated by Hausa-Fulani people with Islam as their religion alongside several other smaller ethnic groups that are Christians. Since the post-military era, the power struggle between the Muslim political elites and their Christian counterparts has dominated the political structure of the North such that it has created the foundations of social instability and the failure of democracy (Adesoji, 2011). The belief that power has to reside with certain religious groups has informed the desperation portrayed by politicians seeking to remain in power.

2.4 Boko Haram: origins, ideology, causes, and impacts

Understanding the context of the emergence of violent extremist groups like Boko Haram in northern Nigeria hinges on the tragedy of religious fundamentalism, which has defined and influenced the history and present dynamics of politics in the Nigerian polity (see Ekpo & Offiong, 2020). The story of the emergence of insurgency in northern Nigeria cannot be isolated from the civilizational struggle and religious fundamentalism which predates the emergence of Nigeria as a country (Anugwom, 2019; Smith, 2015; Thurston, 2018). For instance, Anugwom (2019) traces the origin of violent extremism in Nigeria to the 1804 Jihad of Shehu Uthman dan Fodio that successfully established an Islamic caliphate in the larger part of the modern northern Nigeria area.

Building on the above points, Alexander Thurston's (2018) research identified some of the post-Jihad changes which make northern Nigeria a veritable ground for extremism. One such change that he noted is the existence of hereditary Muslim rulers, of which the Sokoto and Borno Houses are the most senior in that category of rulers. Second, is the emergence of Sufism, a sect that ardently resents the feudal political arrangement in the north and “political emirs” for their role in politics. Third, there is a Salafi movement whose origin is traced back to Abubakar Gumi (1924-1992). Gumi’s followers in 1978 founded *Jama‘at Izalat al-Bid‘a wa-Iqamat al-Sunna* (the society for the removal of heretical innovation and the establishment of the Prophet’s model) popularly known as “*Izala*.” This mass organization spread anti-Sufism throughout northern Nigeria, including to Maiduguri, where Boko Haram originated. *Izala*’s activism provoked bitter debates between Sufis and Salafis.

From the 1990s onwards, Thurston (2018) noted that the young Izala members who traveled and studied abroad did not just return to meet Gumi's demise but also a division among the Izalass. The group, however, kept recruiting young preachers one of whom was Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram. Just before this period, there were waves of Christian-Islam ambivalence that swept through Nigeria during the late 1970s and birthed groups such as *Maitatsine* whose founder, based on some esoteric readings of the Qur'an, claimed to be a prophet (Thurston, 2018). The *Maitatsine* movement shared similarities with the Boko Haram insurgency in the areas of ideology and violent activities (Aghedo, 2014). Amidst these waves or religious radicalization was the declining fortune of the Nigerian state in terms of welfare, economy, and the crushing poverty in the country which is argued by Iyi (2017, p. 8) to have "a debilitating effect on Nigerians, which has forced some to resort to violence" with Boko Haram being a fitting example.

The proximate origin of Boko Haram as an Islamist sect is marred by degrees of obscurity (Aghedo, 2014; Asuelime, David, & Onapajo, 2015, p. 66; Bukarti, 2020). However, the trigger can be traced back to the endorsement of the strict implementation of Sharia law among the northern states in the early days of Nigeria's democratic experience in 1999 (Anugwom, 2019; Asuelime et al., 2015). The Boko Haram group, which has emerged at different times ranging from Aghedo's (2014) date of 1995 and Solomon's (2015) date of 2002 to Ogunfolu, et al.'s (2017) date of 2003. Then came the known appellation as *Jama'atu Ahlis Suna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (people committed to the propagation of the prophet's Teachings and Jihad), which was later christened as the *Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afrīqiyyah* (or the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in March 2015) (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018). The group was initially labeled *Yusufiyya* after its founder Mohammad Yusuf and was called the

“Nigerian Taliban” between 2003 and 2004 (Thurston, 2018). The period 2003/2004 is essential with regards to the first major attack by the group, which has been studied in detail by Bukarti (2020).

According to Bukarti, Abubakar Shekau has maintained leadership of the group from 2009 (when Muhammed Yusuf was murdered by security agents) until its first division in 2012 when members who resented Shekau’s indiscriminate killing of civilians founded *Ansaru al-Musulmina fi Bilad al-Sudan* (2020, p. 70). A further split emerged in 2016 when Shekau rejected his deposition by ISIS, a move that culminated in the emergence of Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) as a declared affiliate (*wilayat*) of ISIS (Bukarti, 2020). It was Abubakar Shekau’s faction of the group, Smith (2015) argues, that said it wants to be known as *Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah Lid Da’awati Wal Jihad*. The group, however, never addressed itself as Boko Haram but it was given that name by journalists and locals who judging from the ideology and mode of operations of the group felt that the group resented influences of Western civilization. Hence, the name *Boko* (book or Western innovation) *Haram* (sin, bad, or deceptive) (Solomon, 2015b; Thurston, 2018).

Boko Haram’s ideology was built around the theology of its leader, Muhammad Yusuf who has been described as fundamentalist in the strictest sense of the word, believing very literally in all of what he took away from the Qur’an (Smith, 2015). Further, the group dreaded scientific innovations and dismissed some scientific notions such as the spherical nature of the earth. The underlying philosophy of Yusuf which his followers found enticing is summarized by Smith (2015) as follows:

...British colonialism and the creation of Nigeria had imposed an un-Islamic way of life on Muslims through all the various layers of a modern state – Western schools, a Western legal system, Western democracy, and on and on....He advocated the development of an Islamic state where Muslim

principles and sharia law would be obeyed and denounced northern Nigeria's traditional leaders, including the sultan of Sokoto, the country's highest Muslim spiritual figure (n.p).

Thurston (2018) further clarified that Boko Haram's ideology is anchored in the Salafi-jihadism doctrine that refers to the combination of Salafi theology with jihadist ideology. One consequence of Salafi-jihadism fusion is a pronounced willingness to commit violence against Muslim civilians. If Salafis view non-Salafi Muslims as being at risk of deviation, and if jihadists view most Muslim rulers as *infidels* who merit death, then Salafi jihadists treat ordinary Muslims as needing violent correction (Thurston, 2018). And even if one views the Salafi-jihadist ideology as a mere cover for jihadists' material ambitions, it is also significant in understanding how the Salafis interact with the rest of the world (Ibid). The group referred to its non-members as *Kuffar* (disbelievers; those who deny the truth) or *Fasiqun* (wrong-doers). The group which started as a nonviolent entity became an extremely vicious and violent terrorist group, particularly in 2009 (Asuelime et al., 2015). The sect strongly rejects the state's secular authority and instead pursued the quest to Islamize the Nigerian state. Its mission is simply to radically change the socio-political liberal order of the Nigerian state to a Sharia-governed system (Ibid:69).

With regards to the causes of Boko Haram's violent extremism in northern Nigeria, several schools of thought have been generated. While some scholars have adopted a monocausal framework for analysis, others have employed multivariable framings. For example, Kanu (2017) argues that ideally there would have been no Boko Haram insurgency, but for the monumental corruption that exists in the Nigerian polity. Aghedo (2014) recognized that Boko Haram depicts a clear picture of the incapability of the state to effectively discharge many of its statutory responsibilities. Boko Haram

is driven by some socioeconomic drivers such as a lingering poor economy, financial mismanagement, political corruption, poverty, inequality, unemployment, poor education, and bad governance (Asuelime et al., 2015; Smith, 2015).

Matfess (2016), in her study of the Boko Haram crisis, affirms that the root of the problem lies in the faulty provisions of the country's constitution, and the nature of federalism it enshrines. Similarly, Mbah *et al.* (2017) argue that the insurgency in northern Nigeria is a culmination of the politics of resource control between the political elites of the north and south. The history of religious radicalization as the “overarching” cause of religious fundamentalism in northern Nigeria indicates that religious fundamentalism feeds on the leadership deficits of the Nigerian state (Anugwom, 2019). Thurston (2018) blames the emergence of the sect, *inter alia*, on Nigeria's contentious politics, economic inequality, endemic corruption, and counterproductive conflict management policies. De Montclos (2018, p.871) contests that the religious roots of the insurgency and its escalation is due to a mainly a story of mismanagement of the conflict by the key peace actors.

There is also the question of ethnicity in the causal analysis of the Boko Haram debacle. For instance, Iyi (2017a, p. 418) believes that the spread of the Kanuri ethnic group across the Lake Chad region, including Chad and Niger, makes for a large pull of strategic recruitment and tactical withdrawal bases that further enhance to a great deal, Boko Haram's emergence, rejuvenation, and continued existence. Solomon (2015) contends that it is problematic to solely deflate ethnicity and to amplify religion in the analysis of the causal factors of violent extremism in Nigeria. He noted that Nigeria has a plethora of fault-lines of which ethnicity constitutes just one issue. Besides the dominance of certain ethnic groups in the Boko Haram insurgency, the perception of some members of other ethnic groups such as the Igbo, who see the

conflict as an ethnic façade in the general politics of resource redistribution (Solomon, 2015, p. 97).

Similarly, Faluyi *et al.*, (2019, p. 78) situate the terrorist insurgency within the complex primordial politics of the Nigerian elites and warned that unless the political elites abandon ethnic politicking and Nigerians, in general, begin to prioritize the country above ethnic and religious affiliations, violence erupting as a result of ethnic and religious disaggregation will likely occur unabated. In analyzing the ethnic composition of the security forces in Nigeria and the treatment of major Boko Haram culprits such as Kabiru Sokoto, Peter Mbah, et al. (2017, p. 183) concluded that it seems plausible to argue that the emergence of the Boko Haram sect is a reflection of elite politics played within the mask of ethnicity and religion based on primordial sentiments and the North-South divide politics that thrive in Nigeria. Supporting this notion, Anugwom (2019) added that ethnicity manifests in the Boko Haram insurgency on two levels namely, first, as the bid of the minority Kanuri (in northern Nigeria) group to reaffirm and re-establish its dominance in the northeast against the greater influence of such other contiguous ethnic groups like the Hausa and Fulani within the geopolitics of Nigeria. Second, the dimension of violence by the sect is seen to deliberately target establishments like churches, shops, and relaxation spots visited mainly by migrants from the southern part of Nigeria (Anugwom, 2019, pp. 198-199).

While the first argument is, however, weakened by the fact that the Boko Haram group has at its members, people of Hausa and Fulani descent, the latter is dwarfed by the fact that the ethnic Kanuri, from 2012 onwards, also suffered greatly from degrees of Boko Haram atrocities (Anugwom, 2019). Contesting the ethnicity narrative, Thurston (2018) infers that the Boko Haram group rejects nationalism or ethnicity by giving *bay'ah* (fealty) to the Islamic State (with no ethnic affinity) as it wages war

against Nigerian apostates. Consequently, Thurston (2018) supports the fact that the group's motivation and the advantage is more religious than nationalist or ethnic. However, ethnic identity unites group members, as reviewed earlier, and cannot be dismissed in the analysis of the Boko Haram violent extremism in northern Nigeria. The fact that all of the Boko Haram leadership from Yusuf to Shekau, to Mamman Nur (Shekau's deputy), and even the leader of Wilayat are Kanuris speaks volumes (Anugwom, 2019, p. 180). Besides the notion that the majority of the territorial coverage and group membership are Kanuri, the language mostly used by those claiming an affiliation with the insurgent group is Kanuri with members from the Ansaru faction being partly a Fulani separation from Kanuri dominance (Jourde, 2017). These facts leave much to worry about the ethnic hypothesis of Boko Haram's origins.

Even as the causes of religious fundamentalism in northern Nigeria are still intensely debated among scholars, the implications on the ground are repugnant, heavy, and very costly. The insurgency has led to much destruction, death, humanitarian situations, and varying degrees of violence, as well as the interruption of normal living, and violence against women and children (Agbaje, 2020; Ekpo & Mavalla, 2017). For example, Onuoha & Oyewole (2018, p.1) noted that the insurgency is estimated to have claimed at least 100,000 lives, displaced more than 2.6 million people, caused pain to over 52, 311 orphans and 54,911 widows, and led to about \$9 billion worth of damage. Between 2009 and 2018, Boko Haram was responsible for 1,639 terrorist attacks, with 1,4436 fatalities, 6,051 wounded victims, and 2,063 hostages captured in Nigeria (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018, p. 5). Claims by the Nigerian government reveals that the crisis has affected 14.8 million people, and caused 23,461 deaths, over 5,000 missing persons, 2 million displaced persons (IDPs), and 1.66 trillion naira economic loss in northern Nigeria (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018, p. 5). Since 2009, Boko Haram has, in

Borno State alone, killed up to 100,000 people and destroyed N1.9 trillion (\$5.2 billion) properties, including one million houses and 5,000 classrooms, as of 2017 (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018, p. 5). Thousands of women were kidnapped and used as cooks, wives, sex slaves, and suicide bombers for the terrorists (Bloom & Matfess, 2016; Oyewole, 2017).

Indeed, women have been the most vulnerable survivors of violence, enduring a larger part of the Boko Haram atrocities (Matfess, 2020). The kidnapping of hundreds of women and children such as the girls in Chibok and Dapchi reinforces Oriola's (2017) notion of the "unwilling cocoons" in which the insurgent group strategically commits sexual and gender-based violence against women. Moreover, Agbaje (2020) and Matfess (2016a) reported that the Boko Haram group has in multiple instances objectified women to enhance their profile, using young women for sexual gratification, propaganda, and gatekeeping. The general insecurity instigated by the activities of the insurgency has hindered local people's everyday participation in religious ceremonies, and it has stalled schools, sports, and other developmental activities causing a generally destructive impact on the economy of the region with a rippling effect on poverty and unemployment (Daouda, 2020).

The recurring effect and escalation of the Boko Haram conflict are worsened by the highhandedness of the state security apparatuses which has been blamed for inflaming tensions between the group and local communities. For instance, Thurston, (2018) highlighted that the continued existence of the Boko Haram conflict owes itself to the pervasive human rights abuses committed against insurgent members and their relatives by the Nigerian state through its security agencies. In fact, the Boko Haram group only resorted to terror tactics after the assassination of its leader, Muhammed

Yusuf, by the state's security operatives. Recounting the atrocities of the security operatives, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (2018) made this:

In the city of Maiduguri, the military promised to kill 100 residents in retaliation for every 1 soldier killed. They openly robbed, kidnapped, bombed, and murdered. They also tried to turn the crisis into a profitable business, ceased properties[sic], pocketed allowances paid by the state government, and racketeered families with extravagant bail conditions to release the youth arrested under any pretext (p. 872).

Such irrational and dehumanizing attacks on the people who ought to have been protected by the state may account for the reason why hundreds were pushed into joining the terror group not just to avenge their losses but to also garner protection from the insurgent group. The human rights violations worsened with the introduction of the state's Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in 2013 and its Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015. The CJTF was alleged to have committed degrees of human rights abuses ranging from the extrajudicial killing of surrendered Boko Haram members and innocent community members while using "knives to slit the throats of several Boko Haram detainees before dumping their bodies in a mass grave" (Owonikoko & Onuoha, 2019, p. 33). The CJTF also assaults women in the communities and IDP camps and use their privilege to witch-hunt opponents, and perpetrate other vices that made the communities dread them and their benefactors" (Owonikoko & Onuoha, 2019, p. 33). The MNJTF, on the other hand, was involved in enhancing communication and coordination of arrests, and in carrying out their activities, arrested suspects were left in cells in deplorable conditions without trial. In Maiduguri, there were over 20,000 of such arbitrary arrests and injustices that further complicated the various counterterrorism interventions ensuring that violence is inevitable (de Montclos, 2018).

The commission of these abuses by the security agencies has been a recurrent theme in the discourse of the Nigerian government's conflict management efforts. Such a scenario, Sampson (2015) contends is due to the failure of the Nigerian state to implement the various human rights treaties, which it is a party to at the international level. This trend makes the government security apparatuses and their coordinating bodies enemies to the troubled communities, while at the same time ensuring that they turn toward Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), who seem to have their interest at heart by catering for their immediate needs in the battered communities and hazardous Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps across the northern states and their fringes.

The activities of internal and domestic NGOs have proven to be very helpful in ameliorating the suffering of survivors and victims of Boko Haram violence, while also helping to bring into the limelight, the atrocities committed by belligerents in northern Nigeria (Walker, 2016, p. 167). Government agencies both at the state and national levels have proven to be inefficient in catering for affected populations just as the few supplies are being mismanaged and looted by corrupt officials (Abdulazeez & Oriola, 2018). Some of the NGOs are known for their active roles towards providing relief materials to IDPs; supporting school programs; providing counterpart funds for financing the basic needs of IDPs; delivering healthcare services; advocacy, creating awareness, and sensitization campaigns; and resettling survivors from the IDPs camps. (Mohammed & Yalwa, 2018).

Faluyi *et al.*, (2019, p.153) narrated that the Red Cross has been very conspicuous in responding to the basic human needs of vulnerable and affected populations. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is also known to be a major humanitarian player, spending about \$291 million in humanitarian

aid between 2014 and 2018 (Brechenmacher, 2019). Other NGOs have proven reliable in providing for the basic needs of the victims and vulnerable as well but not without some obvious challenges that they face (see Daniel & Neubert, 2019; Njoku, 2018, 2020) For example, NGOs such as United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Action Against Hunger, Mercy Corps, Amnesty International, and others have been found wanting and were asked to quit the northeast region by the Nigerian government. While UNICEF, the Mercy Corps, and Action Against Hunger are accused of undermining the country’s counterterrorism efforts by training people for clandestine activities, Amnesty International is accused of destabilizing the country by providing “false evidence” of human rights violations (Njoku, 2020, p. 1).

2.5 Nigeria state peacebuilding effort

Nigeria’s government’s efforts against the Boko Haram insurgency have been majorly around the areas of conflict resolution rather than prevention and/or peacebuilding. This is so because early warning signs are often overlooked. The root causes of the conflict are also ignored with attendant effects emanating from conflict management strategies. The politicization of state responses to conflict such as the Boko Haram insurgency compromises genuine efforts to address the issues (Mbah et al., 2017) and de-escalate emerging issues to the point that conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and even conflict resolution becomes very difficult. Such is the case with the Boko Haram insurgency which has become a crisis that has taken root within Nigeria for over a decade now.

The earliest reactions by the Nigerian government to the threat of violent extremism in northern Nigeria was the definition of legal frameworks that would proscribe insurgent groups and as well give it legitimacy to fight the criminal activities of these groups. Some of the legislation enacted by the Nigerian government included

the 2011 Terrorism (Prevention) Act, the 2011 Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, the 2012 Money Laundering (Prohibition) (Amendment) Act, and the 2013 Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act (Faluyi et al., 2019, p. 83). This legislation provided a coordinated framework between government agencies and defined roles and responsibilities that cumulatively aided the processes, procedures, and approaches to confronting, preventing, resolving, and cementing peace and justice in the case of the insurgency. By 2015, the Northeast Development Commission Bill was passed into law. The bill is laudable in that it seeks to pursue peace through the coordination and prosecution of the war by “other means” which has been projected to deal with both the push and pull factors of terrorism and radical ideologies in northern Nigeria, also depriving the terrorists of a readily available pool of apologists, recruits and socio-economically induced sympathizers (Ekpo & Mavalla, 2017, p. 12).

Nevertheless, the major effort of Nigeria’s counterterrorism strategy has been the use of force and counter-violence with a labyrinth of human rights abuses carried out against combatants and civilians. For example, the reaction of the federal government to the July 2009 attacks was the lethal use of force, which culminated in the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and another 700 members of Boko Haram who were held by the police force (Ekhomu, 2020, p. 183). Troops deployed for counter-insurgency operations in some north-eastern states were raised from about 3,000 in 2012 to 8,000 in 2013 to 20,000 in 2014 to 25,000 in early 2015, and 40,000-50,000 in 2017 (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018, p. 18). The government initially underestimated the zeal, network, and power of the group and mistook its actions for brigandage and /or just another Islamic criminal upheaval that could be suppressed and quenched like its predecessors in the 1980s. This informed the government’s acute policing, militarization, intelligence gathering, and sorties.

The tactics often deployed by the troops comprise of road barricades and passenger searches, mass arrest, some intelligence-based raiding, precision bombings, curfews, the issuance of a state of emergencies, collaboration with some local stakeholders for intelligence gathering, and other post-theatre sub-tactics (Anugwom, 2019; Ekhomu, 2020; Solomon, 2015b). The government has also established camps for displaced persons, as well as some mobile schools, de-radicalization programs, and even banned local people's use of horses in Borno to checkmate deadly raids and attacks by Boko Haram henchmen (Onuoha & Oyewole, 2018). These military tactics were adjudged inefficient and ineffective, which led to innovations and modifications resulting in joint military and community operations. The Joint Task Force (JTF) was formed comprising security personnel from different forces and paramilitaries. In 2013, there were modifications at the strategic level due to the escalation of terrorist activities in the region, and by 2015 the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) was created. Upon the escalation and regionalization of the Boko Haram threat, there were some cross border cooperation and operational collaboration which added the counterterrorist prerogative to a Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) that has existed in Nigeria since 1994 to combat cross-border crimes within Nigeria and Cameroon, Chad, Benin, and Niger's borders (see Anugwom, 2019; Ekhomu, 2020; Popovski & Maiangwa, 2016).

There were attempts at utilizing political options such as negotiations and granting of amnesty to the Boko Haram militants on the grounds that they will surrender their arms and embrace peace yet the general diffidence and politicization of the conflict have made some observers to question the proposed amnesty of terrorists and others have expressed worries over the unintended consequence pardoning violent extremist (Anugwom, 2019; de Montclos, 2014; Ekhomu, 2020). Also, the government has recently deployed such strategies as dialogue, ransom payments, and prisoner

swaps with a view to ameliorating the most negative manifestations of the crisis. Nigeria's huge reliance on the use of force has been counterproductive. The evidence of human rights violations and abuses accounts for the persistent escalation of the Boko Haram terrorist activities in some ways (de Montclos, 2018; Owonikoko & Onuoha, 2019; Thurston, 2018). Although some northern states have witnessed a conspicuous decline in the violent disposition of the extremist group, the northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe continue to experience violent attacks. These actions have led many observers to unanimously call for an overhaul of Nigeria's overall counterterrorism strategy. Such calls are hinged on the notion that the Boko Haram insurgency is a political conflict that requires a political solution, rather than a military-type conflict resolution technique.

2.6 Regional conflict resolution efforts

There is a growing involvement of regional bodies in the unending quest of maintaining both regional and global peace and stability. This has been the rootage of the idea of regional security governance. Nigeria falls under the geographic lines of Africa and West Africa, regionally and sub-regionally; thus, the country belongs to the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS), by the very reason of its location. Also, the Boko Haram menace has affected countries in the Lake Chad region, this has been exacerbated by a seeming internationalization of the insurgency through foreign contacts and alliances. The AU, before the proliferation of terrorism in Africa, had in 1992 adopted Resolution 213 with the primary aim of curbing violent extremism. Article 4 of the Constitutive Act also disavows terrorism and stresses the need for member states to address structural conditions aiding the

spread of terrorism, building capacity, and promoting human rights, and the rule of law (Solomon, 2015b).

Also, the AU has delegated the drafting of specific counterterrorism strategies to sub-regional bodies, Nigeria, in this instance falls under ECOWAS jurisdiction. Another strategic positioning of the AU in combating terrorism in Africa include the adoption of the Common African Defence and Security Policy; the founding in July 2002 of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT); the adoption of the AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism among others (Solomon, 2015b).

Surprisingly, with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency, the AU has played little or no role and even failed to discuss nor issue any formal communiqué until 2014, several years after it had been aware of the group's deadly activities in Nigeria (Mickler et al., 2019).

Consequently, Solomon (2015) argues that the AU has failed to make its intended impact on the continent and he attributes the failure to six reasons: (1) the attitude of some heads of states over terrorist threats; (2) the unwillingness of national governments to giveaway aspects of their state sovereignty; (3) the diversity in values held by African states; (4) the challenge of financial deficit; (5) the emphasis on sub-regional bodies on issues of security; and (6) the dependence on state structures. Even though the regional security governance is delegated and bequeathed to ECOWAS by the AU, the body, too, has failed to step in as a subregional body to offer a resounding solution or initiative to prevent and stop the Boko Haram insurgency, which has already become a regional threat.

Dieng (2019) noted that from 2011 to 2014 when the Boko Haram insurgency escalated and proliferated across the Lake Chad region, ECOWAS was largely indifferent. It took until 2014 before the regional body began to discuss issues related to Boko Haram. Yet the disposition of the sub-regional institution with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency has been more in the areas of paying lip service to what is going on, and releasing communiqués (Mickler et al., 2019). Dieng (2019, p. 5) observed that ECOWAS's efforts to prevent the terrorist insurgency has not yielded substantial results; rather, it has created a security void which necessitated the creation of cross-border initiatives such as the MNJTF and the G5 Joint Sahel Force to combat terrorist threats in the West African region. The MNJTF, which metamorphosed from the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), has about 8,700 soldiers with soldiers coming from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria. With four sectors of intervention command (Mora in Cameroon, Baga-Sola in Chad, Baga in Nigeria, and Differ in Niger), the MNJTF created a "safe and secure environment for many communities previously occupied by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups" (Dieng, 2019, p. 481). The joint effort recorded huge success in dislodging and reducing the military capacity and capability of the terrorist group (Ibid). ECOWAS's inability to lead the regional security governance of West Africa is attributed to the paucity of funds, the dearth of political will, rivalry with the AU/UN over the control of the regional security structure, and the fact that not all of the affected states are members of the ECOWAS regional body (Obamamoye, 2020, p. 15).

2.7 Regional organizations and security

Security, in its holistic sense, has become the priority of most international and supranational organizations. Even those which were initially founded for economic purposes are gradually co-opting the security objective in their *raison d'être*. For

instance, Suzuki (2020) notes that one of the key components of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is the working relationship between the AU and the sub-regional groupings which all started as Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These RECs include the ECOWAS, Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Arab Maghreb Union (AMU/UMA), Eastern African Community (EAC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (Dieng, 2019). Thus, Obamamoye (2020, pp. 1-2) asserted that regional security governance now involves a non-centralized structure of maintaining stability within a regional space, through concerted efforts of the regional actors. The peacebuilding activities of these regional actors are increasingly important for dealing with Africa's collective problems around their shared history, security, and governance.

In the West African region, ECOWAS has been the most visible of the regional actors alongside the other collective efforts by MNJTF, G5 Joint Sahel Force, UN Office for West Africa, and the Sahel (UNOWAS). It is in this sense that Lopez-Lucia (2015, p. 352) argued that West Africa's security governance took a defining shape in the 1990s following ECOWAS' movement from non-interventional policies to the adoptions of "the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999), the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008)" all of which provides ECOWAS the unique opportunity to spearhead the security governance architecture of the subregion. The West African region is bedeviled by serious governance challenges such as political instability, weak democratic systems, pervasive activities of extremists and terrorist groups, organized crime, porous international

borders which aid the smuggling of some dangerous and illicit items, the proliferation of small and light weapons, trafficking of people, and illegal cross-border migrations, amongst others. In the face of all of these challenges, ECOWAS has made concerted efforts at establishing governance by putting forth resolutions and initiatives to tackle these challenges with certain degrees of successes and failures (Aning & Bah, 2009).

2.8 ECOWAS and regional security governance in West Africa

Indeed since the 1990s, ECOWAS has being a major factor in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts within West Africa (Coe & Nash, 2020). These efforts have assumed multidimensional forms that have been grouped together as diplomacy, mediation, and peace support operations (Suzuki, 2020). Following the outbreak of the political crisis in Liberia and Sierra-Leone in 1990, ECOWAS stepped in as a regional security governing actor to launch the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to help resolve the conflict in the two West African countries. Convinced that the escalation of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra-Leone could constitute a major breach to the peace and stability of the entire West Africa region with attendant effects on people's human rights, the regional body deployed peacekeeping troops to both countries to supervise a ceasefire agreement, which brought the civil war to an end, and also averted a huge humanitarian catastrophe (Arthur, 2019, p. 169).

Before the relapse of the Liberia and Sierra-Leone conflict into further violence, ECOWAS further renegotiated another agreement that witnessed the resignation and exile of Charles Taylor, a rebel leader and major actor in the conflict, to Calabar, Nigeria in August 2003 (Arthur, 2019). Goaded by the earlier successes, the development of a framework that supports intervention, and the support of the UN Security Council, ECOMOG was subsequently deployed to address the political crises

in Guinea Bissau (1998–1999, 2012) and Côte d’Ivoire (2003–2004) (Maiangwa, 2017). Compared with other RECs, ECOWAS brokerage of peace agreements has been quite successful. Data reveals that between 2002 and 2015, ECOWAS has led 127 percent and 138 percent of pre-conflict and post-conflict agreements in the region respectively (Coe & Nash, 2020, p. 165). This surpasses SADC’s 59 percent and 67 percent; IGAD’s 64 percent and 44 percent; ECCAS’s 8 percent and 19 percent and CEN-SAD 17 percent and 11 percent (Ibid). However, ECOWAS’s negotiators are predominantly prominent politicians and retired heads of states who are not necessarily mediation experts *per se* so that there is an elitist taxonomy attributed to the regional organization.

Using its military might, the regional body has thwarted some unconstitutional changes of government, which would have provoked a great deal of instability and crises that includes the cases of Togo in 2005, Guinea in 2008, Guinea Bissau in 2009 and 2012, Niger in 2009 and 2010, Cote d’Ivoire in 2010, and Mali in 2012 (Maiangwa, 2017). The ECOWAS body, through initiatives such as the West African Police Chiefs Committee (WAPCCO), ECOWAS Drug Control Unit and Drug Fund (EDCUDF), West African Joint Operations Initiatives (WAJO), the Global Container Control Programme (GCCP), Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP), the 2013 ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, and the ECOWAS Integrated Maritime Security Strategy, has also made some sterling success in combating drug trafficking (Maiangwa, 2017, p. 9). Also, through several multilateral initiatives and collaborations, ECOWAS is involved in fighting trans-border crimes and checkmating terrorist organizations, and preventing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the borders of West Africa (Lopez-Lucia, 2015, p. 352).

On counterterrorism efforts in West Africa, ECOWAS seems well-positioned to strategically combat the menace of terrorism and violent extremism. Besides the various protocols on conflict resolution, already adopted by ECOWAS, the regional body has also established an early warning and response network (ECOWARN), and an Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) initiative that empowers the regional body to detect and plan appropriate responses to organized crimes and their finances by checking money laundering (Maiangwa, 2013, p. 11) In 2013, the regional body also made the ECOWAS Political Declaration and Common Position Against Terrorism and its annex, and the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy to further strengthen and fortify its counterterrorism strategy in the West African region (Uzoehina, 2017, p. 59). The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) has been adjudged to be a great framework that is capable of connecting the counterterrorism interest of the whole of West Africa into a grand strategy that tackles human insecurity as the root cause of violent crimes in West Africa (Uzoehina, 2017).

Generally, ECOWAS's counterterrorism strategy is anchored on three main pillars. The first pillar is fastened to the trio principles of "prevent, pursue, and reconstruct". The strategy's second pillar seeks to establish a practice of timely and active response to the terrorist attack in West Africa while the third pillar deals with post-terrorism reconstruction programs that the affected states should implement (see Ukaigwe, 2016, pp. 114-20). These strategies, especially the prevention strategies, are people-oriented, and signify the growing shift from an 'ECOWAS of states to an ECOWAS of the people' (Aning & Bah, 2009, p.2). The bulk of the implementation of this strategy, however, lies with the member states that have hitherto been lackadaisical about counterterrorism until the proliferation of terrorist activities in Nigeria and Mali.

ECOWAS also has as its counterterrorism partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other international bodies. The regional body runs a counterterrorism coordination unit that monitors and evaluates its projects annually for improved decisions, and to create new decision-making templates (Maiangwa, 2017). Of great advantage to the regional body is the fact that other global partners such as the AU, the UN, and powerful states like the US, France, and the UK, among others, lend their support to the various ECOWAS' interventions and peacebuilding efforts (Bappah, 2018, p. 90; Harmon, 2015).

However, ECOWAS, as a preponderant regional security actor, has not been doing very well in combating Boko Haram's insurgency and violent extremism in the West African subregion (Maiangwa, 2013, 2017; Uzoechina, 2017). In fact, its counterterrorism strategy has been most powerful in the realm of rhetoric and designing strategies rather than acting and implementing them (Mickler et al., 2019). The 2012 attempt to lead the fight against violent extremist groups in northern Mali failed to come to fruition, and it was taken over by the French-led Operation Serval in 2013. The regional power also ignored the atrocities of the Boko Haram insurgent group in Nigeria until 2014 (Dieng, 2019). ECOWAS seems incapacitated with regard to counterterrorism issues, particularly the implementation of its counterterrorism policies.

2.9 Implementing ECOWAS's counterterrorism strategy

Several efforts were made to tackle the menace of Boko Haram's insurgency in spite of the unrestricted upsurge in its activities. One of these efforts was ECOWAS's counterterrorism strategy. Notwithstanding this strategy, several issues remain, these include the question about ECOWAS's ability to complement the federal, state, and local governments local strategies in addressing the challenge, and the extent to which the remote causes of the conflict were addressed in line with ECOWAS's strategy.

A key component of the local strategy is the traditional institutions, which knows each member of its ward that includes the families. So, it is a useful mechanism to use to prevent conflict. The introduction of modern policing systems and constitutional amendments has taken away the important roles and responsibilities of traditional rulers and their institutions in Nigeria. Local peoples and their traditional conflict resolution institutions have abdicated their responsibilities thinking that the modern police system will suffice in addressing the Boko Haram threat. Unfortunately, what has been noted so far in terms of delivering security, peace, and conflict prevention is that the modern policing system has not been so effective because it has not been able to penetrate the strata of the society up to the grassroots level (Campbell, 2018). The police-to-population ratio in Nigeria is similar to the rest of Africa and the local communities are often worse-off because there are grossly under policed. It remains to be seen whether the interventions will modify at some point to bring about a blend of the conflict prevention mechanisms that are indigenous to the people with those of modern policing. If a hybrid model is put in place, then there could be a sort of balance, and reinforcement that could bring about sustainable peace in northern Nigeria.

This expectation is important given the promise by West African leaders in February 2013 through the Political Declaration on a Common Position against Terrorism to explore every possible approach in its battle against terrorism. That declaration incorporated a Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan, embraced by the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at its 42nd conventional session in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire. The strategy was the aftereffect of a comprehensive process that began in 2009 and has since expanded to include national, regional, and global specialists, civil society

the media (Ewi, 2013). The commitment of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in improving the security strategy indicated the common interest of civil society and regional bodies like ECOWAS.

The core motivation behind the Declaration and the Strategy is to anticipate and annihilate terrorism and related criminal acts in West Africa with the end goal of making conditions favorable to sound economic development and guaranteeing the prosperity of all ECOWAS residents. The plan also aimed at providing additional support to regional and global instruments against counterterrorism as an operational strategy.

In the wake of transnational crimes and terrorism committed in West Africa, the Declaration was hailed as a remarkable accomplishment in ECOWAS's war on terror. The incidence of military upsets, internecine clashes, mercenary activities, and the rule of tyrants have plunged the West African sub-region into various manifestations of terrorism (Maclean, 2020). Violent episodes such as the Niger Delta strife of 2006, the resurgence of Boko Haram in 2009, and the control of northern Mali by psychopathic militants since 2012 constitute different anchor points in the same chain of terror that has engulfed West African nations since their independence.

The turn of events in recent times has indicated that the rise of terrorist groups like Ansar al-Dine, al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in Mali and al-Shabaab in Somalia signal that if terrorist groups are not contained then they will push the region to the brink of unrecoverable civil crisis. As the Africa International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) illustrate, peace missions are costly, enduring and underscore the need to organize preventive measures (Freear & de Coning, 2013). It is in consideration of these issues that the Declaration and the Strategy

were adopted. The key inquiry here is whether the Declaration and the Strategy can tackle the confounding issue of terrorism that is increasingly becoming internationalized within West Africa. The declaration is also aimed at assessing the commitment of ECOWAS member-states and other regional bodies to the war against terror (Freear & de Coning, 2013).

Further, it is essential to note that even though ECOWAS has since acknowledged the need to battle terrorism, the success of the Declaration and Strategy rests on the structural competency of the Organization. The Declaration however provides a wide spectrum for engaging terrorism including standards and rules shared by all member-states, recognized regionally, and in jurisdictions globally. For instance, member-states unequivocally object to terrorism and related offenses with the commitment to censure any financing related to terrorism (Human Rights Watch, 2012). The United Nations' efforts on global counterterrorism have further encouraged member states to adopt a strategic framework against anti-terror war, based on some key principles namely; forestalling, going after terrorists, and resettlement (OHCHR, 2008).

The most significant principle is forestalling acts of terror, which require member-states to embrace a wide scope of exercises to counteract terrorism. It incorporates adopting and executing strategies for dealing with conditions that enable the spread of terrorism, entrenching democracy, and improving early warning systems and operational insight (OHCHR, 2008). Other elements include: discouraging fanaticism and radicalization, and advancing popular policies within member-states as well as respect for human rights. The principle of going after terrorists empowers member-states to embrace measures that engage terrorism once it occurs. An important feature in these goals is to unsettle terrorists, reducing their capacity to instill fear and

ultimately bringing them to justice. The principle of resettlement involves restoring the confidence of victims and rehabilitation. The strategy comprises the ECOWAS counterterrorism coordination unit, ECOWAS arrest warrant, and an ECOWAS blacklist of terrorist and criminal networks. The strategy additionally requires the creation of an ECOWAS counterterrorism training manual.

While it might be difficult to assess the success of the declaration and strategy, in principle, they are veritable tools for ensuring peace and security because they could alter the usual mode of anti-terror operation in Western Africa. The issuance of an ECOWAS arrest warrant, for instance, could harmonize cross-border operations among states exposing places of refuge for terrorists.

A major test for this strategy will be the level of political will by member-states in enforcing it. Observations in the past seem to suggest that plans of this nature may be hamstrung by the lack of political will due to rival interests between the member states or principally due to corruption within the governments. While the strategy may not be a comprehensive response to terrorism in West Africa, it provides a powerful and proactive system for containing the dangers of terrorism. Its ultimate success will depend however on its implementation by all member-states. Member states should take deliberate and pragmatic steps to ensure both the strategy and the declaration are upheld at the national and regional levels. The ECOWAS Commission must move beyond protocol to act in mobilizing the counterterrorism coordination unit and set up an observatory system that includes indices for assessing compliance level (Ewi, 2013).

Many organizations are working with ECOWAS to coordinate a more effective counterterror approach. For instance, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) provides the analysis component type support to ECOWAS. By way of operation, WANEP provides analysis, presents recommendations, and carries out risk

analysis scenarios, through policy briefs that it provides for ECOWAS. WANEP made a major recommendation to invest in prevention because it appears that the regional body invests more into response than prevention. This comes back to the structural issues and investing in prevention that could address some of those underlying causes of violence.

Women's empowerment and practical disarmament have also been enunciated by ECOWAS as veritable structural tools for conflict prevention. It is believed that when women are empowered, especially within the African context, they take care of their homes, so they have control over their children and the household essentially (Kabeer, 1999). There is no gainsaying the fact that when women are empowered, they build the nation. Yet when there is a situation where women are not empowered, it creates a lot of problems within the family setting and this is reflected in the larger society. The same thoughts have been given to the idea of disarmament, which takes small arms and light weapons out of the hands of people (ECOSOC, 2010).

There are numerous intervention programs and ideas that lie beyond disarmament and women's empowerment that can address Boko Haram terrorism, yet concern remains. One major concern is the mismatch between peacebuilding programs, and what the local population requires. These programs are often regarded as elitist. Some of the criticisms of the ECOWAS framework include that it is an elitist organization raising questions about how its peacebuilding programs and development strategies could benefit ordinary everyday people in northern Nigeria (Francis, 2018). There is the need for more inclusive policies because most programs do not relate to peculiarities of grassroots people as evidenced in their poor results. In this respect, the AU has a major role to play. Think tanks like the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) should bolster ECOWAS through inquiry and

recommendations to the regional group, member-states, and the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit.

Most Nigerians, especially in the north may not be able to describe exactly what ECOWAS is and what it is doing. When the issues of peacebuilding and development were raised in communities where I visited, the people did not seem to know much about ECOWAS. This is against the backdrop of the federal ministry of foreign affairs claim of sensitizing Nigerians about the various programs of ECOWAS in all the 6 geopolitical zones over the last five years. These efforts could yield more fruit if the ECOWAS decisions, programs, protocols, and conventions were designed to incorporate traditional peacemaking principles into the various strands of its peacebuilding strategy (Bolaji, 2011). People must be aware of the existence and benefits inherent in these programs. The ECOWAS peacebuilding projects would have a higher chance of succeeding when they are done in close collaboration with community leaders, and specific national agencies that are saddled with the responsibility to get the information down to the grassroots (Bolaji, 2011).

A noticeable challenge is that projects are usually implemented at the state capital levels; often getting those projects to the rural areas is resource-intensive and challenging. The Boko Haram group did not just emerge out of thin air, some analysts have shown how poverty, long-lasting economic disparities, and apparent structural violence at the grassroots serve the key factors underlying the terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria (Walker, 2012). The neglecting of these factors, particularly in the rural communities by the national government and international organizations such as ECOWAS is responsible for what we have now. Yet the intervention programs in northern Nigeria have continued in a manner that does not factor the needs of local people.

2.10 ECOWAS and the challenges to regional security governance

ECOWAS' challenge in coordinating and superintending West Africa's security seems to be as enormous and complex as the threats that bedevil the region. One of ECOWAS' overarching challenges is the unwillingness of some 'powerful' member state to cede aspects of their sovereignty to ECOWAS for the overall interest of the region (Marc-Antoine Pérouse, 2014, p. 27). Such is the case in Nigeria's tough stance against the deployment of foreign troops within its territory in spite of the incessant Boko Haram threat (Marc-Antoine Pérouse, 2014, p. 27). This kind of ambivalence is premised on the notion that the actor's proximity to conflict can compromise the neutrality and impartiality of their intervention. Also, there is a high risk of advancing domestic interests in the guise of regional interests. Thirdly, the gap in socio-political and economic realities between member states makes such an open-door defense policy a perpetual mirage according to Kuwali (2018, p. 53).

These factors are very much potent in the case of Nigeria as ECOWAS seems more like a tool for regional dominance than a movement towards supranationalism (Lopez-Lucia, 2015, p. 354). Consequently, even as the ECOWAS Commission successfully adopts some necessary protocols, the bulk of its implementation still falls on the member states that are found culpable in breaching the protocols they co-engineered. Hence, there is a general sense that the political will of ECOWAS member states must be reawakened to walk the talk since none of them can isolate themselves from cross-border threats and conflict. The protracted and unconventional nature of recent wars discourages member states, too, from contributing troops for regional purposes (Arthur, 2019). The fear of reprisal by extremist groups operating across

borders is also a frightening factor that restrains member-states from championing ECOWAS peace initiatives (Arthur, 2019; de Montclos, 2014).

The historical division of the West African region along the two political axes of Francophone and Anglophone is another major source of ambivalence (Maiangwa, 2013). Also, the separate operation of the MNJTF from a distinct G5 Sahel Force in prosecuting the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region and Mali respectively depicts the complexity of ideology and haplessness in managing regional and international political interest within the West African region (Dieng, 2019). The dynamics and political intrigues between ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN have often hindered the progress of regional decision-making, as well raise questions about the capacity of ECOWAS to manage West Africa security challenges due to the paucity of funds for financing the running cost of the regional security initiatives (Akanji, 2019; Kuwali, 2018; Maiangwa, 2013, 2017). About 85% of ECOWAS's budget is realized from the resources it generates from its member-states (Arthur, 2019, p. 174). Conversely, Maiangwa argues that the major challenge of ECOWAS and other RECs in Africa is not necessarily their finances, rather these organizations are incapacitated due to the “incompetence, profligacy and corruption of their political elites and other public officials who facilitate the chain of the organized crime by sacrificing national and regional security on the altar of greed” (2013, p. 13).

Although ECOWAS has relied largely on troops from Nigeria for its interventions and now that Nigeria is bedeviled with her internal security challenges, ECOWAS lofty aims seem thwarted militarily (Arthur, 2019). Therefore, it may be difficult for any meaningful ECOWAS intervention to be implemented into Nigeria's security crises (Mickler et al., 2019, p. 285). Further, even though ECOWAS has within its framework an early warning system, it has yet to prevent violent extremism and

other forms of transnational conflict within the subregion. ECOWAS has also proven to be irresponsive to the numerous human rights violations and the lack of separation and checks and balances within the domestic governments of member states (Arthur, 2019).

Even as the ECOWAS's counterterrorism strategy has been alluded to by several scholars to be at the policy level there has been a major attempt towards providing a guided action to solving the insurgency and violent extremism problem in the West African region. Uzochina (2017) has faulted ECOWAS's counterterrorism policy document, and has identified key areas in which its protocol could work against the ECOWAS commission. The counterterrorism strategy defined violent extremism and radicalization in the context of religion, and by doing so, downplays other sources of radical and extreme ideology such as economic deprivation, which is fundamental in ECOWAS's efforts against radicalization (Uzochina, 2017). For starters, ECOWAS would need to rethink its conceptualization of violent extremism and radicalization since defining a problem is very imperative in conceptualizing a sound solution.

2.11 Conclusion

Here we sought to consider the historical development of the Nigerian state, her multi-ethnic nature and the recent occurrences of conflicts and insurgency to the point that cross-border attacks are being carried out across neighboring countries in West Africa. The chapter also focalized the efforts deployed towards nipping the problem in the bud including military and joint military operations. It was observed that little has been achieved in the efforts to combat the Boko Haram challenge, there is therefore the need to frame a different peacebuilding approach that will provide a lasting solution to Nigeria's troubled northern region. In furtherance of this discussion theoretical approaches concerning conflicts and peace initiatives are reviewed in the following

chapter to provide a nuanced understanding of proposed peacebuilding frameworks for curtailing these violent problems as those faced by local people in northern Nigeria.

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Post-colonial Africa is replete with conflict and, more recently, Western Africa has been caught up in the web of New Wars and terrorism (Kaldor, 2013). The preeminent fear of terrorist activities spreading across the Sahel region is worrisome and the people have often wondered when the region would witness relative peace. To begin with, one of the deadliest terrorist groups, Boko Haram is gathering momentum developing deep roots in northern Nigeria, despite the Nigerian state and other foreign actors burgeoning efforts to counteract Boko Haram's insurgency. The Nigerian government has increased its military budget for purchasing military hardware to assist in its fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. Unfortunately, these interventions are yet to produce the needed positive and sustainable peace for the people of northern Nigeria.

Reflecting on the Nigerian state and the regional peacebuilding interventions in northern Nigeria, there are calls for utilizing a more subtle approach in combating Boko Haram terrorism. Scholars and practitioners in their attempts to shed light on the search for peace in the region have drawn attention to the lack of grassroots participation in the efforts to create peace with justice. They argue that local participation in peacebuilding missions and programs is a key component in determining the success or failure of the intervention (Autesserre, 2010; Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009; S. Lee, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2006, 2011; Narten, 2009; Pugh et al., 2008). While the Nigerian government remains firmly in control of the efforts to quell violent extremism and terrorism in the northern region, the notion of local participation is limited to the involvement of local leaders who are the voices of the people in their communities.

The inclusion of local participation also requires an understanding of the local dynamics and the underlying causes of violent extremism. Also, ECOWAS' commitment toward regional peace and security has witnessed its peacebuilding strategy being deployed to member states. ECOWAS' peacebuilding strategies must also be vested in grassroots participation to complement the efforts of individual member states. Thus, this literature review critically explores the history and evolution of violent conflict in northern Nigeria specifically within the context of the Boko Haram insurgency.

First, the chapter reviews the literature on violent extremism, terrorism, and ethnoreligious conflict as a step into understanding the context of the Boko Haram conflict. This section reflects the experience of the people, and their motivation for rebellion. Second, it explores some of the theories on conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and buttresses the actual peacebuilding practice experienced in northern Nigeria and West Africa. It reveals the gap between the theory and practice of critical and emancipatory peacebuilding approaches and why an alternative peacebuilding paradigm is needed.

3.2 Violent extremism

As the world is increasingly becoming complex with many ideas, technologies, interconnectedness, and interdependencies, among others, values owned and held dearly by local peoples and groups are also becoming threatened by these global forces, culminating in adherents often going 'extreme' to either evolve or preserve some kind of unique identities (Atran, 2015; Charles & Ekwutosi, 2020; Kaufmann, 2010). Violent extremism is not a novel concept in political and security, and peacebuilding discourses. The origin of violent extremism according to Hoffman, (2017, p. 83) is traceable to over two thousand years ago or it commenced with the eleventh-century

Christian crusades or during the events following the 1789 French revolution (Mansouri & Keskin, 2019; Sageman, 2017). However, violent extremism became popular and has since gained overwhelming attention since September 11, 2001, in the aftermath of the Al Qaeda attack in the United States. (Jackson, 2016, p. 20; Sajoo, 2016, p. 28). Therefore, violent extremism is not unique to northern Nigeria or West Africa yet it has become a global issue that compels varying interpretation(s) and framing from keen observers.

For instance, the Australian Government defines violent extremism as behavior to capture the beliefs and actions of supporting or using violence to realize religious, political, and ideological goals (Healey, 2017, p. 34). Neumann and Brooke (2007) in yet another detailed exposition, asserts that extremism could mean but is not limited to:

Political ideologies that oppose a society's core values and principles. In the context of liberal democracies, this could be applied to any ideology that advocates racial or religious supremacy and/or opposes the core principles of democracy and universal human rights. The term can also be used to describe the methods through which political actors attempt to realize their aims, that is, by using means that show disregard for the life, liberty, and human rights of others (quoted in Borum, 2017, p. 17).

Violent extremism occurs in instances when individuals or groups overtly push and advance their ideological beliefs, through the use or call for violence (Southers, 2013, p. 4). The use of violence here underscores that the radical and extreme element rationalizes the use of force or harming of specific targets for defined goals. According to Southers (2013, pp. 5-6), some important attributes manifested within extremist groups include intolerance, superiority, otherism (presumption that some groups do not belong to the mainstream), absolutism, and doomsday scenarios that are domiciled in an apocalyptic outcome from a failure to pursue their mission.

For violent extremism to manifest itself there must be some fundamental group grievance and/or ideology to which adherents are connected to and are keen on advancing at the expense of any cost, bodily harm not excluded. This explains why persons and institutions with precepts and conventional ideas are often identified as harbingers of violent extremism. Goertz and Streitparth, (2019, p. 9) noted that religion has some affinities to violence, fundamentalism, and totalitarianism because religion forms identities, influences behaviors, is doctrine-bound, engenders legitimacy, and creates an institution. Keskin and Tuncer (2019) argue against theology being the ultimate trigger of radical ideologies and violent extremism. They note that religious teachings or theological precepts are not necessarily to blame for extremism, rather it is the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of these teachings that have metamorphosed with exuberance into creating extremists out of some youth populations (p. 16).

The theological basis of violent extremism is further echoed by Mohamed Ali (2016) in his treatise, *The Root of Religious Extremism*, where he supports the argument that the Salafi doctrine of *Al-Wala' Wal Bara'* is the basis of Islamic extremism. He noted that the concept of *Al-Wala' Wal Bara'* which translates as “loyalty and disavowal” is central in the ideology of modern Salafism, and it prescribes a dysfunctional relationship between Muslims and non-adherents by promoting Muslim solidarity while completely dissociating with the things that displease God including *kufr* (disbelief), *shirk* (apostasy), *kuffar* (disbelievers), *bid'ah* (religious innovations), *ma'siyyah* (disobedience to God), and *al-anzimah al-taghutiyah* (un-Islamic political systems) (Ali, 2016, p. 4). On the other hand, King and Pauly (2016) in their analysis of ISIS's ideology claim that Salafism or Salafiyyah in the Sunni school of Islamic jurisprudence is a breeding sect for radical extremism. King and Pauly (2016) argue

that this tendency is inherent in their belief that “they alone adhere to pure Islam as directed by God and they alone practice the faith as God intended” and in this narcissism, “all others, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, who do not believe as the Salafiyyah followers, are t apostates and legitimate targets for termination in the movement to create a true Islamic caliphate” (p. 33). Cliteur (2017) also advances the religious argument by identifying some radical contents of the Holy Bible, especially those in the book of Deuteronomy, that serve as the “roots causes” of contemporary extremism, explaining that religious motivation to violent extremism must be granted the kind of attention it demands (p. 18). Further, Hoffman (2017, p. 82) highlighted some contemporary Christian-affiliated extremist groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and the Red Hand Commandos in Northern Ireland, and later in his analysis, he added the Jewish and Christian White Supremacists to his list of extremist groups. Conversely, Tellidis (2016) rejects the claim that religion causes extremism, rather he argues that religion is only politicized by extremists as a conduit to reaching their goals.

On the other hand, Glazzard, *et al.* (2018) posit that extremism could crisscross ideology as a prime factor in its causal analysis. They articulated that other factors such as identity, social networks, and grievances suffice as both causal and contributory factors. The overarching cause, Glazzard *et al.* (2018, p. 3) argue, is the failure of governance of which religion or ideology is used by conflict actors in their quest for territory, power, or resource acquisition. Such failure creates what Hassan (2019) has labeled as “deficits” in development, economy, freedom, and even knowledge, which lubricate the pathway to violent extremism. Sajoo (2016, p. 34) tends to agree with this point that the lag in the “quality of life, employment, equality, and accountable governance fuel disaffection that extremist violence thrives on.”

This makes more sense as Gambetta and Hertog (2016) has adopted the theory of relative deprivation to explain the prevalence of radicalization of greater numbers of youths, specifically, in the poorer Islamic countries that have been involved in some form of development crises since the 1970s. They contend that frustrated expectation and ambition drive this group of educated youths into the first level of radicalization (Gambetta & Hetog, 2016, pp. 34-35). This is similar to Kanu's (2017) position that there is a strong nexus between violent extremism and state corruption. The connection is the frustration and aggression engendered by populations witnessing leaders who amass illegitimate wealth through corrupt practices while synchronously failing to deliver basic services to the people (Kanu, 2017, p. 280). Nevertheless, there is a “nearly unanimous” evidence linking either material deprivation or inadequate education as a variable in understanding the cause of terrorism or violent extremism (Krueger, 2018, p. 2).

It is worthy to note that violent extremism is often preceded by stages of radicalization which has been described as a movement of beliefs by a person or group of persons from being relatively conventional to being extreme and rigid in wanting a drastic change in society (Healey, 2017; Jayakumar, 2019; Koehler, 2017). It is, however, the incorporation of extreme tactics such as fear, terror, and violence to achieve change that places such demagoguery at the level of terrorism and/or violent extremism (Healey, 2017). This is why Southers (2013) opines that extremism is a primary feature of terrorist behavior. However, there seems to be a distinction between terrorists and extremists – while the former adopts fear and violent tactics, the latter operates in the realm of ideological beliefs without an explicit endorsement of violence. Essentially, the notion of what constitutes terrorism is debatable and this remains an area of intellectual and ideological contention.

3.3 Terrorism

Shanahan, an expert in critical terrorism studies, defined terrorism as the deliberately indiscriminate use of violence or threat of it towards members of a target group to influence the psychological states of an audience group in ways the perpetrators anticipate may be beneficial to the advancement of their agenda (2016, p. 239). A critical examination of both Krueger and Shanahan's definitions, however, reveals various elements that make it descriptive, classificatory, and even normative. The same viewpoints were also noticed in the work of Erlenbusch-Anderson (2018) who noted that most literature on terrorism appears to adopt a descriptive approach yet builds normative judgment into description based on the cases selected. Also, Hoffman (2017) derived a definition of terrorism from a normative approach to be an occurrence of political violence carried out by individuals, government, or states belonging to an organization or ideological movement dedicated to the revolutionary change that they fervently believed can only be effected through violence or the threat of violence.

Sandler (2018, p. 1) identified two ingredients of violence and political goals as the most important element in conceptualizing terrorism. These elements are well captured in the Social Science Researcher definition of terrorism as:

The calculated use of unexpected, shocking, and unlawful violence against non-combatants (including, in addition to civilians, off-duty military and security personnel in peaceful situations) and other symbolic targets perpetrated by a clandestine member(s) of a subnational group or a clandestine agent(s) for the psychological purpose of publicizing a political or religious cause and/or intimidating or coercing a government(s) or civilian population into accepting demands on behalf of the cause (Hudson, 2018, p. 16).

Several types of terrorism have been identified in line with their normative characteristics. Hudson (2018), for instance, highlighted four types of terrorism based

on political or ideological background, to include nationalist-separatist, religious fundamentalist, newly religious, and social revolutionary. The same normative ingredient was used by Sandler (2018) to label the “four waves of terrorism,” namely, anarchy, nationalism, leftist ideology, and religious fundamentalism.

The critical element in our review worth reemphasizing, however, is that terrorism is a tactic of political violence (Krueger, 2018, p. 14; Townshend, 2018) or a type of “tactics used within a strategy of tension” (Vergani, 2018, p. 24), in which extremists also use it to advance their cause (Healey, 2017). The taxonomy of terrorism as noted above by Hudson (2018) could overlap. There are cases where elements or labels of ethnicity are seen in religious fundamentalism as in the case of the emergence of extremist groups in Pakistan (Topich, 2018). Similarly, the Boko Haram insurgency has been attributed to some kind of ethnic explanation in determining the identity, culture, or value-base of its members (Anugwom, 2019; Faluyi, *et al.*, 2019; Iyi, 2017b; Jourde, 2017; Mbah, *et al.* 2017). Therefore, a theoretical discourse on the concept of, and nexus between ethnicity or ethnic conflict and violent extremism would not be out of place.

3.4 Ethnic Conflict

Conflict is as old as human existence and will continue to manifest itself since the inevitable but limited global resources must be shared by all humans (Hoffman, Alamilla, & Liang, 2018). Ethnicity is also an old and problematic concept. According to Taras and Ganguly (2016, p. 1), ethnicity is defined as a “large or small group of people, in either traditional or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture, racial similarity, common religion, and belief in a common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the

group.” Nonetheless, some people share certain affinities as described above but fail to see themselves as belonging to the same ethnic identity. This makes ethnicity a very complex term to define, describe, or explain. Ethnicity is a concept that is best explained through theoretical framings than to be defined with certain variables.

Consequently, Wanjala Nasong’o (2015) in his edited volume *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa*, has summarized the phenomenon of ethnicity under the two theoretical interpretations – the premordialist and constructivist schools of ethnic analyses. While the premordialists assume that ethnicity is a natural phenomenon defined by commonness in a common ancestry and cultural attributes including language, religion, customs, traditions, cuisine, and music, among other things, the constructivists see ethnicity as products of human actions and choices, not biological givens. The constructivist's argument is predicated on the assumption that ethnicity is a creation since the purity of every group is contaminated by the assimilation of others, comingling, and miscegenation (Nasong’o, 2015, pp. 1-2). Additionally, Taras and Ganguly, (2016, p. 4) have added another theoretical school namely, instrumentalism, which sees ethnicity as a manipulative tool employed by “individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end.”

Irrespective of its purity or the determinant variables of ethnicity, Nasong’o (2015) toeing the constructivist's path posits that six-steps are needed to what he terms a “process of cultural objectification” of ethnicity. For an ethnic identity to be constructed and maintained, it must first, invent a language; followed by a tradition; and then symbols, including totems, legends, myths, and shrines; succeeded by the invention of ideologies of shared ancestry, culture, and religion; and then followed by the creation of ethnic boundaries which defines the “we” against the “them;” and

stereotyping other groups to justify privileges and differences in access to society's resources (Nasong'o, 2015, p. 3).

For Nasong'o (2015), ethnicity is not problematic. The root of ethnic conflict, rivalry, and ambivalence lies in the instrumentation of ethnicity, that is., the use of ethnic identity by individuals and political elites inoffensively or defensively to advance their selfish interests or respond to threats or opportunities. Nasong'o agrees that nations should naturally comprise of people of common descent or ethnicity but that has failed to be the case due to the dynamics and force of history. Countries in Africa, for instance, were arbitrarily created across kith and kin by the forces of colonialism, and this remains the root of most ethnic and boundary conflicts in Africa today (Nasong'o, 2015, p. 4).

Taras and Ganguly (2016) highlighted that the causes of ethnic conflict include nationalism (self-determination), democratic instability, resource competition, and hypothetical factors such as ancient hatred, irredentism/foreign intervention in ethnic disputes, state collapse/anarchy, human emotions, poverty/resources, and elite competition. Similarly, Etefa (2019) reported that ethnic conflicts are not spurred on by hatred, climate change, or competition for natural resources yet they are with regards to politics as political and economic failures that resonate in the ethnic grievance are the root cause of ethnic conflicts in Africa. In most cases, Etefa (2019, p. 18) argues that political elites intentionally enflame and sponsor conflicts between ethnic groups when their regime or survival is threatened by public grievances. Hoffman *et al.* (2018, p. 50), on the other hand, argue that it is the lack of exposure and isolation from ethnically and culturally diverse programs, combined with lengthened authoritarian leadership and government that may have directly contributed to ethnocentric ideology and conflict in Africa. In order for a group to mobilize, Nasong'o, (2015, p. 17) posits

that the group must have experienced some deeply felt threats or have fundamental grievances against the system or another group. Other motivators for group action are the emergence of “political opportunity or access to resources” (Nasong’o, 2015, p. 17).

The internal and external causes (powerful states, the diaspora, and regional powers among others) of ethnicity seem to be infinite. What then is the connection between ethnic conflict and violent extremism or terrorism? The nexus is that during ethnic conflicts, based on the underlying causes and grievances, parties could radicalize, become extreme, and adopt a terror strategy (Townshend, 2018). Also, ethnicity could be used by terror actors for several purposes that fit the instrumentalist theory of ethnicity (Sandler, 2018, p. 52). For instance, Fathali Moghaddam (2005) pointed out on his staircase to terrorism how grievances that build from relative deprivation could accumulate and radicalize a defined group into considering and adopting terrorism as a strategy in intergroup conflict. Participation in the conflict then becomes hinged on the possibility that members from a particular ethnic extraction could improve their status when they engage in social actions that are designed to empower them (Fellman et al., 2015, p.92). Brooke (2018) draws on his experience to infer that, ethnicity and identity are crucial variables to consider within nationalism or terrorism. He further noted that most sustained terrorist campaigns result from the perceived mistreatment of one group by another and, more so that the terrorist groups need support from their in-house members too (Brooke, 2018, p. 132). By this notion, the sustenance of Boko Haram terrorism is linked to the support it gets from its members and the perceived mistreatment of its members by the government.

3.5 Conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding

The concepts of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding are sister terms that revolve around the elementary catalog of Peace and Conflict Studies and overlap and form a high degree of intersection in both usage and application. Conflict prevention, as a concept, does not entail the acute stoppage of the manifestation of conflict since conflict is functional, inevitable, and is as old as human existence. For example, Ramcharan and Ramcharan (2020) explicated that conflict prevention borders on the utilization of several strategies and mechanisms to ensure that conflicts do not degenerate into violence. In other words, conflict prevention mechanisms are designed not to prevent conflict, but to monitor indicators in conflicts that could foment possible escalation and violence.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in the same vein, has defined conflict prevention as a “nonviolent (or creative) conflict transformation and encompasses activities designed to defuse tensions and prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread or recurrence of violence” (Ukaigwe, 2016, p. 163). Similarly, Swanström and Weissmann (2005) opine that conflict prevention is a peaceful process that is devoid of violence and is divided into two different categories: direct prevention and structural prevention. While the former is short-termed and is targeted at thwarting an imminent escalation of an existing conflict, the latter addresses the root causes and potential trigger factors of violent conflicts (Swanström & Weissmann, 2005, p. 19). This is why conflict prevention is labeled as a proactive strategy that benefits from historical and strategic intelligence (Ray, 2012, p. 59).

The structural conditionality that supports the practice of conflict prevention has been captured by Ramcharan and Ramcharan (2020) in their study to include: sustainable development, justice, and equitable and effective institutions, among others.

Also, Ray (2012) highlighted structural solutions to conflict prevention that include: political determination by the affected parties, economic development, increased human security and happiness levels, and mediation by a third party, among others. Moreover, Ukaigwe (2016) asserts that the operationalization of conflict prevention includes relying on early warning, conciliation, mediation, and preventive disarmament/deployment tools to achieve peace (p. 164).

Conflict resolution, on the other hand, portends to the nonviolent settlement of an already manifested and/or escalated conflict. Conflict resolution has to do with the restoration of a conflicting party's relationship, signaling the end of the altercation. It has been interchangeably used with terms such as negotiation and reconciliation which has been defined as the principal approach to transforming conflicts that focus on processes of rebuilding relationships. The goal of conflict prevention is to create relationships that can be classified or seen as "normal, trustful, and peaceful" (Leiner & Schliesser, 2018, p. 179). Conflict resolution also fits within former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's idea of peace-making which has been defined as action taken to resolve the issues that have led to conflict, or action taken to bring warring parties to the table through a peaceful approach (Bappah, 2018, p. 84).

The processes of conflict resolution also extend to bargaining, negotiation, and third party mediation strategies (Avruch & Mitchell, 2013). However, conflict resolution is only possible when the underlying causes of conflicts are not issues bordering on the parties' basic human needs. According to Avruch and Mitchell (2013), if such fundamental needs are not catered for, conflict resolution efforts are bound to fail since the parties barely compromise on their basic needs that are necessary for their survival. Thus, to be a good conflict resolution practitioner, one must be good at conflict analysis as well as understanding the basic needs of the conflict parties (Avruch &

Mitchell, 2013, p. 8). Conflict resolution is curative and is affected by cooperation/competition, perceptions of social justice, motivation, trust, communication, language, attribution processes, emotions, persuasion, self-control, power, violent disposition, judgmental biases, personality, development capacity, group problem-solving creativity, the issues at stake, and the general orientation of parties (Deutsch, 2014).

Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is both proactive and curative. It falls under the same definitional lens as conflict prevention yet “takes place through a developmental lens, intending to address the fundamental root causes and conditions of violent conflict” (Karbo, 2018, p. 12). It has been argued that the focal point of peacebuilding is the removal of the deepest triggers of conflict which has been highlighted to include social injustice, economic despair, pervasive poverty, and political oppression (Karbo, 2018, p. 12). Peacebuilding can take place before, during, and after the emergence of violent conflict. While the praxis of pre-conflict peacebuilding fits the conception of conflict prevention as described above, that which takes place during conflict follows a different approach.

Agbibo (2015) for example, likened peacebuilding attempts that take place during a violent conflict to those actions taken by some parties in the conflict to curtail the violence or facilitate a speedy resolution to a conflict before it degenerates into violence. Hence, he refers to the actions of some youths in the northern states of Nigeria in supplying the military with assistance, intelligence, and even tactical support in their onslaught against the Boko Haram insurgency as peacebuilding efforts (Agbibo, 2015). Post-conflict peacebuilding, on the other hand, entails strategic efforts put in place by actors and parties in conflict to ensure what Galtung and Fischer (2013) classifies as positive peace (cited in Cremin & Bevington, 2017). Equally, Boutros

Boutros Ghali defined post-conflict peacebuilding as the actions taken to identify and support structures which will tend to reinforce and consolidate peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (see, Tom, 2017, p. 44). This is done partly through the mobilization of resources for post-conflict reconstruction and the development of longstanding strategies for sustainable peace. In other words, post-conflict peacebuilding can assume the form of concrete and visible developmental projects that contribute to socio-economic development crisscrossing the fields of agriculture, transportation, water and energy resources, culture, and, importantly, education (Karbo, 2018, pp. 12-13). Therefore Tom (2017) puts a practical spin on Boutros Boutros Ghali's post-conflict peacebuilding notion. He enumerates that peacebuilding activities should include initiatives such as disarming armed warring parties and restoring order, the seizure of weapons, the repatriation of refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation (Tom, 2017, p. 44).

However, building peace is a very difficult and complex process since it involves power relations among parties with its attendant frictions (Björkdahl et al., 2016). It could be a planned process and even emerge through an unexpected or accidental channel; if poorly timed, peacebuilding efforts could be ineffective or cause harm to intended beneficiaries (Mac Ginty, 2013b). Some peacebuilding interventions have intentionally and/or unintentionally “thwarted the implementation of peace accords or the fulfillment of a widely enjoyed peace” (Mac Ginty, 2006, p. 115). The “spoilers” or “spoiling” factor is a peacebuilding process has become a dreadful strategy of most stakeholders in conflict situations who, for several reasons, seek to destroy efforts aimed at transforming conflict situations, and enshrining positive and

sustainable peace (Newman & Richmond, 2006). Ensuring the smooth transformation of conflicts, therefore, demands the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders, including women, youth and children in the process (Özerdem & Podder, 2011, 2015), and a broad and critical approach or model to foster positive and sustainable peace (Björkdahl et al., 2016, p.3). Millar (2018) contends that such an approach must be “thick” in the description and sufficiently capable of advancing a “close examination and interpretation of the complex and multi-dimensional social reality of the local setting” (p. 6).

The aforementioned has culminated in a plethora of theories, models, and presuppositions that seek to advance a befitting framework for peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes. While the debate on the suitability or otherwise of the liberal traditional democratic approach to peacebuilding remains heated (see Jabri, 2013, p.15), some scholars have devised models to challenge the dominance of the liberal peacebuilding culture which emphasizes the top-bottom approach by accentuating the dominance of the “international” in local peacebuilding processes (Autesserre, 2010; Lee, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2006, 2011; Pugh et al., 2008). The liberal interventionist approach has been associated with imperialism (Williams, 2010) and enmeshed in the “crisis of legitimacy” (Pugh, 2011, p. 308) often imposed by a wider set of powerful international actors (Mac Ginty, 2013b, p. 3). These approaches are also “driven by a modern form of colonial rationality” (Jabri, 2013, p.2) that ignores the “microlevel tensions and often jeopardize the establishment of peace at the macro-level” (Autesserre, 2010, p.11). In other words, the liberal peacebuilding construes with state-building in Africa (Williams, 2010, pp. 58-73) so that its paternalistic approach tends to undermine the role of local peacebuilding actors (Lee, 2019, p.3).

Consequently, there is a growing call for alternative approaches that would mirror the trajectories of peacebuilding paradigms from the “top-down” (liberal international) to the “bottom-up” (Autesserre, 2010:14) or better still, a peacebuilding strategy that can accommodate the frictions between what is “universalistic and particularistic, homogenous and heterogeneous, liberal and illiberal, and global and local” (Björkdahl et al., 2016, p. 6). Peacebuilding ought to be rooted in local societies and communities should be accorded the privilege to negotiate their priorities in the move to sustainable peacebuilding (Pugh, et al 2008, p. 390). This is so because the structural, proximate, and even triggering causes of most conflicts are local and could be best addressed at the bottom level. Autesserre (2010, p. 9) has actively argued for the involvement of local community members in peacebuilding processes. According to Lee (2019) promoting community ownership of peacebuilding processes makes it more legitimate and sustainable as, in their peculiar contexts, “local people control and/or influence the design and implementation of their peacebuilding programs” (p. 1). Local ownership of peacebuilding, Lee (2019) further argues, supports local rights to self-determination “and offers more emancipatory modes for participation” (p.8). It is also an invaluable approach to achieving what Mac Ginty (2014) has described as “everyday peace” or “the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intra-group levels” (p. 553).

To this end, Mac Ginty (2006) suggests that collective or widespread ownership of peacebuilding, must promote and retain mass involvement through mechanisms such as “referendums, consultation processes, public participation in reconstruction activities and serious attempts to broaden the chief advocates of peace beyond the established civil society and metropolitan elite” (p. 188). Because in most cases, the

funding for peacebuilding comes from the top, that is from international organizations, government agencies, NGOs, private and corporate organizations, and even multinational organizations, local ownership seem challenging (Lee, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2013b, p.3). However, Pugh *et al.* (2008) noted that emancipatory peacebuilding should not be romanticized since some of the local actors could include “genocidaires” and too much focus on the local could also lead to a complex analytical-lag on liberal or global peacebuilding structures (p. 396).

Nevertheless, Björkdahl et al. (2016) contend that peacebuilding interventions ought not to occur in total exclusion of the locals, instead, they must involve an active interaction and subtle influence across the top and bottom trajectories. This, they further articulated, manifests through processes such as “localization” and “vernacularization”. While the former refers to the interaction between foreign and local ideas, beliefs, and practices, the latter captures the process where a foreign idea is domesticated into local institutions, yet it retains its original form (Björkdahl et al., p.11). The interchange or intercourse between the “international” and the “local” actors in the peacebuilding process is widely termed hybrid peacebuilding (see Lee, 2019; Mac Ginty, 2013b; Pugh, 2011). Hybridity, in peacebuilding, is formed through constant interaction between external interveners’ perspectives and their local counterparts’ responses (Lee, 2019, p.11) and such responses, Mac Ginty, (2011, p. 90) notes include local actors resisting, subverting, or ignoring interventionists’ peacebuilding structure and establishing alternatives to such projects. Consequently, when solving the puzzle or friction between international and local actors, hybrid peace can be both contributive and emancipatory, as well as legitimizing multiple levels of peacebuilding interventions to achieve positive peace (Lee, 2019, p.11).

3.6 Conclusion

The terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria has exposed the inherent socio-cultural and religious contradiction in the West African subregion. The dawn of the 21st century has witnessed a myriad of socioeconomic and political problems and challenges, resulting in violent civil wars and more recently a violent terrorist insurgency. These events justify the apocalyptic representation of the subregion as the “coming anarchy” (Kaplan & Rieff's, 2000). To this end, the terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria poses a grim prospect for West Africa, and it calls for an urgent rethink of current peacebuilding practices on the ground.

As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure, so that we must learn from the dire consequences of inaction in the case of Darfur and Rwanda. Thus, the Nigerian government must critically re-evaluate its current peacebuilding practices to include peacebuilding methodologies that are contextual in addressing the root causes of youth radicalization and capable of empowering the local population through honest and culturally sensitive interventions. As it is clear from the northern Nigerian case, the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency transcends Nigeria into other neighboring West African countries. Therefore, ECOWAS's actions must reflect the population's emancipatory stance within the grassroots. Consequently, the emancipatory paradigm that includes the state, non-state, and regional actors requires a culture of peace that is embedded in an authentic process of transformation both for individual states and collectively for Western Africa.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study explores the effect of preventing Boko Haram's violent extremism through peacebuilding interventions in northern Nigeria and the rest of the Sahel region. While violent conflict prevention has been widely held as valuable in the peacebuilding discourse, the practice of conflict prevention in West Africa has proven to be ineffective going by the peacebuilding strategies of the Nigerian government and ECOWAS. Significantly, the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has caused a largely reactive response from the Nigerian government, and other peace actors (Bamidele, 2017). Hence, this study adopts a grounded theory qualitative method in which face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to gauge the experiences and perceptions of the everyday people in northern Nigeria. The study participants ranged from officials of the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative (PCNI) who are involved in the implementation of the government's peacebuilding strategies towards the Boko Haram crisis. Also, participants were drawn from leaders from CSOs involved in peace work across northern Nigeria, as well as some community leaders and everyday people across the ethnic and religious groups in four northern states Abuja, Kogi, Nasarawa, and Kaduna. These participants represent the top-level, middle-level, and grassroots level. This is in line with Lederach (1997) three-tier approach towards analyzing conflict and achieving a coherent perspective towards peace. Specifically, this chapter discusses (1) the qualitative research approach and grounded theory; (2) the researcher's background and positionality; (3) the study participants' profiles and research sites; (4) the research questions and scope of the study; (5) the participants' recruitment; (6) ethical considerations, informed consent, and confidentiality; (7) risks encountered and

precautions taken in the field when conducting the research; (8) data collection, analysis, and coding; and (9) limitations of the study.

4.2 Qualitative research and grounded theory

The qualitative research methodology provides a significant potential to explore the phenomenon of conflict prevention and my interviewee's conceptions of peacebuilding programs that have meaning to those affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. The adoption of a qualitative design helped the researcher make sense of the state-level intervention practice and local experiences and perceptions of those interventions. Rather than confine the study to the systemic method in which controlling variables determine or influence outcomes, qualitative research considers the complex, contingent, and context-sensitive experiences of both the local community and state-level processes of intervention (Macdonald, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative method design can be framed along the lines of a social inquiry that is data-driven yet flexible in using unstructured data to study socially occurring cases in detail as it emphasizes the use of verbal rather than statistical forms of analysis (Hammersley, 2013, p. 7)

Moreover, the qualitative method allows for a people-centered approach wherein the participant's narratives or stories are broadly relevant to the research (Swati, et al 2020). The researcher also has the rare opportunity to observe and account for the people's experiences in their natural language (Reid et al, 2017). Complementing audio recording with transcripts from the interviews and the secondary data is a concrete approach in scripting people into the research (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). As Mac Ginty and Williams (2009) opined, many studies in the areas of violent conflict tend to "write people out," by adopting a technocratic stance that prefers simplistic standardized results. Maintaining simplicity ignores local perceptions and

experiences, and in effect, offers no real solution to the people. Finding indigenous practices to conflict resolution requires access to a variety of lived experiences and perceptions in the context of peace intervention within communities in northern Nigeria. Recognizing the perceptions and experiences of the local population is better suited to using a qualitative methodology (Gobo, 2011).

Following the qualitative research tradition, this study also situates itself in a grounded theoretical framework of analysis that allowed for themes to emerge inductively from the data. Informed by the need to move beyond the people's perceptions and experiences of peacebuilding practice to creatively undertake a problem-solving role, a grounded theory methodology served the research by integrating categories that emerged from the data and exploring their relationships within the context and between the strands of participants (Urquhart, 2013). During data collection, the extraneous stories or narratives made in each interview was followed up with related questions to expand the density of data within each of the emerging theoretical constructs. This process kept the research questions open, allowing theory to be altered or formed concurrently. In a bid to maintain the 'groundedness' of the study, I tried to carefully minimize the influence of pre-existing constructs that emerged from previous literature on the topic by allowing theoretical constructs and categories to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2014).

In practice, I found fulfilling this expectation to be challenging, especially because the research proposal included a literature review before I collected the primary data. For the purposes of integrating local voices within the study, I deemed the constructivist version of the grounded theory to be most suitable (Charmaz, 2005; Charmaz, 2014). On one hand, this methodological approach provided me with a path for change through ongoing empirical research. In other words, the constructivist

version of grounded theory “anchor agendas for future action, practice, and policies in the analysis by making explicit connections between the theorized antecedents, current conditions, and consequences of major processes” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 512).

4.3 Researcher background and positionality

The effect of this qualitative research would be incomplete without factoring in the perception of the people at the grassroots. Suffice it to say that as the researcher, it was important that I went as close as possible to the people on the ground who are the real victims of Boko Haram terrorism to explore the agencies involved in coordinating peace across the region. Rather than take a distanced position, my role was to fully understand the lived experience of the people from the conflict-ridden communities in northern Nigeria. I attempted to restore my participant's humanity by listening to, and valuing their overall experiences and perceptions of government intervention(s) and the overall impact of peacebuilding programs (see Senehi, 2010; Silverman, 2017). The participants through their stories and narratives: (i) asserted themselves as key actors; (ii) provided me with authentic local knowledge and grasp of the situation with regards to their personal experiences; and (iii) they generously shared their experiences with me (see Pouligny, 2002, p. 202). Consequently, I deferred to the participant's interpretations of their experienced reality without misinterpreting the situation and making false claims about the local people or their coordination of peacebuilding interventions.

I was aware of the grounded theoretical framework in which I situated my study and as I collected and analyzed the interview data. As I researched peacebuilding interventions in northern Nigeria I felt that the constructivist theoretical approach held emancipatory and social justice potential as it sought to include a broad spectrum of

stakeholders in the field research (Christians, 2005; Lincoln, 2009). My research participants were able to act on their own behalf which was both transformative and authentic for them. The constructivist approach recognized that my participant's perceptions could change throughout the course of the study (e.g., the concepts of education, minority, and poverty are socially constructed and could mean different things to different people) so that my work was to understand the multiple social constructions of people's meaning and epistemologies. The ontological assumption of the constructivist paradigm is exemplified by Schwandt's description of what he calls "everyday" constructivist thinking in the following way:

In an unremarkable sense, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Most of us would agree that knowing is not passive—simple imprinting of sense data on the mind—but active; the mind does something with those impressions, at the very least forms abstractions or concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197).

Thus, my positionality as the researcher meant that my interpretation of the participants' perceptions was not independent of my values. My interactions during the field research were both reflexive and respectful of the human relations between myself and participants. To this end, I tried to be balanced, fair, ethical, and authentic during the field research (see Mertens, 2014). My positionality could have biased the research as I considered myself to be an insider-outsider. As a Muslim male from northern Nigeria studying at a Canadian University, my interaction with my research participants in exploring local perceptions of peacebuilding in rural communities were a little complicated at times. For example, during my fieldwork in different cities across the northern states, the popular language spoken amongst the local inhabitants are Hausa and I speak little Hausa so that I could not conduct a full interview in Hausa. So, I used

the English language and was often referred to as *Bàtūrè* (Westerner). Therefore, I represented an outsider trait on entering the research yet sometimes I was in the insider position of having intimate knowledge and relationships in a particular community. Having lived in northern Nigeria almost all my life, the context of the people's daily lives were not uncommon to me as I developed friendships with many people in the cities where I conducted my field research. In this sense, it could be said that I was more of an insider, especially with participants whom I have known over the years and some others who were happy that one of 'their own' was working to put forward their experiences to the world. For example, I had many participants who wanted to talk to me about their experiences without signing the consent form. Even though I explained to them it was to fulfill ethics requirements, and to provide them with some sense of confidentiality, they still did not bother to sign the form, so the consent was oral. In detailing my fieldwork notes through which I reflected on the research process, I recognized how I represented multiple identities and how my shifting identities were often characterized by the different responses of trust or suspicion, depending on the participant I was interviewing (see Arthur, 2010). In light of this experience, the study interview questions were designed with the understanding that those who are closely involved in peace work and those who are supposedly the beneficiaries of the policies and programs of the state, would have varying perspectives about the impact of peacebuilding. I used a range of participative methods that I deemed appropriate for the different participant groups. Those living in the grassroots are the direct beneficiaries of peace in practice, and they formed an integral part of the research design.

While much of the academic literature on insiders-outsiders tend to discuss how the researcher sees him or herself during the research process, the focus should always be a balancing act between the researcher 's positioning, and the ways in which their

roles are perceived by others in the process (McNess et al., 2013). My position as an insider may have seemed ideal to me, yet in reality, many participants saw me as someone from a Western country and institution (an outsider) who they hoped would assist in getting their experiences out there to make the changes they want to happen in their communities (see Milligan, 2016). Herein lay the importance of power and privilege that I embodied as a researcher coming from the outside. The researcher must always acknowledge the potential pitfalls of the illusion of being an insider when approaching the research site externally, and the researcher should consider both the ways in which the participants view them on the ground and what the researchers actively choose to do can impact or shift her or his position (see Charmaz, 2005).

4.4 Research sites and participants' profiles

Given the horrendous campaign of terror being launched against communities in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram, there have been peacebuilding efforts by both the government of Nigeria, ECOWAS, and some external international peace actors in the region. In order to access the people's perceptions of the violent conflict and their participation in the peacebuilding processes, I conducted 40 interviews across four northern states in northern Nigeria.

This study includes 40 semi-structured interviews with participants spanning across different organizations, the peacebuilding sector, and the grassroots. Due to the religiously sensitive nature of the research site, the gender and religion of the participants were deliberately not included as a defining variable in the study, even though many participants self-identified during our interactions. Similarly, the other participants include those living in internally displaced persons camps across the four selected states in northern Nigeria. Displaced people experience different traumatic

events due to the activities of Boko Haram in the region and conducting this study with a cross-section of displaced persons, points to an important factor of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the need for routine screening and management of PTSD. On account of the participants' narratives of the conflict, peacebuilding interventions should cater for the mental health of the displaced population. The emergency situation conditioned by the Boko Haram terrorism has only complicated their adaptive claws and models of survival. Persons who, however, traced the sources of their disabilities to the Boko Haram violence and atrocities displayed some high level of distress and post-traumatic stress disorder, especially while attempting to recount their stories. Since I did not possess the psychological technique or assistance needed to stabilize them and collect valuable information from them, I limited myself to those who were comfortable sharing their stories. I interviewed 3 groups of people. The first group of the study's interviewees was made up of officials in government who reside in Nigeria's political capital, Abuja, and are involved in formulating policies with regards to peacebuilding in Nigeria. The second group of interviewees consisted of participants from ECOWAS and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in conflict prevention in northern Nigeria, and the third group of respondents included participants from communities ravaged by Boko Haram's insurgency. The focus of the study is to examine the respondent's experiences and perceptions of peacebuilding efforts in northern Nigeria from the everyday people's perspective. The Nigerian government, ECOWAS, as well as foreign and local CSOs, are in one way or the other involved in peace work across communities in northern Nigeria. Yet, their peacebuilding efforts have not yielded the expected result for the region. Hence, this study seeks to ensure that the voice of the grassroots population is amplified with regards to peacemaking and peacebuilding processes in northern Nigeria.

One of the key ideas that informed the participant's selection is what John Lederach, (1997) describes as a peacebuilding pyramid or triangle. Lederach noted that there are three levels of leadership involved in conflict resolution, and these different levels should guide peacebuilding approaches. At the top level of leadership towards resolving the conflict in northern Nigeria exists the federal government and all its agencies including the military. These are actors with high visibility in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. At the middle-level leadership, there are actors in respected sectors such as CSOs leaders/officials, religious and ethnic leaders, etc. And then there are local leaders who represent more than just themselves and they play significant roles at the grassroots level (Lederach, 1997). The presence of the military, alongside CSOs was visible at the research site. While there have been major military budgets to fight the Boko Haram insurgency, very often the militarized approach has failed to work. The conflict is highly intractable; thus it is important to skip to the mid-range level where problemsolving workshops or interactive problem-solving are created and to also include the bottom level whereby local people can seek creative solutions by working with local citizens on the ground to deal with the day-to-day manifestations of the insurgency. Interestingly, many resources have been invested by the top-level leaders towards addressing the Boko Haram conflict in relation to Lederach's pyramid, yet there are no trickle-down justifications on the ground. Hence, more participants were chosen at the mid-range level and the grassroots level based on their ability to thoughtfully share their experiences and perceptions of their peacebuilding experiences in northern Nigeria and to analyze their overall involvement in the peacebuilding programs and interventions.

Table 1 reflects the general profile of the research participants and the study areas.

Pyramid	Number	Percentage
Top Level	6	15%
Middle Range Level	10	25%
Grassroots Level	24	60%

Table 1: Demography – Peacebuilder/Recipient Divided (n=40).

The participants from the top-level were drawn mainly from two government agencies directly involved in the northern Nigeria conflict. The Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) and the Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative (PCNI) were both established to strengthen Nigeria’s capacity for the promotion of peace and conflict prevention, management, and resolution as well as to coordinate the reconstruction of the Boko Haram-damaged north-east, respectively. The middle-level participants were chosen from leaders and senior officers of peacebuilding organizations involved in a range of activities in the region. At the community grassroots level, I tried to include participants’ from across the ethnic and religious groups in Abuja and three surrounding states, namely Kogi, Nasarawa, and Kaduna. Due to the volatile nature of the northeastern states, it was safer to find participants from these three locations. Abuja is the political capital of Nigeria and has become a hub for internally displaced persons and the surrounding states. Thus, the states chosen have a significant population of participants that fled from the Boko Haram insurgency. The overall breakdown for all participants according to their location and organization can be seen below in Table 2.

Table 2: Demography – Organisational Representation (n=40).

Location	Organization	Participant(s)
Abuja	Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution.	4
Abuja	Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative.	2
Abuja	The Kukah Foundation	1
Abuja	Economic Community of West African States	4
Abuja	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding	1
Abuja	International Community of the Red Cross	2
Kogi	Participation Initiative for Behavioral Change in Development	1
Kogi	Action Aid	1
Kaduna	Borno State Emergency Management Agency	1
Kogi	Kogi State University	1
Nasarawa	Nasarawa State University	1
Abuja	Abuja Municipal Area Council	2
Abuja	National Emergency Management Agency	2
Abuja	Lugbe IDP Camp	6
Abuja	Waru IDP Camp	6

Abuja	Garki Ultra Modern Market	4
Abuja	Federal Capital Development Authority	1

4.5 Research questions and scope of the study

The following four questions were developed reflecting key components of the topic to achieve the aims and objectives of the study.

1. How do the research participants understand, the causes or connecting factors for violent extremism in northern Nigeria?
2. How does ECOWAS's intervention benefit the people at the grassroots in northern Nigeria communities?
3. What contributions have the Nigerian state, and other peacebuilding partners made to prevent the escalating effect of Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria?
4. What are the peculiar attributes of the ECOWAS framework as well as factors in the study area that makes the ECPF effective or ineffective?

4.6 Participant recruitment

In order to recruit suitable participants for the study, I identified states in northern Nigeria that have at one point or another been struck by the Boko Haram insurgency. My extensive investigation of potential participants resulted in putting together a critical list of organizations, gathered primarily for the purposes of gaining insight into peacebuilding in the region. Interviewees from both state agencies, CSOs, and grassroots local participants were chosen through purposive sampling that aimed to achieve maximum variation by including participants with experience of the conflict and the overall peacebuilding project in the sample (Ahmed, 2017). I also incorporated

into my sampling procedures, a snowball strategy in which the interview participants connected me with appropriate participants within the peacebuilding sector or who had a similar experience of the conflict (see Creswell, 2016). Although this strategy has its biases since it is likely that the recommended participants would be like-minded on the issues to be discussed, it was necessary to use this technique given the unique situation in the region. First, it was difficult to get an audience from potential participants in the top-level organizations unless they were referred to me by an acquaintance. The referred participants already knew who I was and so it reduced any suspicions they might have had about me during the interview process. Second, the grassroots participants especially those living in the IDP camps were afraid to speak of their experiences to a stranger out of fear of some type of retribution unless they felt comfortable with me as a person. For instance, an official from the Abuja Municipal Area Council was my mentor within the IDP camps, and because security remained a great concern for the grassroots participants, the said official contacted some individuals via phone with regards to the purpose of my visit. Thus, the snowballing technique was central in helping me access a sizeable number of the study participant.

During my visit, I highlighted to the participants my profile, the study purpose, the methodology, the justification for the research, and human ethics assurances following the University of Manitoba's research ethics protocol. Some potential participants did not respond to my email or text messages and no further information was shared with this potential group of participants beyond the information contained in the letter of invitation in Appendix A.

4.7 Ethical consideration, informed consent, and confidentiality

I had to envision possible risks associated with the research participants and myself. To take care of some of the potential ethical issues, I passed the study proposal and received human ethics approval from the University of Manitoba before approaching the research site. All participants were over the age of 21 years and were provided with the consent form contained in Appendix B. Although most grassroots participants declined to sign the consent form, they did provide me with verbal consent to participate in the study after I read the content of the consent letter to them. This set of participants felt genuinely eager to share their experience and they saw signing a document as being too formal to them, and it somewhat made them feel uncomfortable. As the researcher, I valued the participant's preferences and promised to keep their identity and their organizations confidential for the purposes of this thesis and related research. Even though my reporting of the research findings relies upon extensive reporting of the participants' narrative, all direct quotations from the study participants were replaced with pseudonyms, and the organization or community the individual represents was also changed to protect the interviewee's identities.

I recorded the interview transcripts in digital form at the research sites. The folder in which all of the interview voice recordings were stored, and password protected on my laptop computer. The transcript files were stored in a secure and locked cabinet in my home, and the raw data transcripts and voice recordings were deleted at the conclusion of the study. The research was guided by a sense of honesty and ethical integrity, and no information was deliberately withdrawn or misrepresented in recruiting participants for the study. There were no financial rewards provided to the participants during or after the study was conducted at each site. Due to the perceived risk especially to grassroots participants, they were asked to weigh in on preferred

interview locations, and in virtually all cases the interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the participants, and my presence there did not seem out of the ordinary.

The semi-structured questions were designed to explore the specific impact of violence prevention and peacebuilding interventions in communities, so it was important that the questions were weighed so as not to reinforce fear or threaten vulnerable participants. For example, Fluehr-Lobban (2008, 2013) asserts that interview questions must be modified to offer an ethical basis for shaping the researcher's actions. Even though it sometimes seems impossible to know or predict harm before entering into a research site, the core principle is for researchers to frame questions in ways that (1) prevent any harm to the participants, (2) avoid transgressing cultural values and customs, as well as keeping an open mind about cultural perspectives, and (3) recognizing ethical and moral norms in conducting the research (Fluehr-Lobban, 2008, p. 20).

Bearing in mind that there would be many competing viewpoints emerging from the study, the ethical questions about the participant's experiences must be represented as accurately as possible by the researcher (Druckman, 2005). Although violence exists in every political system, in exploring the causes or aftermath of any social or political problem, there is an ethical obligation on the researcher to show compassion to all participants. The researcher's compassion towards participants portrays the goodness in each person that could be differentiated from all redemptive institutions (Robbins & Lévinas, 2001, p. 120). Part of my strategy in fulfilling these ethical responsibilities were that: First, I adopted the triangulation data technique (semi-structured interviews, participant observation, policy documents), wherein multiple sources of information and data were incorporated throughout the study process. I cautiously considered a wide variety of data sources including organizational reports and publications, photographs,

internet-based documents and information, and CSO and ECOWAS project annual reports that buttressed my empirical findings. Second, since I have lived and worked in northern Nigeria in the past, I had the knowledge and understanding of the language and local culture that allowed me to provide an authentic local understanding of the research site. Also, I conducted an extensive literature review related to relevant themes emerging from the data. The interview questions were used to explore statements made across participants' stories and narratives in order to explore patterns in my interpretation of these narratives. And third, I attempted to identify my biases, which limited any disorientation in my interpretation of the interview data.

4.8 Risk and precaution in the field

After many years of pursuing a policy of containment of the Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian government has yet to holistically succeed. This is the case particularly in the northeast where there have been frequent incidences of abductions, suicide bombings, and anticipatory attacks against perceived enemies with uncertain capacities to retaliate. As I embarked on my fieldwork visiting some of the communities previously attacked by the Boko Haram insurgents, I was aware of the potential risk of my going into a relatively tensed environment. To prevent or minimize this potential risk, I focused on recruiting participants from Abuja and the neighboring states of Kogi, Nasarawa, and Kaduna. I felt a sense of safety in these three selected states because major parts of the cities I visited were relatively calm and were often secured by different armed forces.

As a researcher, I am familiar with the adage which says, “better safe than sorry.” Consequently, Alan Randall’s (2011, p.11) opined that precautionary measures should be taken at all times by researchers even when some cause and effect

relationship has not yet been established. In seeking to include my participants' voices about their lived experiences at the grassroots, their narrative represents stories with the embedded risk of violence and trauma. Mitigating the risk of an interviewee's possible retrieval of emotions, contexts, and relationships requires caution in the framing of the research questions. Also, showing compassion, empathy, and sensitivity to the other in analyzing the participants' experiences helped me to minimize the risks during the field research. For example, during my interviews with participants from the different organizations that are active in the geographical area, some participants mainly from the IDP camps and grassroots told me stories about their survival of violence and other abuses through the actions of Boko Haram in their communities. The risk factor kept me mindful of the teller-listener interaction and that I should not be guided by my presupposition and/or stereotypical attitudes with each storyteller (see Senehi, 2010, 2016, 2019). Rather, I suppressed my biases by acknowledging the transformative power of the participants through the interactive narrative process (see Montalbano-Phelps, 2004).

4.9 Data collection, analysis, and coding

This study was conducted in northern Nigeria as I carried out qualitative research regarding the people's experiences and perceptions of peacebuilding efforts against the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency. I conducted 40 face-to-face semi-structured interviews from four northern states - Abuja, Nasarawa, Kogi, and Kaduna. I recorded Thirty-38 interviews with a digital recorder that were transferred into a password-protected folder on my laptop computer, and two participants preferred not to be audio recorded, so instead, I took notes on my laptop during the interview. The audio-recorded interviews were manually transcribed by me for analysis. Each interview was

done at the participant's preferred locations, with most respondents opting for their workplace for approximately 40 to 90 minutes each. The English language was used throughout the interviews except for a few grassroots participants who spoke Pidgin English. In order to reduce my bias during the interviews, the theory and propositions outlined in the literature review chapter were a guiding light, however, the discussions with the participants informed the theoretical lens I used to make sense of the participant's experiences. In other words, the literature review reflects the data derived from the study site.

Following the transcription of the audio recorded interviews, themes were generated from the participants' narratives and used to explore their experiences and perceptions of the overall conflict context towards their understanding of the root causes of the conflict as well as the conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy applied to northern Nigeria. Also, a plethora of critical studies that challenge ECOWAS, and the government's stance towards combating violent extremism and the far-reaching implications of Boko Haram terrorism to the Sahel region, also informed the framing of the interview questions. The interview guide inspired the interrelated questions and can be viewed in Appendix A.

Each participant was asked the main questions, followed by several probing questions that were used to guide the flow of the interaction and the direction of the discourse. Suffice it to note that the interview data represents the participant's perceptions and experiences which may be opposed to other people's realities on the ground. However, their experiences and perceptions were significant in helping me to reveal local lived experiences that exist beneath the government and ECOWAS's rhetoric and it provided me with real stories by some of those most impacted by the conflict. I was able to access local level perceptions (the meaning of phenomena) vis-

à-vis the official definitions of so-called facts to derive the “perception gap” from the study (Donini, 2012). Moreover, I believe that the participant's experiences and perceptions underscore a real and often damaging clash between peacebuilder’s notion of peace and the value system of the locals.

The data analysis was done by systematically reading and organizing the transcribed interview narratives to shape the arguments discussed in the study's empirical findings’ (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159; Creswell, 2007, p. 21). The qualitative analysis data software NVivo© was also used for coding the interview data and organizing the interview narratives for quotations. This process was then followed by identifying regularities, patterns, and issues that arose from the interview data. By going through all the participant's interviews, a cumulative list of prominent themes pointing to data items in the interview narratives was made up and the thematic codes informed the content of the data presented in the research findings. The thematic codes were organized and put together to form a general argument for each empirical chapter, and the relevant set of quotations were gathered under each thematic code to offer an authentic insight into each person’s ideas and to the theory-building process. The analysis process enabled me to weave together individual participant’s interview narratives into a broader narrative and discourse. Essentially, these broader frames and coherent discourse represents the lived experiences and perceptions of the study participants with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency and peacebuilding in northern Nigeria. However, some narratives and opinions may, in fact, contradict each other, yet those experiences and perceptions were respected by me in the overall analysis of the study.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology, outlining the composition of the research participants, this was inspired by John Paul Lederach's (1997) peacebuilding pyramid. The qualitative grounded theory approach was particularly useful in that it included the complex transformative approach to peacebuilding by including the voices of the everyday people in northern Nigeria. ECOWAS and the Nigerian government's interventions to curb the Boko Haram insurgency have had much much more visible attention from the top-level leadership (the military, political, and religious leaders). While the notion of local peace ownership is welcome, in practice, it is filled with competing viewpoints and setbacks. Thus, this study adopts a qualitative approach that relies upon open-ended semi-structured interviews with personnel from a few government agencies, CSO personnel, and locals in northern Nigeria. The grounded theory approach empowered the lived experiences of the grassroots people in northern Nigeria to discuss the causes of Boko Haram's violence as well as proffering recommendations towards the entrenchment of policy actions against violent extremism and the promotion of a conflict prevention culture for West Africa.

Chapter 5 - Violent extremism in northern Nigeria: Participants narratives about Boko Haram's emergence and continued existence

5.1 Introduction

Since the 1990s the West African sub-region has become home to some of the world's deadliest conflicts with the potential of metamorphosing into a real threat to global peace and security. For its part, Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and among its most diverse with over 400 ethnolinguistic groups habituating the territory. The country is affected by several conflicts based on overlapping ethnic, religious, political, and regional divisions including over resources in the Niger Delta, the Christian-Muslim divide in the middle of the country, and most recently, the rise of Islamist groups in the north, most importantly, Boko Haram. Boko Haram, which means, 'Western education is a sin' was founded around 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state and the largest city in northeastern Nigeria. At its inception, the main tenet held among its followers was to foment regime change in Nigeria as they believe that democratic and secular rule is in contradiction to sharia law.

Over the years, the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has resulted in exposing the weakness of Nigeria's military and it has raised suspicion that the Nigerian state alone is incapable of stemming the group's use of lethal force and violence. The level of destruction perpetrated by Boko Haram since 2011 is second only to that experienced during the country's civil war in the late 1960s. There are considerable interest and concern in understanding the religious and socio-structural divisions in the country that has led to ongoing radicalization by Boko Haram and the extreme use of violence both inside and outside northern Nigeria.

In this chapter, I explore the context of the Boko Haram insurgency from the lived experiences of the people of northern Nigeria. The scope and frequency of attacks by Boko Haram over the past few years are suggestive of the fact that the counterterrorism policies led especially by the government of Nigeria are flawed. It is hoped that relying on preventive measures rather than reactive peacebuilding measures will tackle the underlying causes of the insurgency in northern Nigeria. These preventive measures require local ownership, which must include an investigation of the people's narratives and embedded practices that are consistent with the everyday reality on the ground in northern Nigeria.

Chapter five is the first of three data analysis chapters that begins an exploration of the terrorist insurgency from everyday people's perspectives in northern Nigeria. It seeks to authenticate the struggles of the people and advance the claim that there are barriers from within communities that require rigorous assessment for effective peacebuilding to take shape in northern Nigeria.

To this end, this chapter highlights the significant role that local participants believe would help the peace actors in their efforts towards preventing terrorist insurgency, and the escalation of violent extremism in northern Nigeria.

Specifically, chapter five provides an overview of the following themes that emerged inductively from the data: (1) Boko Haram, religion, and ideology-weaponizing ethnicity, (2) the victims of Boko Haram insurgency-abuse of power, (3) humanitarian services, and NGOs-meeting people's basic human needs, and (4) addressing the Boko Haram insurgency.

5.2 Boko Haram, religion, and ideology: Weaponizing ethnicity

To comprehensively understand the terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria, scholars have continued to interrogate multiple factors that may account for Boko

Haram's emergence. The varying perspectives with regards to the formation and radicalization of Boko Haram allegedly revolve around the issues of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and by extension the *almajiri* school system as well as the mobilization of ethnoreligious identity (Agbiboa, 2013).

Since the terrorist atrocities and extreme violence began in 2011, the question being asked is whether the people's overall living conditions are unique to northern Nigeria. While there is no simple answer to this question, the reality on the ground will emerge from the study's interview narratives. The primary data collected from the research field reveals some of the participants' perspectives on the recruitment of the foot soldiers of Boko Haram. These perspectives suggest that the recruitment of Boko Haram foot soldiers were made easy due to the prevailing structural issues in many northern communities in Nigeria. At the level of those who survived the Boko Haram attacks, over a quarter of the participants noted that the poor literacy level in northern Nigeria is fundamentally linked to the problem of the radicalization of young men and women in their communities.

Hassan, a trader in Abuja who is originally from Chibok revealed that the *almajiri* system in northern Nigeria is in part responsible for the religious violence and membership of young people into the Boko Haram movement. He explicated the following in his story:

HASSAN: You see I grew up in Maiduguri, and have seen *almajiri* street children who do not know their parents. Between ages 3 to 4 years, these children can travel from far places to become *almajiri*, and the Mallams in whose custody such children are learning can send them to go and look for food and money for them while they sit comfortably under the trees waiting for the children to come back and feed them. So, these children get food for the Mallams, they get money for the Mallams, they wash clothes for the Mallams, and their children, work on their farms and so on.

Another community worker also confirmed the paucity of the educational system in northern Nigeria. Mariam stressed the following in her story:

MARIAM: Every single member of Boko Haram can be killed by the government, but if we don't deal with the teachings and ideology that is spreading to young people in every mosque on Fridays, especially by fake or unqualified Islamic scholars, Boko Haram may physically go, but another group would emerge...So, we must handle the issue of education in our communities.

The participant's narratives indicate that the almajiri system provides low-cost foot soldiers to Boko Haram, and the insurgency in northern Nigeria is fuelled by the state's failure to provide better education and employment opportunities for the youth. The effect of poverty is widespread and combined with the high illiteracy rate are significant pointers that the youths in the region are being brainwashed into violent extremism and terrorism. In tracing the formation of Boko Haram from its initial history as an unorthodox religious sect to its current transnational insurrectionary level, it seems obvious that Boko Haram capitalized on the long-standing structural realities in northern Nigeria. Mahmud is a resident at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Abuja. She affirmed thus:

MAHMUD: As an indigene of Borno State, one thing I realize through my observation, propelled by my study of sociology and anthropology is that we have a big problem in the northeast. I think the problem is just starting. Even before the advent of Boko Haram, Maiduguri was full of jobless youths, even though they claim to be religious, their actions show the opposite.... An average Kanuri man believes in Satanism and this is what they want everybody to embrace.

The upsurge in scholarly and policy concerns about the place and role of the youth in northern Nigeria is aimed at ensuring effective counterterrorism strategies for the region. Many upheavals in West Africa's contemporary development have visibly shown that youths are often at the center of rebellion and violence. For instance, Sierra

Leone's United Front (RUF) and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had their membership dominated by youth and the same situation applies in other protracted conflicts in Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Niger in West Africa.

Therefore, the question surrounding what condition(s) act as a catalyst to youth-driven violence is worth exploring especially within the context of the terrorist insurgency in Nigeria. The insecurity and the overall anarchic context of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northern states of Nigeria call for a reassessment of the approaches used to tackle the issue. To ensure the effectiveness of counter-terrorism efforts, the military option should not be solely relied on. Rather, efforts should be geared towards addressing the various underlying social, political, and economic triggers of violent insurgency, especially in northern Nigeria where these triggers are causing a lot of misery for local people.

From the viewpoints of those I encountered in the field, individuals from several walks of life, there is an overarching indication that the conflict will not be won solely by investing billions of dollars in purchasing military hardware. The situation in the northeast makes it very clear that it is important to understand why it is easy for extremists to recruit young people to Boko Haram as these young people lack education, kids cannot go to school, and the almajiri system traditionally puts kids on the streets begging for alms. A senior officer from the IPCR puts this succinctly when he said that "poverty can be a vulnerability that violence can take advantage of", indeed, the case of northern Nigeria remains shrouded in youth illiteracy, poverty, and a complete lack of security for the local population.

The gatekeepers or elites in the local communities have directly and indirectly contributed to this dire situation. They comprise of the local clerics, who themselves

went through an educational process similar to the almajiri and they are now looking for economic gains. In a bid to achieve economic comforts, the clerics began to preach their radical creed to indoctrinate poor and vulnerable children to recruit a ready army so that they could take advantage of them. Normally poverty might not lead to direct violence, yet poverty coupled with extremist views provides a fertile ground for radicalization, which can become explosive, if it is not addressed early.. Another IPCR official contrasted the poverty situation in northern Nigeria with poverty in the southern part of Nigeria. This is what Joshua had to say on the issue:

JOSHUA: It would be difficult to see a moneybag politician from the southwest, for instance, mobilizing youths to take to violence for the sake of religion. Even though there is the issue of poverty in the southwestern region, there is a sense that extremism does not exist there. The average Lagosian will rather work in the motor park to earn a living. But here in the north, the youths have limited choices. They are either waiting for handouts from politicians or seeking alms on the streets...

Even if the youths want to work, there are no industries to employ them in the north, and then there is the literacy levels issue. So, you see, the difference is very clear when you compare them. Go to Kano and you'll see people sleeping in open spaces in harsh weather conditions. So, when you combine the poverty and literacy situation in the north, you know there is an impending crisis. And I think that the elite in northern Nigeria have not helped matters because what they have done is to continue to manipulate this vulnerable population.

Over time this population of manipulated young individuals grow up and the chances of violent extremism taking place multiplies. In the prevailing situation, this is likely to continue for a very long time because the political elite in the north is not ready to keep the situation in check. The lack of will to change the situation is indicated by a lack of discussions on issues bordering on education, health care, employment, and human empowerment, among other things. While Nigeria drags its feet on the issue, international terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda, ISIS are taking advantage of this vibrant young population. The government's negligence of its young populations has also allowed Boko Haram to take on a transnational dimension that is overwhelming

the region. Perhaps because these influential persons also control the state machinery, there is little support for regional organizations like ECOWAS to intervene in this conflict.

In investigating the cause of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, the participants also lay claim to the religious vulnerabilities that exist within their communities. Historically insurgencies in northern Nigeria have exposed the differences in religious ideology between Islam and Christianity. The Uthman dan Fodio insurgency in 1804, the Maitatsine insurgency in the 1980s, and more recently, the Boko Haram insurgency has exposed the religious fault lines in this region. These recurring insurgencies have had Muslims call for the introduction of sharia law in northern states within Nigeria and some of these Muslim elites have adopted a jihadist ideology in seeking to establish a sharia legal system there. Consequently, I was interested in exploring the people's correlation of terrorist insurgency in their communities to Islam. In other words, are there actual shreds of evidence to suggest that the current Boko Haram insurgency is rooted in Islam? A Borno State indigene, Birma located in the IDP camp (Waru) in Abuja expressed his opinion about Boko Haram's emergence as well as the significance of the religious dimension on the ground:

BIRMA: My own experience of Boko Haram is that it didn't start at the local level, it started in the state capitals in the form of an Islamic movement, but it was a ploy to deceive the people through religion. It was much later that people began to understand that these people were not genuine members of the Islamic faith. I became aware of this conflict in 2007. There was a day I was passing close to the mosque on a Friday during the Jumat prayer; the place was crowded due to traders who brought their wares for sale.

I decided to buy date fruits from a trader after which I enquired whether he would still come around the mosque by the next Friday since I didn't have enough money on me that day. Surprisingly, the man became furious with me for choosing Friday as my shopping day. He even called me a pagan and ordered me to call Jumaat to prove that I wasn't a pagan. I did

that for fear of being further molested, so this was the kind of issue that could spark-off violence.

A local council chairman and leader in the government's effort in protecting displaced persons also shared a similar experience of the insurgency within his community. John reported this issue in the following manner:

JOHN: The thing (conflict) began from my community in Gworza's Local Government. From day one I would say this conflict was religiously based, but as time went on things changed. This is because in front of our house there they killed three of our brothers who happened to be Christians.

After the killing, we made a complaint to the Chief about some strange faces that came and were preaching a message that we didn't understand, but he replied that they were normal preachers....In this wise the Christians reasoned that if the three people killed were only Christians, one cannot deny that the ugly development had religious undertones, so many Christians decided to run away from that community.

Further, a participant revealed the complexity of religion in local people's lives, and how the grassroots population makes sense of their livelihood amid diverse religions and ethnicity. A young farmer, Tanko disclosed his opinion on this issue in the following manner:

TANKO: Even at the level of trying to improve our lives in our community, sentiments still come in. Those in positions of authority end up protecting their religion and this makes other groups feel left out or not included in the efforts towards the improvement of their lives.

Religious fractionalization then comes in the form of existential hatred and grievances held by people from both major religions, and in investigating the people's perceptions about the evolution of Boko Haram. They allude to the fact that the animosity between Muslims and Christians made violence inevitable when the insurgency began.

In addition, a culture of fear also plays itself out in the realm of high politics. Even senior politicians are afraid to speak out about this fragile situation. The current Vice President, a Christian seems less open to conversations revolving around the insurgency in the north. For example, Arthur is a participant from the Kukah Foundation shared his thoughts about Vice President Yemi Osinbajo in the following way:

ARTHUR: When the Vice President came here, and we were speaking to him, my observation is that he looked very isolated in the presidency. He can practically influence nothing, which is the figure that came out. So, this is to tell you that even in power those in the high political office are very careful in choosing who to speak with if they see you as politically aligned to the opposition, its a problem. People are very protective of their position, their influences. Speaking with you they are too careful about their political interests in case they say something that will influence a religious debate, or they could be misunderstood.

At the community level also, some of my participants from the non-Islamic faith believed that the Boko Haram insurgency went beyond what some Islamic scholars preached in their mosques. They opined that there seems to be a belief that there are agents sponsored within their communities who use religion as a bait to perpetrate violence. It is significant to note that some non-Muslim participants pay attention to the types of messages the imams of the various mosques preach since the imams are leaders who help to guide and provide the moral support that justifies the actions of many Muslims in northern Nigeria.

These sermons are done through a public address system after the daily obligatory Friday prayers and sometimes, they openly provide derogatory messages to the ‘non-believers’ of Islam. For example, a Christian participant expressed concerns about the fear of living among Muslims in her community. Mary revealed the following in her story:

MARY: We [Christians] feel a sense of fear living with the Muslims. It wasn't always like this. But now we see ourselves as major targets of Boko Haram and as a result, we're forced to resort to self-help to protect ourselves from attack.

Local people believe that fear drives the insurgency in northern Nigeria, and especially the non-Muslim participants in this study echoed this point of view. Given that northern Nigeria is a region with a predominantly Muslim population, it was significant to observe the correlation between religion and the perpetuation of violence. Numbers do matter and when ethnoreligious groups are in the minority, this can inform their sense of being besieged by their enemies.

The fear of religious coexistence is one of the main causes of Boko Haram's insurgency reducing young people's moral barriers to carrying out violence against religious opponents (Onuoha, 2012). Contrary to the speculations that the Boko Haram insurgency is part of an international terror group linked to Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, or ISIS aimed at Islamizing Nigeria, by rejecting all forms of Western education and culture, the emergence and escalation of Boko Haram's activities are rooted, it seems in the religious ideology founded by elite politicians in their quest for political power. Understanding the Boko Haram insurgency in the context of radical religious ideology alone does not do justice to the reality on the ground as many of my research participants highlighted the fact that religion provides a unifying environment among the existing ethnoreligious identity groups.

Consequently, the weaponization of ethnicity and religion for political gain over the years has turned out to be a time bomb that is manifesting in an explosion that will rock the state and its surrounding neighbors. The Boko Haram's quest to claim territories in northern Nigeria creates a permeating desire to gain the power to control

resources and protect ingroup interests. Many in desperation have taken to illegitimate and unpopular measures *vis a vis* adopting terrorist tactics to gain that power. It has been alleged that the founding of Boko Haram was a strategy to destabilize the government of President Goodluck Jonathan. These allegations have, however, neither been validated nor refuted. It remains to be seen whether the government of Muhammad Buhari is honest in its fight against terrorism, especially in the light of his administration's proposal to grant amnesty to the Boko Haram members deemed to be repentant and reintegrate them back into the civil society.

Even within the northern Nigerian ethnic splinter groups, there is the impression that politicians are manipulating ethnicity for their selfish gains as pointed out by a participant from the Waru camp. Kabiru explicated the following in his story:

KABIRU: I think one of the biggest challenges we have in Borno State is that out of the three senatorial districts that we have, only one particular district has held onto the power and everything for more than four, five decades controlling the entire state, which is yet to provide good governance for every citizen. They don't want the other party to complain about something.

Even though the other parts keep insisting that even if they cannot be given control of affairs, the only thing they want now is peace. Yet the dominant group keeps sabotaging all efforts aimed at achieving peace because lack of peace has become the industry that provides wealth for them. So, it is unfortunate, that while the ordinary citizens keep praying for peace, those in authority are not ready for it.

It was observed that the community had some deep-seated ethnic biases, which could also fuel violence if they are not addressed. One of the participants used inflammatory language to describe another ethnic group. Mahmud described the Kanuri ethnic group as averse to progress, saying that they believe in Satanism. Mahmud expressed the following in his story:

MAHMUD: Even before the advent of the Boko Haram insurgency, Maiduguri was full of jobless youths, and even when businesses are established to help create jobs in the community the average Kanuri man does not want to work. They believe in Satanism and this is what they want everybody around them to embrace.

Mahmud concluded that the Kanuri's started the crisis. He recounted on this issue as follows:

MAHMUD: I want to be very honest with you. I am not generalizing but I want you to understand sincerely that the Kanuri people are yet to learn anything from what happened. They don't want to believe that they started this thing, which consumed their people and is still consuming their people. But, as an indigene of Borno State, one thing I realize through my observation propelled by my study of sociology and anthropology is that we have a big problem. I think the problem is just starting.

Similarly, another participant from ICRC noted that the Fulani's are constantly being stigmatized, which sometimes makes violent confrontation with other ethnoreligious groups inevitable. Tony recognized the following in his story:

TONY: Today, the Fulani's are stigmatized. Nobody wants to associate with them. You hear people saying things like why you are behaving like a Fulani man as though being Fulani is to be forbidden. We've now reached the point where the Fulani's feel stigmatized and hated. (I am saying this one because I have little experience, we have solved a lot of problems between farmers and herdsmen and I am telling you exactly what used to happen) what is leading to what we are having today?

The incessant ambushes of government security forces laid by Boko Haram are both worrisome and suspicious. Troops have reportedly been ambushed in inconceivable circumstances, which beg the unanswered question of whether the Nigerian military is altogether free of saboteurs from within its ranks. These strange happenings have not escaped the curiosity of the community as observed by one participant. Rabi recounted the following in her story:

RABI: In my Local Government, Chibok, though I have not been there for long now. My father recently came to Abuja for a medical check-up informed me that the recent commander of the Army posted to the area has demonstrated a high level of response to the security of lives in the area. He goes to each of those communities himself instead of sending his soldiers. He also makes sure that the soldiers are kept on their toes. Schools in the area were upgraded and the villagers were happy with the military and appreciated the commander for his diligence in bringing peace to our community.

In March 2018 Chad's security chiefs were all fired following the killing of 27 soldiers by terrorists. While there has been a public outcry by Nigerians, the heads of security agencies are yet to be dismissed from their positions. the Commander-in-Chief has chosen to keep them at the detriment of his popularity in office. This has raised eyebrows and further suspicion about the honesty of the present administration as captured by another Chibok resident. Layla recognized the following in her story:

LAYLA: Suddenly there was a bomb blast in Maiduguri after which the authorities transferred this capable officer and brought in another commander. Later we heard that his transfer was due to sabotage from his colleagues. The news of the transfer came as a shock to many of us because the former commander was a good man who wasn't ready to take bribes or compromise the search for peace.

An analysis of the government's financial, technical, or strategic capacity in the fight against the insurgency is no less important. The participants revealed that the state's armed forces are grossly underfunded in coping with the rising scale, sophistication, and lethality of Boko Haram. This lack of capacity also relates to other issues across the conflict spectrum including prevention, management, and control that are necessary for conceptualizing the conflict in the first place, and the participants reported that the government continues to demonstrate its unwillingness to meet those demands. They also revealed that ECOWAS has abdicated its responsibility to monitor the implementation of its conflict prevention program. Unfortunately, even that

responsibility has been hijacked by the state government, which has been labeled corrupt by a participant resident from one of the states in northern Nigeria. Faruk communicated the following in his story:

FARUK: I can tell you categorically that the state government is a saboteur of peace. In the heat of the Boko Haram invasion in our state, there were lots of relief materials donated to the government by some donor and humanitarian organizations. Instead of the government officials distributing the materials to us to assuage our suffering, they divert the donations for personal use and in some cases sell them to traders who resell to us.

These set of government officials don't want the conflict to end. The same thing is happening in the military. The oga's (Senior officers) are in Abuja collecting huge allowances and they don't care about the soldiers posted to fight the terrorist. No proper feeding, no better equipment, yet their budget keeps increasing and they say it is because of Boko Haram...

Some of the community people that I talked to acknowledge the potential of ECOWAS to prevent conflict in their communities. Others seemed sympathetic to the organizations describing the challenges that ECOWAS and other agencies face in doing peacebuilding work within their communities.

5.3 The victims of Boko Haram insurgency: Abuse of power

While my participants held divergent views about the rationale behind Boko Haram's emergence in Nigeria, the effect of the group's activities has affected various stakeholders in unquantifiable terms. Since 2002 when Boko Haram publicly began to unleash terror in northern Nigeria space, it became a significant security threat to the Nigerian state as well as neighboring countries with a series of indiscriminate attacks on the general public. Civilians have been most affected in the conflict that has featured

kidnappings and the destruction of public and private properties. Since 2014 Boko Haram has been responsible for thousands of deaths through bomb blasts, gunshots, the kidnapping of foreigners, and the notorious abduction of over 250 high school female students from Chibok Girls High School in Borno state. The trauma caused by Boko Haram's terrorist activities has damaging effects on the victims. Any government or ECOWAS interventions must be seen to understand who the victims are, while policy formulation and its implementation as well as other peacebuilding programs seek to meet the physical and psychological needs of the survivors.

Consequently, many of my participants were victims of the Boko Haram insurgency in their various communities. The interview narratives revealed two major themes that are now discussed to highlight the people's notion of victimhood as they reflected on in the interview data.

It is instructive to note that in my interaction with the participants, many perceive Boko Haram to be a radical interpretation of Islam whose ultimate goal is the setting up of an Islamic state through 'holy war'. Those who hold this view believe that the victims are Christians. When asked to identify the victims of Boko Haram terrorist attacks, they describe the way Christians have been violently killed while Christian churches were burned. A participant from Chibok, Jamil who was at one of the IDP camps in Abuja had this to say on the issue:

JAMIL: Boko Haram specifically targets Christians; they seem to see Christianity as a Western religion, which is why they often attack communities where Christians are the majority and they burn down our churches.

Participants overwhelmingly affirmed in our interactions of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria that people in the communities who are Christians felt more at risk. Rebecca, who is the wife of a pastor from Borno state described the sense in which people feel victimized based on their religion. She made known the following:

REBECCA: When Boko Haram attacked my village in 2014 many people went into hiding, the insurgents went about saying ‘come out you infidels, your days are numbered’. And indeed they killed a lot of people who didn’t know a word in Arabic including a pastor in my husband’s church and they brought the church down in flames. So many of us, Christians, felt that they’re the prime target especially after the terrorist burnt down churches and left the mosque out.

The impact of Boko Haram’s operation on the Christian community is indeed staggering and the perception is that Boko Haram terrorist attacks are understood to deliberately target non-Muslims. For instance, in 2015 the Boko Haram leadership pledged allegiance to ISIS, and this group was involved in brutally destroying ancient Christian communities in Iraq and Syria. ISIS demanded that Boko Haram target Christian communities and the then leader of Boko Haram refused to do so, so ISIS appointed a new leader of Boko Haram. Now, there are two rival groups, one claiming allegiance to ISIS now known as ISWAP (Islamic State of West Africa Province).

The interviewees communicated that ISWAP has a shared hatred of Christians and they speak of themselves as victims of the conflict. For example, a senior pastor from Dapchi community provided details of how they feel as Christians. This is what John had to say on the issue:

JOHN: The situation for Christians in especially northern Nigeria is dire... Christians would go to sleep at night not knowing whether they’ll wake up the following day still alive. Our brothers and sisters are slaughtered in the streets every day. Generally, many, if not most of the victims of the Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks in Nigeria’s Northeast are Christians.

The damage was done to a Christian community where many Catholic Christians were killed in one diocese alone and thousand of Christians were displaced in Bama, Maiduguri, this creates the impression shared by the participants about Christian victimhood. The notorious kidnapping of Chibok schoolgirls, from a largely Christian community, is illustrative of this point. Some 112 girls are still missing, five years after, and this situation alludes to the fear that Christian residents in northern Nigeria have with regards to Boko Haram. The World Watch List reported in 2019 that there is a significant number of Christians killed right across Nigeria. While all the deaths are not solely due to Boko Haram's violent attacks, the group still accounts for many of the deaths in northern Nigeria. This perhaps most devastatingly leads to a constant and troubling fear among many Christians for their safety in the face of Boko Haram attacks, and this uncertainty and victimization was expressed by many of my participants.

Other participants blame the cause of the insurgency on the clash of political interests by opportunistic politicians in northern Nigeria and that it is not about religion at all. For example, the political struggle between the incumbent Governor Mala Kachalla of Borno State and Senator Ali Modu Sheriff allowed Boko Haram's leader Mohammed Yusuf to oust the government that was not sympathetic to its cause. In 2003, using his huge youth following, Mohammed Yusuf helped Senator Sheriff to win the governorship election and Yusuf was later appointed onto a committee in the Borno State Government that oversaw the selection of Muslims for the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca. Some of my participants believed that Yusuf's appointment helped provide the Boko Haram leader the funding needed for the group's activities at the early stage of its terrorist activities. Understanding the Boko Haram insurgency in the light of

religiously motivated violence may, therefore, be suggestive that northern Nigeria embraces a single ideology, which is in fact not the case.

Some other participants, especially those from the non-Muslim faith provided an account of their experiences that did not entirely link the insurgency to religion. Instead, they recognized that the Islamic religion is exploited by the political class in their struggle for political power. Grace is a worker from the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Abuja described the issue of insurgency and religion in the following way:

GRACE: I am a Christian.... and have now come to recognize that after all, we are one people in northern Nigeria; whether you are a Christian or Muslim, a Hausa man, or a Tiv man. The common enemy is poverty and it is no respecter of language or religion, so we must fight this enemy. We must fight ignorance. We must fight illiteracy in our communities instead of killing each other.

Another participant, a businessman in Abuja, expressed a similar notion that the political class is exploiting religion. This is what Muazu, a local politician had to say on the issue:

MUAZU: If there are no elites to mobilize and manipulate the people against themselves, northern Nigeria would have witnessed a great level of calm. But the problem is that right now, there is a crisis because of elite involvement in manipulating and mobilizing the people along fault lines of religion and ethnicity. We need to ensure that those elites no longer exist...

According to some of my study participants, religious fractionalization is not the primary cause of the insurgency on the ground. Rather these participants seem to agree that religion is a critical variable in facilitating violence in the history of northern

Nigeria. With specific reference to the Boko Haram insurgency, many participants linked the conflict to the deteriorating practice of the almajiri system, which was intended to inculcate Islamic virtues in the youth. Instead, this has now translated into the prosecution of violence in the north.

The almajiri system is being exploited and used by opportunistic politicians to foment trouble, cause a riot, disrupt peace, and achieve selfish political interest. It has been observed that most of the terrorist insurgency involving suicide bombings, setting places of worship ablaze, killing innocent souls, and destroying property were masterminded by jobless pupils of the almajiri schools (Oladosu, 2012, p. 1821).

Indeed, the case of religious fractionalization vis-à-vis the almajiri system in northern Nigeria provides a breeding ground for radicalizing youths and making them vulnerable to conflict entrepreneurs. While various studies have corroborated the history of the almajiri Islamic system, and the impending danger of grooming potential terrorists, the religious practice has also exposed several perspectives to the emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria (Anugwom, 2019).

Moreover, some participants described Boko Haram as ‘slave raiders’ who target women in raids for ‘wives’ in the regions in which they operate. Also, the Boko Haram terrorist group uses women and children as suicide bombers; this is an important dimension to understanding the dynamics of its operations in northern Nigeria. Examining these perspectives with the people on the ground provide clarity in our understanding of the core of women and children’s victimization by this group. The use of women and children by terrorist groups to perpetrate violence is not new. The Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Red Army Faction in Germany, the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA, Basque Homeland and Unity), and the Tamil LTTE Tigers are other examples of armed conflicts in which women have been actively involved as combatants.

Women in these other protracted ethnic conflicts have participated in or encouraged their children to get involved in the political struggle. Women and children in those instances were enablers rather than victims of terrorist acts. In the case of northern Nigeria, women and children are exposed to complex jeopardy of forced abduction to be deployed as suicide bombers or war-front sex slaves' or they suffer death as a vulnerable population in the conflict region. The rationale for using women and children in Boko Haram operations is linked to the sociocultural structure in northern Nigeria that is strongly embedded in patriarchy.

Boko Haram's crimes are notorious in that they include abductions, forced marriages, suicide bombings, and attacks on schools perceived as providing Western education. There are also thousands of children imprisoned by the Nigerian authorities for suspected involvement in Boko Haram, often with little or no evidence to support those claims. Since 2012, the US has spent over US\$100 million in assisting the Nigerian authorities to put an end to terrorism (Solomon, 2015a). As part of its counterinsurgency efforts, Nigeria's military has detained thousands of suspected Boko Haram members, and those detained since 2013 have included at least 3,600 children¹. Most of these children were victims of Boko Haram. The government's detention policies simply add another layer to their suffering.

One of my research participants expressed how the mother of a victim complained about how her son was detained for two-and-a-half years for allegedly selling yams to Boko Haram members. Others recollected how soldiers arrested and detained kids after they fled Boko Haram attacks in their villages, sometimes singling out adolescent boys perceived to be of fighting age. Soldiers accused them of being

¹ United Nations, "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria," April 10, 2017, S/2017/304, para. 29, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/304 (accessed August 2, 2019)

Boko Haram members because they had not left their villages soon enough after Boko Haram attacks. Girls were abducted and forced to become wives of Boko Haram members. Most of these children are never charged to any court, and some are held for months, and often years, with little or no contact with the outside world. Their families often presume they are dead. In fact, some of my participants confirmed that none of these detained victims were ever taken before a judge or made to appear in court.

Another participant articulated that the Giwa barracks, which is the main military detention facility in northeast Nigeria had cells so crowded with inmates sleeping on their sides and that they were packed tightly together in rows. The women and children feel victimized, first by Boko Haram for abducting them or attacking their villages, and then by the government for the high-handed behavior of the military. They are frustrated that the military did not adequately investigate the crimes before carrying out raids and arrests, which often lead to the torture of innocent young boys.

Many participants recounted that women were kidnapped and forcefully recruited into carrying out terrorist activities by Boko Haram. For example, John is an executive with the Abuja Municipal Council (AMAC) who is involved in advocacy for girl's education noted the following in his story:

JOHN: The issue of children, especially the girl child being involved in terrorism is worrisome. After the abduction of about 276 schoolgirls from their hostel in Chibok, we began to hear about a series of suicide bombing which caused panic for a lot of parents in the north generally. The quick succession and severity of the suicide bombing in Abuja, Maiduguri, Kano, and other major cities in the northern part of the country caused panic, more so because the perpetrators of the attacks were women and young girls.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in its report condemned the escalating tension arising from the use of women and children in conflicts and wars by strapping

bombs around their bodies (UNICEF, 2014). Similarly, there was impassionate advocacy around the world broadcasted by the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign, seeking the Nigerian government's intervention to rescue 276 schoolgirls kidnapped from Chibok in Borno state. In explaining the rationale behind the attraction for using women and children in many Boko Haram terrorist operations, a female participant revealed that the socio-cultural and religious structures in northern Nigeria are strongly embedded in patriarchy. This is what Mary had to say on the issue:

MARY: To tell you the truth, we live in a male-dominated society. We see this in our culture and in our religion daily where the man can marry more than one wife, but the woman cannot have more than one husband. Where there is a set age for the girl child to be married off and no set age for the male child. Most women here are housewives, their husbands provide for the household....So, you can see why it becomes easy to exploit and manipulate women to commit a crime of terrorism.

Implicitly the views from the experiences of the people in northern Nigeria seem to suggest that the discourse about women and children's victimhood with regards to the terrorist insurgency is inextricably connected to the patriarchal society that paves the way for men's control of the family. An intervening variable to this pattern of crime entails that we try to understand what seems like an institutionalized social order of male-dominated patriarchy that is ancient to the region. A gender system of domination was created in northern Nigeria through a long-standing practice of patriarchy and social inequality. This system of subordination is illustrative of Boko Haram's terrorist exploitation of the women and children who are mostly girls that are used in its suicide attacks.

Despite the security measures deployed by the Nigerian state and the surrounding countries to respond to Boko Haram insurgencies, it remains capable of initiating significant attacks against unarmed persons. In response to this anarchic security

dilemma, the government appears to be taking a rather simplistic view of the situation, rather than looking at and addressing other core variables in the conflict. How these young girls are goaded into the violence is yet to be fully accepted by government agencies coupled with their lack of consultation with local communities when they create interventions. Why are the women and children vulnerable to Boko Haram's manipulation is a question worthy of in-depth consideration? For instance, Muslims are living in the southern and western parts of the country, but it is going to be more difficult for a political figure there like Tinubu to ask young people to carry arms against any other ethnoreligious group. Yet it is probably easier for a politician like Atiku Abubakar to recruit or to convince young people to perpetrate violence in the North. These peculiarities leading to the fact that youth are vulnerable to radicalization and exploitation must be firmly established to successfully confront Boko Haram, and to address the core issues escalating the conflict. This failure in understanding these issues even by internal organizations has led to the failure of several intervention approaches and a waste of resources. For example, Tanko pointed out the following in his narrative:

TANKO: Due to the displacement of people, especially women and children, humanitarian agencies stepped in at Bama in Borno state and over thirty thousand houses were built and given to the government to use in accommodating IDPs. Now, as generous as this sounds the challenges are that shelter may not be the primary need of these people. Some of the women whom were beneficiaries of 3-bedroom houses lamented that they do not know how to maintain the houses they got because they don't have jobs.

Here again, there is a lack of consultation with local people. Houses are built without asking local people what they want. Consequently, the sustainability of grassroots approaches like those of the Kukah Foundation runs internships for women across northern Nigeria will be tested over time. The organizers, however, have complained

that so far there is not a single woman in the state's houses of assembly to add impetus to the intervention efforts on the ground.

5.4 Humanitarian services, and NGOs: Meeting people's basic human needs

It has been eleven years since the insurgency began in northeast Nigeria, with armed opposition groups fighting the Nigerian army. The conflict is far from being over and civilians are caught up in the middle. People continue to be forced from their homes by the violence and many displaced families now live in camps either operated by state authorities or they are informally set up alongside local communities. The majority of the displaced people are women and children who are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival. It is estimated that 1.8 million people have been displaced across the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (Avis, 2020).

The need for humanitarian aid/assistance has increased in the past few years, there are still gaps in support for displaced communities to have their pressing concerns adequately addressed. Many areas of Borno state remain very insecure today, which makes helping local people very difficult for NGOs and CSOs. Humanitarian workers can only work in so-called 'garrison towns' or enclaves controlled by the Nigerian military, and they cannot access other areas outside of military control. Yet people's needs remain unmet even within these garrison towns. This has forced some people to leave the relative safety of the camps, risking their lives to seek food and firewood outside of the security perimeter.

In the formal camps, restrictions on people's freedom of movement undermine opportunities for self-reliance and prevent people from farming or

growing crops so that they are heavily dependent on humanitarian assistance for survival. This is compounding local people's long-term physical and psychological traumas of having lived through a decade of violence. People living in the camps are crammed into small patches of land, with little infrastructure or humanitarian support to ensure that their basic human needs are met. Many families sleep in tiny huts made of plastic sheets or torn-up clothing and fabric that are unable to withstand even brief spells of rain.

I was keen to explore how the people survived in these camps, and if there was an adequate provision to meet their basic amenities. My participants disclosed that their children were not accessing education, and they did not have enough food to eat. Many have been displaced since 2014, and they were still talking about a water project five years later at the camp. Consequently, the feeling is that not so much has been done to assist people living in the camps, and more needs to be done, otherwise people are more likely to feel that their living conditions are being used as a conduit by government officials to siphon money from, especially international humanitarian agencies. A camp dweller, Ezekiel claims that the people's dire situation in the camp provides thieving opportunities for some corrupt officials. This is what Ezekiel had to say on the issue:

EZEKIEL: Since we arrived in this camp eight months ago, we haven't had any latrines (washroom system) to use. We all have been defecating in the open, usually running to the nearby bush. We all must beg, including my children, and work menial jobs to survive. There is no assistance coming our way from the government. In the past six years, I've been forced to move three times. The first two times I was fleeing violent attacks, and then the third time because of difficult living conditions.

An influx of displaced people from across the region into Maiduguri has led to the population doubling from one to two million. While most aid agencies and much of

the humanitarian aid is concentrated here, the needs are so massive, and the health services still do not have enough resources to take care of the people.

The MSF runs one of the largest therapeutic feeding programs in Borno State, where it cares for severely malnourished children with medical complications many children admitted every month. However, some residents attest that there are some slight improvements in their living conditions. For example, a civil servant from Adamawa, Hamza narrated the following in his story:

HAMZA: Government officials visited our community after the Boko Haram attacks and gave assurances of coming to our aid. Unfortunately, we don't get to see much action. Many people had to flee this community, but since we started seeing some international organizations come in, things have changed slightly, you see their presence in health care facilities, in building schools, in rehabilitation, in helping farmers with seedlings and fertilizers.

A participant from the ICRC spoke about witnessing an increase in the number of malnourished people in the community when he worked between May and June 2019, The participant noted that 'people did not have enough food to last through the period between harvests, commonly known as the hunger gap'. Also, participants from Gwange district spoke about not being able to get adequate medical care. Joyce narrated the situation this way:

JOYCE: We have to transport ourselves to the state government-run pediatric hospital in Maiduguri. Imagine having displaced people with no money at all need emergency medical care. Our children have experienced a measles outbreak and there is no equipped hospital here. The MSF in 2019 came here and they set up a makeshift clinic. That is the only clinic we have in Gwange and before we left for the IDP they provided intensive care service to us, especially our children during an infectious disease outbreak.

According to other participants, they witnessed humanitarian agencies provide much needed medical care to the towns of Pulka, Gwoza, and Ngala, including primary and secondary healthcare, treatment for malnutrition, maternity services, and mental health support. However, these healthcare facilities for the entire area and its efforts to absorb an increase in patients as local people's health continues to deteriorate due to seasonal factors and poor living conditions. In the camps visited in Abuja, the caretaker confirmed that an average of over 300 displaced persons are admitted every month with less than a square kilometer of land, 'these people live under poorly made makeshift shelters that are easily damaged by strong sand winds and heavy rainfall, it is like a double tragedy for many'

With the arrival of the rainy season, the health of displaced people worsens, with an increase in malaria cases, so that people who have not received prevention treatment are particularly vulnerable to the disease. The people on the ground in northern Nigeria are exposed to a high level of violence and traumatic experiences in an ethno-religious conflict exacerbated by the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. Their suffering and vulnerability are also extended to the displaced people camps where their immediate humanitarian needs are not being adequately addressed by the government and NGOs. The humanitarian emergency in northern Nigeria is reaching catastrophic levels. A massive relief effort is needed immediately in remote areas rather than just the state capital. In several locations, people have sought refuge in towns or camps controlled by the military, and are entirely reliant on external aid, which often does not yield anything to them. According to a publication on the MSF webpage, in the town of Ngala, Borno State about 80,000 displaced people are living in a camp cut off from the outside world (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2016). They desperately lack food and healthcare, and people are effectively stranded in the camp and cannot leave.

Rapid nutritional screening of more than 2,000 children under the age of five found that one in 10 was suffering from life-threatening severe acute malnutrition, and people in the camp reported having less than half a liter of water per person per day (Ibid). International NGOs like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have been working in Nigeria since 1996 and the situation in northern Nigeria has got them to spread their presence across affected states, providing humanitarian aids to the communities in dire need of assistance.

My study participants provided numerous explanations on the pervasiveness of their lived experiences and current living conditions in their communities or at the displaced persons camp. The explanations generally revolve around poverty, and this is why many see poverty as a trigger in the emergence of Boko Haram and the ensuing violence that emerged in the area. On the one hand, some participants recognize that the early formation of Boko Haram was a social movement for the poor. This set of participants believed that Boko Haram wanted the implementation of Sharia law that would usher in a welfare system for the poor and this provided the group with its initial grassroots followers.

On the other hand, many participants identified Boko Haram as a sectarian movement that exploited extreme poverty in Nigeria's northern region to recruit and involve its young members in criminality, insurgency, and terrorism. The people's experiences of Boko Haram post-2009 are very different from what they experienced at the outset of the birth of Boko Haram and this distinction is reflected in the study participants' narratives. For example, Birma recounted his community's experience during the early period of the insurgency as follows:

BIRMA: Since the violence broke out, we have been always in transit to and fro Abuja, but as things worsened, we were often compelled to

leave our places of abode and run to the military camps for safety. In most cases, the people working on their farms first spot the militants from afar and they run home to alert the people about the impending danger. You know we live close to the border, and most of the time they come to forcefully take our motorbikes from us, and we often run into the bush. Those who are lucky escape unhurt.

The participants' accounts of the conflict are different. Some had to walk for several miles through the bush to escape the violence in Adamawa. They slept in the bush without food or water for many days. For example, Ibrahim who resides in the IDP camp in Abuja narrated about his life after he escaped from the Boko Haram attack in Adamawa. This is what Ibrahim had to say on the issue:

IBRAHIM: By the grace of God, we came out of the bush and when we came out, we now tried to locate this place as we have been in Abuja before. We also help some of our people who are coming here for the first time to find solace in this place. We were then assisted with accommodation for between N20,000 and N50,000 with the knowledge that we are now displaced. Life then begins from there.

The survivors who are now displaced persons in the camps occasionally receive visits from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The participants from NEMA report that they usually collaborate with faith and humanitarian-based organizations to provide the occupants of the IDPs with food and medical materials and assisting them with enrolling their children in schools. Most humanitarian agencies travel to the IDPs once and are never heard from again. Some of these NGO workers even take advantage of the displaced persons' frightful situation to make money. They apply for grants under the pretext that they are alleviating the people's desperate conditions and they end up disbursing a meager portion of the grant to people while they fill their own pockets with the rest of the money. Displaced persons are forced to

take up menial jobs as farmers, cyclists, or taxi-drivers to survive economically in their new stressful environment.

A female civil servant, Ramat works for the federal government in Abuja highlighted the impact poverty has had on the violent insurgency in the north of the country when she reported the following in her story:

RAMAT: The issue of violent conflict in northern Nigeria is closely linked to the question of poverty; a lot of people are poor, and they easily take to conflict as a means of making ends meet...I hear that some of the young boys recruited by Boko Haram get paid monthly. How do you expect them not to take to crime when they cannot get legitimate work from business owners and the government?

Both strands of explanation offered above provide some useful insight into the emergence of and the continuance of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. The Boko Haram leadership continues to attract sympathetic support from some of the most impoverished people living in the northern part of Nigeria. Young uneducated and unemployed men continue to be recruited into Boko Haram, which validates most of the participant's assertion that poverty could be a catalyst for violence and it also connects to Frantz Fanon's (1963) discussion of the motivation for recruitment of impoverished youth into Algeria's FLN in its anti-colonial struggle with the French colonial power. Similarly, the Boko Haram insurgency exploits poverty by recruiting thousands of uneducated and unemployed young people into its ranks. Emeka who is a senior officer at the Abuja Municipal Area Council expresses his view of the Boko Haram membership this way:

EMEKA: Although some wealthy people are in support of what Boko Haram stands for, but do you ever see them join in the fight and violence? The answer is

no! So let us face it. I only know about Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the young Nigerian boy who is from a wealthy family with training abroad who attempted to bomb a Delta airplane to Miami in 2009. That event was linked to al Qaeda and not Boko Haram, I strongly believe poverty is a factor in the membership because its members are mainly from destitute children, disaffected youth, unemployed high school dropouts.

Some of the participants expressed their uncertainty about the impact of poverty in fuelling the terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria. These research participants offered significant insights regarding their experiences with extreme poverty. Many of these participants acknowledged the fact that Boko Haram took root in northern Nigeria against a backdrop of poverty. They articulated that they had witnessed the radicalization of Boko Haram and its transition to violence because of the failure of the Nigerian state in curbing the high rate of economic deprivation and youth unemployment. The poverty thesis is a common narrative about the insurgency as disclosed by many participants. A participant who works for the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution recounted how the lack of economic opportunities and poverty are connected to the destabilization of security in northern Nigeria. Isaac recounted the following in his story:

ISAAC: The northern part of the country has been negative in terms of the developmental indices whether it is poverty, unemployment, whether it is inequality, or whatever it is. You will discover that the northern part of the country has continued to show worrisome results.... there are a lot of structural violence manifestations in northern Nigeria concerning poverty, inequality, etc. and most of them are prevalent in the northeast region of the country.

Moreover, a former civil servant expressed how the poverty situation in northern Nigeria where she is from was responsible for escalating ethnoreligious conflict, as young people with no hope for the future were prime recruitment targets for Boko Haram. Mary had this to say on the issue:

MARY: If you go to Borno State, you will discover that there is nothing virtually going in terms of whether to alleviate people from poverty or whether to ensure that people attend schools. Most of the schools are closed, and there are no deliberate efforts to open these schools. You will discover that there is a high youth bulge and no industries are springing up to respond to these challenges of youth unemployment.

There are serious cases of unemployment and poverty is on the rise in Borno State. If you go to Adamawa State you will meet the same thing, you come to Bauchi, Gombe, all of them. These states have mainly government jobs with virtually no presence of the private sector or industries; there is also nothing in terms of a deliberate effort to lead people out of poverty.

My research participants indicated that there is a notably predominant notion that poverty and indeed the structural condition on the ground in northern Nigeria carries a lot of explanatory power in understanding the fundamental cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. Drawing from the poverty narrative, I think that it is fair to infer that Boko Haram's insurgency is dominant in the most socioeconomically deprived states. A more insightful fact from my participants was their depth of feeling that the region's deprivation is connected to high-level corruption among the political class. They expressed a sense of injustice and human insecurity which was being experienced by local people, especially the unemployed, the poor, and the mostly illiterate youth population, which motivates them to join Boko Haram.

James acknowledged that there has been some improvement in some of the communities but he noted that the scale of the destruction is massive and that it will take a serious commitment from the government to replenish the resources to meet the needs of returning displaced people and local communities.

JAMES: The Boko Haram insurgency created a lot of challenges that set the region backward and what that has done is that the little resources that are available to create facilities are now being spent on rehabilitating the captured communities. Because you have a whole community destroyed, public institutions destroyed, infrastructure destroyed. The magnitude of the destruction is such that it has produced more population around the little social amenities that are available. The plan is to ensure that some of these social amenities are restored in those communities before the displaced populations go back to their communities.

The government must stabilize the milieu for internally displaced persons by providing them with medications, food, and shelter. This poses a serious challenge because following the crisis because people's entire means of livelihood were destroyed by the violence. Markets were destroyed and seedlings that the farmers depend on to sow and cultivate their crops at the beginning of the raining season each year were also destroyed. People could not even access the river and lakes to go fishing because it was so dangerous. The situation was about the restoration of people's livelihood and health as much as it was about the restoration of their lost amenities. The milieu created a whole gamut of needs that the government has yet to meet. President Buhari's Plan recognizes the people's needs and the cost of rebuilding local communities affected by the insurgency, and the collaboration needed with agencies such as ECOWAS and NGOs to rebuild those communities. Amos from the office of the Presidential Committee on Northeast Initiative has this to say:

AMOS: The PCNI was set up as a coordinating body to harmonize interventions in the northeast. President Buhari recognizes that the government cannot deal with the situation in northern Nigeria or elsewhere alone. So, our mandate is to now bring together the stakeholders from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Some of the issues we've identified as having an intervention gap are Education, health, protection, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) among other things, and shelter and we are making progress to reconstruct the Boko Haram damaged communities.

Considering the people's living conditions trapped within the prism of meeting their basic needs, there appears to be a problem highlighting what are the real issues encountered by the people affected by the violence. Specifically, the problems in northern Nigeria reveals that what the Global North frames as human needs might be different from what people in the Global South see as exactly constituting their basic needs. For example, using the poverty rating of a dollar a day does not match the lived realities of most people living in the Global South or crisis-ridden northern Nigeria. It is imperative for ECOWAS, the government, and NGOs to adopt broad frameworks and culturally sensitive models when dealing with local peculiarities in northern Nigeria. A participant, Kyola from the ICRC had this to share about her experience from working in northern Nigeria.

KYOLA: In working closely with the agencies of government to provide basic needs such as food, health services, and education to the poorest sectors of the population and especially those affected by the insurgency— I have come to see that the locals don't worry so much about some of the things we worry so much about in big cities and elsewhere.

Nobody talks about a balanced diet here; they just eat whatever food they can lay their hands on. Some of the best schools here do not have computers, whiteboards, projectors, or even a library. Just a very basic wooden chalkboard and set of wooden furniture. Yet both the kids and teachers are happy, except for the insurgency which is causing so much fear.

Another participant, Joshua from the IPCR recognizes the need to match the needs of local people with specialized organizations. He noted that:

JOSHUA: Before the outbreak of the conflict in northern Nigeria, the IPCR provided peacebuilding infrastructures to assist local people following its peace

inventory of the local situation. Also, MTN, a telecommunications provider uses its technology on language to assist in deciphering and providing information about the pressing needs and healthcare facilities for residents impacted by the violence.

The key challenge for forging peace in northern Nigeria is that the people are systemically impoverished and are denied their basic needs in order to survive. There is poverty in other parts of the country, yet these communities seem to overcome their impoverishment compared to people living in northern Nigeria where the political class and Boko Haram have exploited the local people. All of the states in the federal system are entitled to their allocation of resources from the federal government as well as the taxes from internally generated revenue from businesses. Corrupt politicians and the lack of a solid business structure mean that northern Nigeria does not have the economic resources to meet all of the people's basic needs, which means that the conflict continues unabated in the north. Poverty plays a critical role in the conflict. Class differences mean that wealthy districts in Abuja like Asokoro and Maitama in Abuja are violence-free while poor people living in an impoverished settlement like Nyanya experience the wanton violence on a day-to-day basis. These people living in such a violent conflict milieu have nothing to lose. If these people had access to good schools, hospitals, and jobs that make life enjoyable they would not want to destroy their neighborhoods.

5.5 Addressing the Boko Haram insurgency

I talked to my research participants at the grassroots level about the ECOWAS multi-national Joint Taskforce comprising Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. They were asked how ECOWAS, NGOs, and the state came into some of these communities to address the violence, and how these efforts were perceived in their

community, and if these interventions had encouraged reconciliation and cross-community interaction. Responses indicated that the Boko Haram problem is perceived to be, among other factors, connected to fanatic leaders as the groups were hijacked by politicians for nefarious reasons as local people got caught up in the bloodbath. This means that the terrorist organization developed its financial capacity given that these Nigerian politicians control the levers of the economy. Nathaniel, a participant from Bogiro reflected on the issue intervention in the following way:

NATHANIEL: The widespread corruption in government has eaten so deeply in Nigeria and it is playing out to the advantage of the terrorists. The affected communities are not only deprived of needed amenities and infrastructure, but the inaction of the government has created an environment conducive for recruitment and radicalization. Pervasive corruption provides a key referent around which extremists can frame anti-secular ideology and radicalization...

Therefore, the participants were suspicious of the political elite's behavior. Some of the participants believed that these politicians used the Boko Haram terrorists as a political tool to attain their personal political goals. There appears to be growing evidence in support of this perspective following the many commentaries by the participants alluding to some type of politicization of the Boko Haram insurgency. As a leading candidate in the opposition in the 2011 election, Muhammadu Buhari was then quoted to have said that, "Nigeria will be made ungovernable should he lose the 2011 elections." Many of my participants believed that President Buhari to whom this statement is attributed, and who is now in power has made good on his threat as violence intensified in many parts of the northern region where he has a lot of followership, especially during President Goodluck Jonathan's term in office. Others now view the violence as a by-product of poverty and underdevelopment rather than ascribing

religion or politics to the Boko Haram insurgency. Mathias is a staff person working with WANEP. He narrated the following in his story:

MATHIAS: Although many discuss the killings, and bombing from a religious dimension and rightly so, because here, conflicts are caused historically by religion, I am a Christian and have now come to recognize that after all, we are one people in northern Nigeria; whether you are a Christian or a Muslim. Many of us now realize that we have a common enemy and the common enemy is underdevelopment and poverty.

It doesn't matter whether you are a Christian or a Muslim, whether you are a Hausa man, or you are a Tiv man or you are a Berom man. Poverty is no respecter of any language, religion, or tribe. So, the government must at all levels show commitment by partnering with credible civil society organizations like WANEP to design and implement effective reorientation programs for the people of northern Nigeria. Particularly they need to take the destitute children off the streets to provide them with the support and training they need to function effectively in society.

Mathias' comments illustrate that in some quarters people have come to realize that until they combat ignorance, then illiteracy and underdevelopment will persist in devastating the local communities. There is also a realization that it is the ignorance of the religion's positive values that lead individuals to kill one another. Mathias articulated the following in his story to recount his ideas about the role of religion in the conflict:

MATHIAS: You may want to ask, why is it that northern Nigeria has always shown signs of violent extremism? When other parts of the country are developing; you see the Eko mega-city emerging in Lagos and then nothing in Kano. Even Nigeria's capital, here in Abuja, if you go to the surrounding communities and you will discover that increasingly, poverty is creeping into Abuja. So, we have a common enemy, and I think the northerners must understand that we need to fight this scourge of poverty, and to fight it, we need to ensure that we all avoid religious sentiments, and we all need to embrace education.

However, Mathias's understanding cannot be effective if only a few people share it. It requires more individuals to become involved in promoting this worldview for it to

work. Some of the participants wished that their society is re-established to what it used to be before the ethnoreligious and political fractionalization that has divided the communities. At some point, Christians were perceived to be the problem while at other times, Muslims were seen as the problem yet, in reality, the root cause of the conflict is the widespread abject poverty, underdevelopment, and ignorance that is exploited by corrupt politicians and the sponsors of religious extremism.

Other participants highlighted the importance of education in tackling poverty which is the real cause for the perpetuation of violence in northern Nigeria. They hope that through intergroup interaction in the schools, those that are formally educated as well as those who do not willfully understand how selfish politicians are using them and their children as pawns will be curtailed. Mary expressed her opinion in this regard as follows:

MARY: I believe that with time, those that are not as literate as some of us will gradually understand the way we have come to understand, through interactions. Most programs aimed at restoring peace and promote harmony are usually challenged through the government.

The interfaith dialogue in my community was hijacked by some elites who ended up manipulating and mobilizing their supporters to boycott the program on the excuse that they were not benefiting because of their religious doctrine. I can't imagine myself attaining the position of leadership and then choose to manipulate my people. If there are no elite's manipulation and mobilization, you will discover that there would be no crisis in northern Nigeria.

The problems seem unending because corrupt politicians have been in power for far too long. The political situation may abate when the current generation of politicians are voted out of office. The emergence of younger persons with new ideas who understand multiple narratives will not exploit existing ethnoreligious fault lines.

A truly representative democratic system votes people into leadership positions based on their merit and not because that person is a Muslim or a Christian. Nathaniel puts it this way:

NATHANIEL: Borno State has got a sizeable number of both Christian and Muslim populations yet since 1999 the highest elective office ever occupied by a Christian in the state is deputy governor. I know this may sound awkward, but why can't a Christian govern the state. It is not as if the Muslims are better candidates. During elections, they will preach oneness and afterward they promote division by playing ethnic and religious politics.

Despite the seeming predisposition of unemployed young people to commit to the insurgency, Boko Haram's rise and the capacity with which it has inflicted much pain on the local community has been truly alarming. Local communities are neglected and angry at the federal government's misguided policy in spending so much money on military hardware rather than putting those resources into peacebuilding projects. For example, the Kukah Foundation was said to have recently carried out seminars and workshops in 75 communities across Adamawa and Yobe states. Peter from the Foundation revealed that the people were asked whether they would accept Boko Haram members back into their communities, and how they felt about the federal government's efforts to deradicalize Boko Haram members? It turned out that these people were unaware and were not involved in the process. Hence Peter stressed the following idea about community engagement in the deradicalization and reconciliation process as follows:

PETER: The issue of community reconciliation and forgiveness, the government doesn't talk about it. Some families are not willing to forgive their children for getting involved in this. There are Boko Haram members who are known to have killed their family members or neighbors, so how do you expect the families or communities to welcome them back without a path to reconciliation and forgiveness?

With developments such as this point above, tackling the insurgency issue becomes a conundrum for the federal and state governments as they can neither effectively sway the group away from its activities without provoking the rest of the country nor can they exercise their sovereign right to use exclusive force against the group without escalating the conflict and endangering the local citizens. For those participants that show more of an understanding of the government's position, they view their predicament as precarious, and difficult for them to walk the plank. Some participants believed that there had to be some religious and cultural considerations in the government's responses to the Boko Haram insurgency. Umar gave a vivid description of what the cultural considerations might look like as follows:

UMAR: The suggestions about amnesty and a leniency program is incomplete without active community involvement. Many of us find it is ridiculous to hear the government is talking about re-integrating 'repentant' low-risk Boko Haram combatants. Anyone who can join the Boko Haram insurgents for whatever reason isn't low risk. Besides, who determines what low risk is.

The same government that tells us they don't have the technology for early warning to detect them know when our communities come under attack? As for forgiveness, we live by such practice in our faith, but in seeking forgiveness there must be confession and corresponding prayers. We have not yet seen any of these happen. Even the traditional rulers have said no one spoke to them about integrating repentant Boko Haram members back in our community.

Some of the participants view Boko Haram as a religious and cultural group that started by denouncing Western education and culture. This is the translation of the phrase *Boko Haram* from which the group derives its name. So, adopting reintegration programs that are vested in the Western model is seen to be counterproductive. Nigeria is a secular state where everyone has the freedom to worship as they wish that is guaranteed by the Constitution. This seems to be a far cry. For example, in 2016 a female preacher by the name of Eunice Olawale was murdered by suspected Muslim extremists while evangelizing in Abuja, and more recently in Kano State, an Islamic

gospel singer, Mr. Sharif Aminu has been sentenced to death for blasphemy (BBC News, 2020; Premium Times, 2016). These acts are against freedom of expression and religion as protected in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended), Section 38 (1) which states unequivocally that: ‘every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private), to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance². Yet in northern Nigeria, this freedom of religion has continued to elude the Christian population with intolerant behavior from the Muslim population and has become a breeding ground for radicalization culminating in the formation of the Boko Haram group.

It is obvious from interactions with my research participants that, among other considerations, education and literacy must be firmly introduced in the community to prevent young men from being radicalized in the first place. Ibrahim fled Maiduguri for one of the camps in Abuja. He averred the following in his story:

IBRAHIM: I believed that you can kill every single member of Boko Haram, if you don’t deal with the ideology that is spreading in every mosque and church on Fridays and Sundays, if you don’t deal with fake or unqualified Islamic scholars and what they teach, Boko Haram may go, but another group could emerge.

Addressing sectarian issues is critical to achieving sustainable peaceful co-existence within grassroots communities. The Kukah Foundation has left no stone unturned in working with progressive local religious leaders in some of the most affected communities. For example, Peter, who works for the Kukah

² Nigeria's Constitution of 1999

Foundation revealed some of the actions the Foundation has taken to empower local youth.

PETER: We went into partnership with the Tony Blair Foundation for a four-year funded project on teaching Islamic scholars and even Christian pastors across all denominations on how to counter violent extremism. We developed the whole series of this rational counterargument from history, from Islamic theology, from the Quran, and translating some of the books into Hausa. Last week we just finished a session for Imams from Kano, Gombe, and Yobe and we intend to step it down, not only to the other states but to the other local governments because we believe that these are people who have access to the local populace.

Entrenching a harmonious non-sectarian society should begin from the grassroots. Unfortunately, northern Nigeria's reality is one of sharp contrast, developing such an environment has become increasingly challenging. The locals are often suspicious of external actors' agendas. Also, a view that received traction among some of the participants stemmed from their distrust of the current federal government. Some participants describe the onslaught of Boko Haram's rogue activities to be a political tool of a rogue administration. Hence, they consider the efforts of President Buhari's administration to quell the Boko Haram crisis as hypocritical. These participants held that Boko Haram has always been used as a political tool for the current government to gain political power. Theophilus is a researcher from Kogi and he expresses his view on the current administration this way:

THEOPHILUS: President Buhari rode to power on the backdrop of President Jonathan's failure to tackle the Boko Haram insurgency. His first inaugural address to Nigerians was that the military headquarters will be relocated from the center (Abuja) to Borno State where Boko Haram had its stronghold. Five years into his presidency, and less than three years to its expiration, that is yet to happen. Instead, we have witnessed more violent killings with the troubling herder-farmer crisis...

So, when you put the reaction of President Buhari in context, it is suggestive to say the man is hypocritical. The insinuations that he has not done much to address that Boko Haram insurgency stems from the continuous denial that the group is still much in effect. The government says they have technically defeated Boko Haram with no real evidence on the ground to support that claim.

Therefore, participants' insinuation that some politicians within the government had a hand in the emergence of Boko Haram because the current government has equally failed to nip violent extremism in the bud. They question the group's source of funding and ultimately believe that the funding emanated from elements within the government at different levels of administration. Although their claim cannot be independently verified or substantiated, the government's recent amnesty program to rehabilitate repentant Boko Haram members by pardoning and releasing these terrorists from its jails has certainly not helped to end that argument. Emeka was quite blunt about his thought on this issue. He noted that:

EMEKA: Why would any reasonable government seek to pardon repentant terrorists as a means towards peace, yet proscribe a peaceful group and label them terrorists just because they seek secession from Nigeria....The logical thing to do is to dialogue with the ethnic group wanting to get Biafra and frown at the terrorist group known for destroying public property and killing many.

Another supposition that some of my participants did not neglect is the absence of the rule of law in the region and the state. These participants narrated that the cause of the increasing terror unleashed by Boko Haram seems to be situated at the center of a culture of lawlessness and injustice pervading the country. These participants made it known that Boko Haram, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are all the inevitable consequences of a corrupt Nigeria's lack of regard for the rule of law. Boko Haram's link to the country's culture of lawlessness is associated with the failure of the federal government to nip the group's terrorist actions in the bud from the very outset. When Boko Haram's leader, Muhammed Yusuf was apprehended in 2008, the government failed to follow due diligence in interrogating him to

understand the group's aims and agenda. Rather than interrogate Muhammed Yusuf to get at the root of the problem so that it could be addressed, its founder was extrajudicially killed, and no meaningful information was extracted from him. The government's disregard for the rule of law allowed it to miss an opportunity to obtain first-hand information from Boko Haram's leader to understand his motivation for starting the group and to determine who his government collaborators were. Consequently, the north is stuck in this sociopolitical quagmire threatening the very existence of the country. Isaac from the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution made this observation in his story this way:

ISAAC: There are shreds of evidence that highhandedness has brought Nigeria to her misfortune with the deadly Boko Haram group. The Boko Haram violence is not unconnected to the killing of its leader – Muhammed Yusuf. I am not excusing terrorism on any alter, but perhaps that sometimes toeing the line of intelligence gathering and using the instrumentality of the law is better. Therefore, I think the study on preventive actions is timely.

Irrespective of the government's perceived shortcomings, civil society organisations, and individuals have made concerted efforts at countering and stemming radicalization on the ground. The Kukah Foundation is one of such organizations taking the lead in working for peace at the grassroots level. Peter works with the organization. He outlined how their peacebuilding activities are shaping the lives of young people:

PETER: We do more advocacy and training programs at the community level. Usually, when the young people finish training through our program, they are sent to work in places like that national assembly to gain experience after which they will return to the foundation to share their experience. Participants are also introduced to private business owners in our network. The Vice President met some of our participants during his last visit here and we took them to the Villa.

Now we have gone into an agreement with the Nigeria National Petroleum Commission (NNPC) to accept young participants on 6 months placement. The NNPC evaluates them and some have been retained through this process. We have had an agreement with NNPC to evaluate them. Some of them have gotten jobs through this process, but they remain fellows to the Kukah Centre. Over the years the center fellow has increased.

This chapter highlights the study participants' narratives which generally affirm that the birth of Boko Haram's insurgency is mired in a plethora of issues including youth unemployment, poverty, lack of cross-cultural contact, and a poor education system. These issues stirred interviewees varying perceptions and interpretations of the interventions into the conflict. Perhaps these experiences and perceptions would provide some useful insights for positive peacebuilding approaches on the ground in northern Nigeria.

5.6 Key Findings

Thirteen key findings emerged from the data in this chapter. First, since the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgent group in Nigeria which has spread through the Sahel region, the discourse as to the causes of the group's activities has resulted in several controversies, and it has been linked to several factors. It is important to state that these factors overlap ethnic, religious, political, and cultural practices in the core northern part of Nigeria. This region which happens to house predominantly Muslim worshippers has its ideology rooted in the teachings of Islam. However, the explanation and interpretation of religious teachings may have been tainted to fit the agenda of whatever group propagates them. The emergence of Boko Haram indicates its total rejection of western culture or westernization and the total embrace of sharia Islamic law and practices. Nonetheless, Boko Haram insurgents were involved in the use of extreme violence in the propagation of this ideology of Islamization, which destroyed both public and private properties and ultimately cause the death of unsuspecting civilians. This led to the arrest and the extrajudicial killings of its members as well as its leaders in the city of Borno by the Nigerian police. This action allowed its loosely affiliated cadre to metamorphose from a religious sect into an armed group fighting the government as a result of perceived injustice in the killings of their leader and members.

This resulted in the emergence of a violent group with a wide network across the Sub-Saharan region with its field of operation in Bama on the Nigerian territory.

Nevertheless, the group has become so many things overlapping ethnic, religious-political, economic, and regional agendas. These foundational causes of the Boko Haram insurgency prompt us to understand the other factors responsible for its continued existence in northern Nigeria with the hopes of modifying peacebuilding interventions to accommodate a people-based approach towards preventing violent extremism in northern Nigeria.

Second, amongst several other reasons responsible for the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, religion is fundamental to the violent extremism shaping life in the northern part of Nigeria. The religious radicalization of recruits centered on poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and seemingly by the extension of the almajiri school system which was effective in breeding and recruiting extreme Boko Haram fighters. The participants' pointed at the social-religious practices of the almajiri school system as the underlying reason for the emergence of Boko Haram, which subverts the custody of children from their parents to religious teachers at the age of development without being sufficiently aware of the consequence of Boko Haram's terrorism matrix. This position was corroborated by my participants as they alluded that the almajiri school system was the fundamental reason behind the Boko Haram insurgency and its violent crimes against humanity. However, much as the religious system may be a key factor for the emergence of Boko Haram, the almajiri system better serves as the breeding and recruiting ground for Boko Haram fighters in contrast to the notion that the religious system was a key cause behind the emergence of religious terrorism.

Third, other participants observed that at the heart of the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, are unemployment and poverty. These are crucial factors responsible for the Boko Haram crisis. In a region with over 60 percent of the people living in abject poverty may present a good argument for the emergence of Boko Haram and its continued activities. The arguments surrounding the issues of unemployment and poverty serve as a catalyst to violent extremism especially within the context of the terrorist insurgency in Nigeria placing poverty as a precursor to violence. Although the poverty situation in northern Nigeria with the property remaining in the southern part of Nigeria holds that it would be difficult for a wealthy politician or any institutional leader in the south to mobilize people to use religion to escalate the violent conflict. It suggests that we have several factors responsible for these comparisons such as the unavailability of the industry for employment purposes, extremely low literacy levels in northern Nigeria also suggests that a combination of poverty and the literacy situation in the northern part of Nigeria has led to violent conflicts and extremism. In the region that is predominantly Muslim with the antecedents of violent insurgency from the Uthman Danfodio expansionism, the Maitasina Crisis, and now, Boko Haram, suggests a useful connection in the call for the Islamisation of the region in the constitutionally secular country.

Four, even though Boko Haram began as an Islamic movement, my participants argued that it was a ploy to deceive the people through religious dogmatism. Before the polarization of the conflict into a political and economic insurgency, Boko Haram's insurgency agenda was the establishment of sharia law. The killing of non-Muslims in the region began because political actors used religion as bait to mobilize political support. Hence, religious fractioning escalated existential hatred and grievances amongst the followers of Islam and Christianity gave rise to the violent killings in the

region that were laced with non-proactive intervention exhibited by the government to prevent extremism from taking the center stage in preventing religious coexistence in the region.

Five, the interviews indicate that the Boko Haram insurgency with its radical interpretation of Islam has the ultimate goal of setting up an Islamic state through “holy wars” as such so that the primary victims of Boko Haram insurgency are the minority northern Christians. My participants believe that Boko Haram specifically targets Christians and sees Christianity as a Western religion that must be eradicated. This claim was supported by several narratives suggesting that the attacks on the minority Christian communities in the north are most prominent and frequent. However, the activities of Boko Haram terrorists go beyond attacks on the minority Christian communities in the north. It may be recalled that several attacks were also conducted on Muslim communities. The Kano central mosque, which had the then Emir of Kano emirate, His Royal Highness Muhammadu Sanusi II, was attacked on a Friday Jumma service resulting in the killing of several Muslims, and the destruction of property that left many Muslim worshippers injured in the hospital.

Six, Boko Haram insurgent terrorist groups have on several occasions taken responsibility for the killings and assassination of prominent Muslim scholars who spoke out against the actions of the terrorist group, which challenged their Islamic interpretation of jihad “holy war.” Statistically, it does seem that Muslim communities have been equally affected by the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist to suggest that both the Muslim and Christian communities are both victims of extreme violence.

Seven, the group’s actions have significant implications for female children’s education and the willingness of parents to send their wards to school after over 250

schoolgirls from Chibok were abducted with a few gaining your freedom while the whereabouts or existence of others are yet to be ascertained. The trauma caused by the Boko Haram terrorists has damaged the willingness e of some parents towards sending their children to school out of fear that they will be kidnapped.

Eight, women have also been identified as victims of Boko Haram, which includes the kidnapping of women for slavery and brutish sexual abuse, subjecting them into forced marriages to commanders of terrorist groups, and providing a source of revenue for logistics and operational setups. Women who have been captured by Boko Haram are often used as suicide bombers for soft targets. Both women and children serve as a core group in the victimization effect of the terrorists. This is rooted in the sociocultural structure in northern Nigeria that is strongly embedded in patriarchy. Nevertheless, males are not excluded from Boko Haram harm as boys of adolescent age have been recruited as fighters by the insurgents. The use of boys as fighters by Boko Haram suggests that both young women and men are victims of Boko Haram. This is also evident in the massacre of boys at a boarding school where over 50 boys sleeping in their dormitories were executed by Boko Haram.

Ninth, the emergence and continued existence of Boko Haram's insurgent terrorists has created a huge humanitarian crisis that requires the services of NGOs and strategic non-state actor's intervention. The displacement of over 1.8 million people the majority of whom are women and children that are scattered all over northern Nigeria necessitated humanitarian intervention by NGOs to set the pace for humanitarian services across the region. However, several areas of the northeast remain insecure for humanitarian workers as many have been abducted and killed for simply rendering services to poor disenfranchised people. This has resulted in the inadequate provision of aid to other areas even those under the control of the Nigerian military

The humanitarian situations in camps established by the military are so enormous that shelters are not sufficient for displaced persons. There have been several allegations of restricted movement, and insufficient food supply, the lack of basic amenities which include water, electricity, and the lack of access to education for children. This suggests that these inadequacies as a result of the efforts by the Nigerian government and NGOs are due to corruption from camp officials.

My participants explained that the camp lacks basic amenities such as toilets and bathrooms. One interviewee noted that “since we arrived at the camp eight months ago, we have been defecating in the open forcing myself and children to move from camp to camp for the past six years.” He further explained that he had to work menial jobs even as a displaced person to feed himself and his family due to the government’s non-provision of food to the camps. However, humanitarian interventions such as the MSF provided for the IDPs is the largest therapeutic feeding program that takes care of malnourished children with medical complications bringing relief and improvement to some of their living conditions.

Other participants reported that NGOs, ECOWAS, and UN interventions meant that things have changed slightly as they rehabilitated healthcare facilities, schools, and helped families with seedlings and fertilizer. Notwithstanding NGOs' efforts, it was insufficient for the number of humanitarian crises prevailing in the camps and largely the entire northeast region where malnourished children and parents lack access to a sufficient food supply that exists alongside people with serious health concerns due to insufficient healthcare facilities in IPD camps. During the rainy season, the health conditions in the camps worsen due to the collapse of hygiene facilities as a lack of clean water impacts the vulnerability of people especially children to waterborne diseases such as cholera.

At this point, the government and NGOs do not stand a chance in confronting the extent of the humanitarian crisis present in the camps with allegations of corrupt officials, abuse of women and children that extends the suffering and vulnerability of the IDPs. This situation has reached a catastrophic state and requires a massive effort by both the government and NGOs in the remote areas as well as in the camps in the state's capital. The incidence of pervasive violence in communities suggests why poverty was a trigger in the emergence of Boko Haram and the early formation of the group in the first place as a social movement for the poor. Consequently, my participants believed that Boko Haram wanted to implement sharia law that would usher in a welfare system for the poor that helped to attract its initial grassroots followers. At one point, the group was providing loans to people ravaged by poverty thereby presenting a platform for the recruitment of fighters who were unable to pay back the loans. The exploitation of extreme poverty in Nigeria's northern region was responsible for the formation of and the recruitment of Boko Haram fighters.

Tenth, the impact of poverty in the emergence of Boko Haram is a significant factor as the participants held that the violent conflict in northern Nigeria is closely linked to the quantum of poverty. They stated that a lot of people are poor and are easily taken to conflict as a means of making ends meet. These positions provide an overwhelming explanation of the exploitation of extreme poverty as a factor leading to the emergence and continued existence of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigerian than elsewhere in the country. Many of my participant's narratives validate the fact that Boko Haram took root in northern Nigeria against a backdrop of poverty. They further articulated that the radicalization of Boko Haram, and its transition to violence was because of the failure of the Nigerian state in curbing the high rate of economic deprivation and youth unemployment. These claims are supported by the United

Nations reports on human development as well as by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (cited in Osumah, 2013, p. 156).

The role of extreme poverty and exploitation by Boko Haram leaves the region in a severe humanitarian crisis on a large scale creating generational chaos and continued violence. As such, it is imperative for ECOWAS, the Nigerian government, and NGOs to adopt a broad framework and culturally sensitive peacebuilding model and counter-terrorism strategies that include a sufficient understanding of the peculiarities of people living in the region. These strategies must be formulated by conflict resolution and peacebuilding experts with an emphasis placed on the political class and governmental institutions through a people-oriented nonviolent conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategy through the people's economic emancipation.

Eleven, confronting the humanitarian crisis caused by the violence of Boko Haram terrorists requires the intervention of ECOWAS, NGOs, and the Nigerian state in resolving the issues through reconciliation and cross-community interaction. This suggests that in formulating a conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategy in the north, both the present military and local people's opinions become a veritable tool for lasting peace. In contrast, the insurgent terrorists' behavior is connected to fanatical leaders, and may have been hijacked by politicians to score cheap political gains. It is important to remember that some of the participant's reports who provided an account of Boko Haram's behavior may not be entirely accurate as they never returned to the region after they were displaced by the group. Some respondents pointed out that the conflict has been politicized, and that most of the killings were done by the soldiers themselves at the bidding of some politicians who gave them large sums of money to carry out the extrajudicial killings. This allegation of complacency and corruption against the Nigerian military may not be far from the truth as the people believe that

politicians used the Boko Haram terrorists as a political tool to gain political goals. They articulated that the politicians, immediately after the declaration of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian who won the 2011 presidential election, encouraged Boko Haram's insurgents' violent activities that were intensified in several parts of the northern region to frustrate his administration.

The emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria originally presented itself as a religious agenda for the Islamisation of the region. However, the study participants believe that the influences and involvement of the political class to deliberately impoverish the people to extremely high levels of unemployment and low literacy levels in the region are fundamentally responsible for the continued existence of Boko Haram's violent activities. The crisis of unemployment and poverty and the virtual enemies confronting the region are neither tribal nor religious as both are victims of violence meted out on the people by Boko Haram. More importantly, having a proper educational infrastructure is important in tackling poverty, so that the hope is that schools will be established to instill in children the value of nation-building, coexistence, and patriotism that will reduce the influences posed by selfish politicians to follow their political causes through their continued support of Boko Haram.

Twelve, the participants shared a common belief that with time, those that are not as literate as the others will gradually understand the importance of peacebuilding through peace education which will restore peace and promote harmony. These participants further suggested that the government plays a prominent role in the crisis currently ravaging the region. The government has neglected local communities resulting in the acrimonious relationship between the government and local people through its misguided policies in spending so much money on military hardware, rather than investing those resources into peacebuilding and community development

projects. As such, the government must respond to this predicament with some religious, economic, and sociocultural considerations in tackling the Boko Haram insurgency.

Thirteen, considering the *almajiri* system, it is implausible within many ethnic cultures in northern Nigeria to let children out of school to go around begging for alms in order to sustain adult teachers. Yet within the core Muslim communities where education is less emphasized, the *almajiri* culture is promoted and this has led to the exploitation of schoolchildren by their teachers. This behavior has been a breeding ground for the radicalization and recruitment base for Boko Haram. Hence, amongst other considerations, education and literacy must be introduced to each family in the local community to prevent young men from being radicalized in the first place by creating a system that harmonizes modern educational approaches or curriculums in line with ethnocultural and religious teachings with well-informed participation, funding, and regulation by the government. One participant made a very instructive observation in this regard. He noted that “we can kill every single member of the Boko Haram insurgents if we don’t deal with the ideology and ethnocultural practice spreading in worship centers and local communities through the regularization of religious teaching centers’ then religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence is a far cry.”

Addressing sectarian issues would actually achieve sustainable and peaceful coexistence within grassroots communities through entrenching a harmonious non-sectarian society that must be well promulgated by the locals themselves. However, the reality of the situation in northern Nigeria lies in sharp contrast with developing such an environment to address local needs and demands because local people are suspicious of external action agendas suggesting more robust and non-sectarian programs in

confronting violent extremism through peacebuilding. Nonetheless, irrespective of the shortcomings of government, individuals have made a concerted effort in countering the extremists' radical narratives on the ground.

5.7 Conclusion

In analyzing the collective narratives of both the peacebuilders and the people of northern Nigeria, it has become clear that there are valid grounds for local ownership of the peace processes in the fight against Boko Haram terrorism. Also, this section reveals a justification for ECOWAS's collaboration with the government of Nigeria in establishing a culture of peace and preventing violent conflict. In addition to this justification, the participants seemed to suggest that the lack of proper cultural syncretism in the various peacebuilding and counterinsurgency approaches employed by the government is a gap that must be filled in the renewed efforts of sub-regional involvement. These narratives provide a picture of both the context and dilemmas sourced from within local communities in northern Nigeria itself. Chapter 6 delves into ECOWAS's peacebuilding efforts to assess the possibilities of harnessing grassroots ownership in dealing with the underlying issues of youth unemployment, poverty, and the radicalization of young men and women all of which have been summarized by my participant's stories.

Chapter 6 - ECOWAS, the state, and nonstate actors conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts

6.1 Introduction

Following the submission made in the preceding chapter, this chapter explores the people's perception of peacebuilding intervention, by collecting the stories of peacebuilding activities from the grassroots people's lived experiences since the Boko Haram insurgency began. The dilemmas expressed by the participants will shape several other discussions on the shared responsibility of the government, ECOWAS, and other non-state actors in establishing bottom-up peacebuilding methodologies for West Africa. The overarching theme for the discussion on interventions would be the fundamental philosophy of grassroots participation which should be an underpinning factor in the peacebuilding efforts of northern Nigeria.

To this end, Chapter 6 specifically explores (1) ECOWAS's conflict intervention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts, (2) Nigeria's role in preventing the escalation of the terrorist insurgency in Northern Nigeria, and (3) the role of non-state actors in the conflict.

6.2 Perceptions of ECOWAS's conflict intervention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts

The participant's perceptions with regards to ECOWAS's peacebuilding efforts can be viewed through several perspectives, namely; how people's livelihoods and confidence have been restored; how people are helped to get back on the path of self-development; how people view peacebuilding efforts, especially in terms of transparency, accountability and justice; and how the people involved in the delivery of peace programs adjudge ECOWAS's peacebuilding efforts, particularly in northern Nigeria.

An important indicator of ECOWAS's achievements in its peacebuilding effort should be in the affected communities' appraisal of justice and truth in handling the Boko Haram's violence. Several efforts to rehabilitate and resettle communities affected by the violence are often fraught with repeated attacks by terrorists. On numerous occasions, the Nigerian government claimed that areas previously attacked by Boko Haram insurgents are now safe for the displaced population to return to because the terrorists have been eliminated. This claim has been retold by the federal government in different forums that Boko haram has been 'technically defeated' (Brechenmacher, 2019). Yet many of the said communities continue to experience bloody attacks and mass abductions from the Boko Haram group. Aminu is one of the research participants from Dapchi who is now one of the displaced victims at the IDP camps, explains this dichotomy as follows:

AMINU: Since we were chased out from our communities, whatever we hear now is based on rumors. But two months ago, some soldiers came to tell us that it is now safe to return to our community. We have no means of verifying such information. Some of our brothers went back because they wanted to farm for the season and there is no land to farm here at the camp. Unfortunately, those that went came back and told us terrible stories that our community was attacked again.

I never encountered an ECOWAS peace mission or anything like that. All that I may have to say about ECOWAS and efforts in our community and others ravaged by Boko Haram was said to me by some of our people who accessed the internet. They read about ECOWAS doing this or that, about Cameroonian or Chad soldiers coming in to help with the crises.

At some point in President Buhari's administration, Nigeria's military headquarters was temporarily relocated to Borno State, which is the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency. Rather than ameliorating the situation, it exasperated it instead. Consequently, it became clear to local people that conflict areas remained unsafe for the resettlement of people and there were no meaningful socio-economic opportunities

available to them on their return to their villages and towns. This was a major setback in the Nigerian government and ECOWAS's efforts to end the insurgency by using an effective counterterrorism strategy.

There is a perception among some of the participants that ECOWAS is not effective because local people who live in affected communities believe that it has hardly had any impact on the ground. ECOWAS's bureaucratic style in the wake of violent conflict within the West Africa region was evaluated poorly by some of my interviewees. For example, a councillor at the Abuja Municipal Area Council who works closely with the agency in charge of managing the IDP camps shared some insight about how ECOWAS, and other partner agencies are evaluated. Following a discussion with this councillor who also doubles as a community leader, John noted the following in his story:

JOHN: We can only talk based on what the organizations do for us in times of crisis. Honestly, I am not aware of ECOWAS's work at Gworza. Although we have seen some other organizations come here to talk to our people and they are mostly foreign NGOs, but I don't know their names. They provide medicine and try to interview some of our people.

These foreign organizations are trying, but we also see them coming with big cars, so we see them as rich and we are thinking maybe they are benefiting from the crises. At my office level, we have been having several meetings with the IDPs and we mostly see faith-based organizations – Churches every week with food items, and other relief materials to cater to the needs of the IDPs.

There seems to be a disconnect between communities and ECOWAS's work. Some participants have the impression that organizations are doing so much but little is seen across communities. Some of the organizations have blamed this impression on a media bias toward them. Arinze works with Action Aid. He stressed that the negative perception people hold of ECOWAS's work being done in conflict-affected communities may be due to media bias.

ARINZE: Action Aid is involved in delivering a plethora of services across Nigeria. With the insurgency situation in the north, we are involved in education for the youth and tackling poverty in several ways. Specifically, I am involved in a project that is supporting and encouraging girls to go back to school. Everyone is living in fear due to the frequent incidences of abduction by the Boko Haram group

I am glad that someone is interested or asking what we do because often we make huge sacrifices and put nothing out there for the world to see. Some of our staff were abducted and killed by Boko Haram last year and this has been ongoing, yet we haven't quit the fields in the north.

ECOWAS is also involved although I may not be able to speak in specific terms.... One thing I like to add is that you must be mindful of the media. The Nigeria government likes to take credit for the work that most of the international actors do on the ground. So, I will not be surprised if you go out there and the media tells you something different.

Arinze highlights the role of the media in shaping local people's perceptions. This is, especially pertinent in the age of social media and the rise of the fake news phenomenon. The media's role in influencing people's perceptions cannot be overemphasized. There have been several conflicting reports by Nigerian state-controlled media and the free press about Boko Haram's activities. Some of the participants revealed that the military cannot be trusted to report its true casualty rate suffered at the hands of Boko Haram in these dangerous conflict zones. Moreover, the media does not report authentic and accurate facts about the military and its actions either. In fact, a WANEP participant acknowledged the role of the media and challenged its accuracy in reporting about the Nigerian military. This is what Mathias had to say on the issue:

MATHIAS: The reports from the media are sometimes distorted and I will tell you why from my experience. In Jos, Plateau State, where there has been relative peace for some time now, the media cannot go there. WANEP was involved in a dialogue in Jos and we wanted media coverage and found none. So WANEP did some reporting and published it. The approach was shared with other countries, and I have organized some training using my experience from the dialogue workshop.

There has been relative peace after the dialogue, WANEP has yet gone back to the stakeholders for feedback. However, the media never

reported the peace that followed our intervention program in Jos. Instead, what was seen in the media was that there are killings in Jos, creating the impression that our dialogue framework didn't get the desired results. Bad news they say sells, but I can tell you that a lot of progress was made in Jos.

Further, to the return to peaceful livelihood for victims of the Boko Haram attacks, the Nigerian government seems more committed to pursuing other political issues like eradicating corruption in government, strengthening the national economy through diversifying and huge military budget to defeat Boko Haram than it has shown to the dire needs for victims of the conflict in northern Nigeria who are in very desperate conditions. I saw firsthand the living condition of some of the participants, and was taken aback by their condition of living at the IDP camps. It was nothing close to normal as the camps had very little supplies necessary to meet the residents' needs including clothing, food, housing, power, and water. Rather than getting help entirely from the government, participants tend to see more help coming from Faith-based and Civil Society organizations. The efforts to provide charitable donations are also inadequate given the increasing needs of the people. Every passing day increases the likelihood that some catastrophic event like the COVID 19 epidemic would rage through the camps given the poor sanitation. Zara is a resident of the Lugbe IDP camp. Her reflections are typical of the accounts of most survivors of Boko Haram violence. Zara recounted it as follows:

ZARA: As you can see, our real community now is no longer in existence per se, because our places have been taken over by Boko Haram. We have merely found ourselves in another people's community, which we have made our own now. The fact, however, is that we have not seen any improvement in our conditions of living so far, apart from the water they sometimes bring for us, or sometimes some bags of rice or corn brought by some churches. Apart from this, we have not seen much improvement in other areas.

People feel very frustrated. Some of these camp residents came from very comfortable backgrounds and their lives have now become shadows of their past which increases their frustration. Other camp residents are embittered because they have now become prisoners in their territory. There is rising anxiety among the IDP camp dwellers and a large number are showing signs of depression as tensions escalate over the scarce supply of resources within the IDP camps.

Both at Lugbe and Waru IDP camps in Abuja where I met with survivors of Boko Haram insurgency, the participants' perceptions of ECOWAS's peacebuilding efforts are not very positive. Many of the participants say they know nothing about ECOWAS and its peacebuilding efforts. Some of the participants communicated that the IDP camp dwellers feel abandoned and neglected because of their plight. The participants do not hold the external international organizations responsible for the poor support they are receiving, however, they consider the Nigerian government's effort to be lax and poor. They see the Nigerian political system's corruption as the key stumbling block in preventing terrorism and in nurturing effective peacebuilding. Omeiza is a senior university lecturer from Nasarawa State, he stressed the impact of corruption on the fight against Boko Haram's terror in this way:

OMEIZA: Corruption is the actual terror in Nigeria's terrorism crises. It is corruption that led to the deterioration in northern Nigeria and it is corruption that is sustaining it. Why should I even want to blame ECOWAS or other international agencies when in fact the government at home has been abash and insensitive. Foreign organizations have good intentions for us because they come in with their resources and sometimes manpower but unfortunately, our government has not been complementing their efforts.

Don't forget that ECOWAS recorded success in Liberia and Sierra Leone because of the contributions from Nigeria. Then we had a seemingly professional armed force. Today corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian armed forces and has undermined the peace effort in northern Nigeria through the theft of our defense appropriations, the creation of fake defense contracts,

and the absence of logistical supports for the rank and file soldiers on the frontline to fight against Boko Haram.

The participants blame the Nigerian government for the anarchic political situation in northern Nigeria because it is the principal actor in the conflict. ECOWAS is like a lame duck because it cannot hold the Nigerian government accountable in its response to the situation. Some of the participants noted that some government officials and military officers have been complicit in the crisis. ECOWAS has failed to institutionalize investigations to establish the truth about these allegations or to repudiate them outright. These participants revealed that ECOWAS would redeem its tarnished image in the eyes of local everyday Nigerians if it sanctioned the government over issues of corruption or inaction towards its citizenry.

The participants also communicated that ECOWAS could mobilize its funds for the fight against Boko Haram terrorism in the Sahel region and position itself as a real peace partner with the Nigerian government and the AU that would gain local support from the people. Consequently, external powerful actors could entrust it with resources to implement peacebuilding and security programs on their behalf. It remains to be seen if ECOWAS will live up to its strategic role in the fight against Boko Haram. For example, Arinze expressed the following in his story:

ARINZE: The collective security agreement between ECOWAS member states, should give it the institutional impetus to compel good governance. I mean, it is easier for ECOWAS to mandate Nigeria than any other international partners to address some of the underlying issues we see on the ground in northern Nigeria that could enhance violent extremism.

When member state governments are toppled through extra-constitutional means as we have seen in the Gambia and Mali, ECOWAS has been very quick to intervene or issue through sanctions. That level of energy is needed to compel good governance. Some donor countries will be willing to assist ECOWAS with financial and technical support if they saw a real commitment to peacebuilding in the region.

The participants noted that the war against Boko Haram terrorism necessitates a collective effort by all of the partners. So far the concerted efforts against Boko Haram were made with minimal successes. ECOWAS is an important stakeholder in the fight to stem the terrorism crisis in northern Nigeria and across West Africa. ECOWAS normally has the dual mandate to play both an active and supervisory role in the struggle against terrorism. However, some participants point out that ECOWAS has failed, and it is negligent in that regard. For example, Amina, a Senior Program Officer with the Participation Initiative for Behavioural Change in Development (PIBCID) in Kogi State posited that ECOWAS is expected to draw up a crisis strategy with the Nigerian government to take on and defeat Boko Haram, and it has failed to do so.

AMINA: When it comes to protocols and policy documents, ECOWAS cannot be found wanting. But the situation of terrorism in northern Nigeria and some West African countries needs a tough response from the regional body. I think that ECOWAS has done very well in both its conflict prevention and counterterrorism strategy for West Africa. However, with the level of deterioration in communities, those documents are as good as the difference between theory and practice.

A coordinated regional plan of action does not exist, or it is ineffective due to the escalation of violent conflict in West Africa. In the current complex dynamic, therefore, other actors such as CSOs, NGOs, and INGOs such as the Action Aid, MSF, ICRC, and a host of others that have different capacities are approaching the situation randomly and with much trepidation in trying to address the crisis by providing aid and humanitarian aid to survivors of Boko Haram violence. Their support is uncoordinated, and it has had little impact on the ground. ECOWAS is a primary non-state actor that could coordinate all of these support tracks into a strategic security and peacebuilding plan.

Further, some of the participants recounted that ECOWAS should act as an arbitrator or mediator with regards to truth and justice issues that are part and parcel of the terrorism crisis, especially as there is little confidence in the Nigerian government. The peaceful restoration of relationships must resonate with the local people. Some of my participants shared their notion of justice and what peace truly means to them with me. This is what Jamil had to say on the issue:

JAMIL: Normally, in our community, we believed in resolving issues communally and that includes having understanding among ourselves. We are not used to the police or court system in the event of a conflict. We believed in the round-table discussion where we can talk eyeball to eyeball and resolve conflict among ourselves. So, people believe more in traditional methods of resolving conflicts.

Consequently, disputants would go to their local chief in northern Nigeria, popularly known as the *Maiangwa*, rather than rely on the local government or law enforcement agency to resolve their conflicts. The local chiefs then resolve the issues through mediation using local languages and traditional knowledge, and wisdom. These indigenous peacebuilding methods are used to address family-related disputes within the communities. Land conflicts and the war on Boko Haram terror go through the law enforcement system yet there seems to be no real lasting peace insight (see Nwosile, 2005, p. 159). The terrorism dynamics are different, and so some of my participants claimed that even when they find young people joining Boko Haram, they are afraid of reporting them to law enforcement out of fear of being labeled terrorists themselves.

Most cases that are reported to the traditional rulers most often are not forwarded to the law authorities. For example, the *Maiangwa* see themselves as custodians of tradition, and they are not inclined to report cases to the government

as they would have betrayed the people, while the law enforcement agents on the other hand treat anyone who does not report useful information to them as an accomplice. Local people have lost trust in the government and they rely more on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve their disputes (Ajayi & Buhari, 2014). Many of my participants noted, quite resoundingly, the negative impression that they have about the government's involvement in addressing Boko Haram's terror campaign. Asmau had the following to say on the issue:

ASMAU: There are claims that some governors and top politicians are the ones sponsoring Boko Haram. Yet not one arrest has been made in that regard. We feel strongly about the allegation because the Boko Haram we see around us cannot afford the weapons they use without sponsors.

Since the government has failed to make these arrests, I think ECOWAS can help... But we don't know where their office is. When we see something strange in our community, we tell the police but most times they can do anything until there is a call from Abuja. We all live in fear. Also, we heard on the radio that they have established a ministry to cater to us and officials came here to promise we would be returned to our community soon. This same government is now proposing to forgive Boko Haram members in the name of amnesty. How can trust them? Instead of trusting the government, we should try ECOWAS.

In ethnoreligious conflicts, any wrongdoings must be investigated and must not be politicized. Independent investigations are important because the Nigerian government cannot be trusted to judge a case impartially. Those individuals alleged to have been involved with Boko Haram must be fairly investigated and quickly brought to justice if they are found to be guilty in order to restore local people's confidence in the government's credibility. Garba, a senior officer at the Borno State Emergency Agency expressed the view that the government must earn the trust of the people in Africa. He articulated the following in his story about the insurgency in northern Nigeria:

GARBA: I believe the government is doing a lot but needs to do more in northern Nigeria. The people do not know about the workings of ECOWAS at the community level, so their only hope for justice, fairness, and peace in the northeast and Nigeria at large is the federal and state government. To evolve an equitable system that is just to everybody irrespective of status, the government must name and prosecute big names involved in sponsoring the Boko Haram terrorism.

This was why Goodluck Jonathan was voted out of office. He kept telling the people that the sponsors of Boko Haram are invisible. The saying that “charity begins at home” has to be at play in the case of ECOWAS involvement. So, for ECOWAS to intervene it needs to gauge the posture of the Nigerian government carefully. There has been a recommendation to the government from the ECOWAS secretariat on counterterrorism. But you see some of these things might not be in the public domain.

Also, Tony who works for the ICRC recognized that in addition to what his organization is doing in providing humanitarian services, Nigeria needs to be seen to honor its commitment to relevant norms, especially international humanitarian laws. He reported this issue in the following manner:

TONY: The more Nigeria is seen to respect relevant laws, the more we can have peace in the conflict regions where we intervene. From my work with the ICRC, one of our core values is to respect laws and to me, I can say that this approach is working. For example, when you have soldiers that disregard the rule of law, humanitarian law, human rights law, they encourage a circle of violence. I have seen a lot of communities before in which the military came from this direction, and the people start running towards the other direction.

The people are running along with the opposition armed groups in the same direction and soldiers get the feeling like these people are not cooperating with them.... The soldiers make little effort to distinguish between innocent civilians and the armed group in their operations. When they cannot identify who is who, they treat everyone as a terrorist and that in effect is a violation of humanitarian law in armed conflict. In addition to ECOWAS implementing some programs in communities, it is the closest organization that can call Nigeria to order in regard to the military activities in the conflict region.

The military must be re-educated and reminded of its responsibility to abide by the rules of war. Their procedures during combat would also cause less conflict and radicalization of young people. Some NGOs are pushing the military to

respect the rule of law. Tony from the ICRC goes further, and he reported on this issue as follows:

TONY: The ICRC together with other not-for-profit organizations working in the northern Nigeria region have enjoyed the cooperation of the locals. Although we are here to help them, if they are hostile to us, it would make our work difficult. These locals are scared of the military because of how they are treated.

So, I tell you firsthand that the agencies trying to abide by the law are now winning the hearts and minds of the civilians. There is more cooperation from the people in the communities as opposed to what we first came. ECOWAS should be involved in monitoring what goes on here. That way the people can recognize their effort in fostering peace and reconciliation.

Another critical challenge in the fight against insurgency is that the government is not doing enough to punish offenders. There have been numerous past Commissions of Enquires set up to investigate conflicts. A white paper was issued, and the government promised to publish the perpetrator's names, yet it never did, and those people were never prosecuted. This corrupt political system that allows the perpetrators of violence to go unpunished incentivize others to cause more harm and destruction, and certainly does not give local people any reason to believe the government. Additionally, ECOWAS silence on this also does not tell the people that both the government and ECOWAS want to end the violence.

6.3 Nigeria's role in preventing the escalation of the terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria

The countries that host the highest number of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa are DR Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Nigeria (see Lopez-Lucia, 2020). These countries did not just wake up to find themselves in troubled waters with civil strife on their doorsteps, rather over time corruption, neglect, and

decadence crept into the polity and the society. The government provides for people's security and plays a key role in making the country safe against natural disasters like famine or unnatural disasters like terrorism. Nigeria is a Global South country, which is still in the process of addressing problems such as basic infrastructure, facilities, and human security. Humanitarian crises in Africa are escalated by intercommunal, ethnoreligious, and tribal clashes. As the crisis in northern Nigeria escalates and spreads, people migrate from crisis-prone rural areas to towns to cities to seek refuge that increases the population and overstretches social services in cities like Abuja, Maiduguri, Kaduna, and Yola that creates humanitarian needs. For example, Garba, from the Borno State Emergency Agency disclosed the following in his story:

GARBA: The challenge for many states like Kaduna, Kogi, Niger and Nasarawa is that they (their citizens) now have to cope with either opening their homes to the displaced population or having their state government set up IDP camps from an overstretched budget. The displaced persons are mostly from the northeast and initially, there were running to their various state capital, but even the state capitals are being attacked, so the survivors seek refuge in other states.

I was assigned from Maiduguri to Kaduna because we have a lot of our people here. Most of the state governors are battling with paying their civil servants' salaries and embarking on projects. So, inheriting refugees is the least on their agenda and there isn't much they can do to help. Therefore, the federal government through NEMA is keeping track of IDP camps scattered all over northern Nigeria as we're helping to provide them with their basic needs.

Social welfare, security, and rehabilitation are some of the key problems faced by refugees living in IDP camps that necessitated their migration (Okorie et al., 2020). The escalation of Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria and neighboring countries creates risks concerning the displacement and movement of persons who become collateral damage in the process. Consequently, a multilateral and multilevel intervention approach is needed in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency. Nigeria is

one of the state actors' within this conflict and it holds the primary responsibility of preventing, managing, and de-escalating Boko Haram's acts of terrorism in and around its borders. For example, Garba put it this way:

GARBA: It is very disappointing to even see that Nigerians are displaced in their country, when in the past, Cameroonians fleeing violence were coming to seek refuge in Nigeria. What happened to the giant leader? I recall Benue state and Cross Rivers state used to play host to the refugees then. That tells you how things have deteriorated in this country.

Nigeria with support from other ECOWAS member states and the UNHCR provided better shelter, security, and access to essential services for survivors of violent conflict from other neighboring countries. Today, Nigeria needs similar support in Nigeria, but we must put our house in order first. You don't expect any external actor to take the government seriously with the series of corruption allegations that are tied to the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency.

Nigeria is supposed to provide law and order to ensure people's peace and security. The Nigerian federal government's critical duty is to secure the lives, property, and key interests of people within its territory. However, Boko Haram's campaign of terrorism has challenged the federal government on the catastrophe in northern Nigeria getting to the brink of a breaking point and bringing into question whether the country will survive the onslaught and those of other potential insurrections in other regions of Nigeria. Under the current political administration, the Nigerian state appears to be overpowered by Boko Haram, to the extent that the insurgent group has made territorial claims to some local governments in the northeast and having aspirations to redraw the map of Nigeria as well as extend Islamic rule across the country.

The view of some of my participants is that there are no legitimate security personnel safeguarding the country. Suleiman who was a former resident of Maiduguri shared his thought with me about the challenges of the security forces.

SULEIMAN: The security forces are not fully engaged in combating crime and stopping criminality. Let me give you an example. We have IDP camps all over Maiduguri, even in the local government areas, but there is hardly

security personnel around to protect the victim. Shouldn't these victims feel secure at the camps?

How can a country almost hitting two hundred million population fail to boast of having five million security personnel? In the northeast alone if we exclude Gombe, Bauchi, and some parts of Taraba state, the rest have huge security challenges, yet the presence of the military and other security personnel is so scanty.

The dire security situation in northern Nigeria has caused the people to think about community policing because it can ensure that communities feel safer, secure, and peaceful as the communities work closely with the community police towards shared goals (see Segrave & Ratcliff, 2004). Community policing provides a myriad of benefits for communities as they face heightened criminal activities across the country. For example, local communities and local law enforcement created the 'Hisbah corps' in the north and the 'Amotekun corp' in the southwest amidst the ongoing debates about establishing local community police units across the country, the facts on the ground suggest that there is an obvious shortage in community police officers to address the security challenges emanating from Boko Haram. Similarly, some of my participants held the view that if the Nigerian government wants to end the violence, then it needs to invite the community leaders and religious stakeholders to a meeting with the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior and Work to discuss a way forward. For example, Muazu had the following to say on the issue:

MUAZU: Using the military to fight Boko Haram may work to some extent. But if the government wants to pursue peace, it must work closely with our traditional rulers. The traditional rulers are revered and more importantly, they know what is going on in the community. This is about intelligence gathering and not just making multiple arrests. Many of our brothers are in custody, yet the violence hasn't stopped. That should tell the government something.

Some people are calling for the removal of the service chiefs. While I do not see anything wrong in changing services chiefs to get better results, it will be an exercise in futility if the newly appointed military chiefs refuse to work collaboratively with the local community and traditional leaders. Change in strategy is what is needed.

Given the Nigerian military's perceived ineffectiveness, there are calls for the government and the country's security service chiefs to resign because they have failed to quell the upsurge in terrorism in northern Nigeria. Consequently, the Nigerian governments have come under increasing pressure to be seen to be supporting local community initiatives to provide security for their local populations. The prevailing security situation in Nigeria has exposed the government's impotence in tackling Boko Haram's atrocities committed against innocent civilians. For example, Tanko is an internally displaced civilian and a farmer from Gwoza in Borno state. He described the negative turn of events in the following way:

TANKO: Boko Haram destroyed my farm and my family... When they took over our village 9 years ago, I ran away and left everything behind. I was at El Miskin extension camp for three years before moving to Waru camp here in Abuja. The land here is good for farming better than where I came from, but it is difficult to secure land. Our son was killed, and our 16-year-old daughter was taken away. When the incident occurred, my wife and I were terrorized and in shock, but had to walk for 14 hours to get to the camp.

Life in Gwoza as a farmer was good for me and my family before the attack. We (farmers) struggle to find arable land and herders cannot get lands for their animals to feed on. Many years ago, our animals (cows) go into people's farms, but we always settle because the cow dung was used to fertilize their farms. At that time inorganic fertilizer is not a common thing. Today that synergy is lost; what used to be a symbiotic way of living is now the cause of violent conflict.

Tanko's narratives show the deterioration in inter-communal relationships and what is more disturbing is that the federal government does not seem to understand the nature of the Boko Haram insurgency or how to go about dealing with the resultant violence. The government at both the federal and state levels has not yet determined whether Boko Haram is an ethnic, religious, political, or an economic issue to devise appropriate peacebuilding and counterterrorism strategy. This exposes the governments to be weak, and fundamentally incapable of tackling the ruthless Boko Haram terrorists. The buck stops with the federal government in finding a lasting solution to the insecurity in the region, which has made life so miserable for the civilians, and which threatens the territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. The federal government's

understanding of the fundamental causes of the crisis must seek paths to peace and progress. For example, a participant described traditional peacemaking using the Hausa/Fulani way of communal living. Kyola recounted the following in her story:

KYOLA: In our (Hausa) community we lived peacefully with the Fulanis but all that was expected for conflict to arise was for a Hausa farmer to come out and say his farm was encroached by cattle owned by the Fulani and that his farm produce has been destroyed. Immediately such reports are made, the leaders from the Hausa community will summon the leader from the Fulani community. Both leaders will bring Mr. A (from the Hausa community) and Mr. B (from the Fulani community) together and the damage done is assessed.

Often, the dispute is resolved by replacing what was lost. The leader will typically say what has been lost cannot be replaced but the suffering can be alleviated. Mr. A is asked what he is willing to take, and Mr. B is asked what he is willing to give as compensation. The compensation is mutually agreed and that settles the traditional conflict resolution process.

The federal and state governments have been primarily responsible for peacebuilding activities in the ongoing conflict, it would seem plausible to advancing indigenous peacebuilding measures to prevent the escalation of violence in local communities. Ignoring or discarding alternative conflict resolution systems is counterproductive because they emanate from local cultures and are the peaceful mechanism that communities have used for centuries to resolve their differences. These time-tested systems must be preserved and used to transform relationships. Before the arrival of the British colonialists, northern Nigeria had its system of governance and conflict resolution. This explains why in northern Nigeria today one can find the Emir's palace together with a mosque and then a prison. This is a well thought out system of administration where the palace of the emir serves as an administrative center, the mosque serves as the court and a place of worship. The mosque where the *alkali* (judges) sit used to be the lower the court, then the Emir's palace was the highest court and there were prisons where the court sent the offenders. If one was sentenced to jail, then that individual was taken right away to the prison. This means that there still exists

a system of administration, a system of conflict prevention and resolution just as one would find in a normal court. Consequently, to successfully prevent conflict in northern Nigeria, it means incorporating traditional and appropriate conflict resolution processes into current peacebuilding practices and efforts. There should be a middle ground for people on the fringes of society to access justice in ways that culturally resonate with them. For example, Muazu noted that

Growing up in northern Nigeria, we never saw our parents use the court system or settle disputes through the police. Conflicts such as interreligious, ethnic, or even cases of divorce were resolved communally. While I think the traditional system is potent, our times have changed. People now approach the courts over land disputes and that is the 21st-century reality. So, with regards to Boko Haram, I think a lot of the religious animosities could have been nipped in the bud before it became a large-scale violent conflict. Now it is too late for our traditional leaders to intervene.

Boko Haram does not have regard for anybody. However, I must say that northern Nigeria has a good resource for conflict resolution and prevention in the traditional institution. Muslims look up to the Sultan of Sokoto for the sighting of the moon in the month of Ramadan. Also, if you look at the literacy level of the people, they are more likely to submit themselves to the local chiefs or elders than with formal institutions.

People must be communicated to in their local languages to engage with them, and this also adds to the overall peacebuilding structure. The language of those that are beneficiaries is crucial because if they are not communicated to in the language that they understand then peace efforts cannot be effective because they cannot be engaged in the process as participants/beneficiaries, rather more problems will be created because of their exclusion. In northern Nigeria, the language of the transaction is Hausa and non-Hausa people also use it. For example, in Nupe speaking areas, Hausa is used to communicate between Nupe and other ethnic groups. Similarly, Hausa is also spoken in the Gbagyi, Fulfude, and Berom speaking areas as well as the local languages. Community stakeholders have a great responsibility to look after their communities, which lies in contrast to the state's limitations to fully grasp the significance of culture

and language in peacebuilding. So, the community stakeholders must come together to work and define their peace and determine how they might work with other communities in terms of providing intercommunal conflict preventive mechanisms to address local conflicts. Although they have been doing so, they need to strengthen and evolve their indigenous peacebuilding traditions and processes.

Local communities are using local government's peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms, which have not been very efficient. Local stakeholders need to come together and work out their community peace structures. Through intergroup dialogue, they can work out how they relate within their communities as well as across their neighboring communities while the state system can also build on these informal kinds of structures. These conflict resolution and peacebuilding structures are very important in building authentic peace in the various communities, yet the reality is that the community level is looking to the government to perform these roles. Unfortunately, the federal and state governments have little security apparatuses at the grassroots level and the community's residents seem to agree that working together is the only practical way to fill the security power vacuum. Some of my participants described what working together looks like in their communities. Bashir articulated the following in his story:

BASHIR: Due to the incidence of violence around us, we lived in fear and got tired of complaining because the criminals keep exploiting the security vacuum in our community. So, we devised a vigilante system and then gave them arms (not guns) to guard the community.

The problem is that most of the criminals understand the communities and know the divisive nature of the communities, i.e. religious, commercial, or ethnic and they go through those fault lines to perpetuate their crime. The vigilante system is not backed by law. But I can tell you that it has made some progress because the vigilantes speak the same language and have shared common goals.

The situation in northern Nigeria is that some of the criminals are insiders with firsthand knowledge of local communities. Their approach is to wreak havoc and continue to

light sparks along the religion fault line to stir up conflict so that they can intervene to resolve it with violence. The Nigerian federal government has continued to turn a deaf ear to the people's outcry for help, often the government blame the communities for being complacent in allowing the violence to happen in the first place., The Nigerian President showed zero empathy for the survivors of the 2020 massacre of people in Borno by Boko Haram. Also, the President blamed the people living in the community in the town of Auno for being responsible for the Boko Haram attack perpetrated on them. President Buhari was quoted to have said in a premium times publication that "this Boko Haram or whoever they are, cannot come up to Maiduguri or its environs to attack without local leadership knowing" (Haruna, 2020). While the President and the government blame the ordinary people for their tragedies and do absolutely nothing to alleviate their suffering then the people have no choice but to fend for themselves. An ECOWAS employee situated other violent crimes across the country with a similar spectrum of faultfinding, blaming, and shaming. Mariam reflected on this situation in the following manner:

MARIAM: The Boko Haram insurgency started as a blame game between Christian and Muslims. Whenever there was a massacre the Christian will blame the Muslims for attempting to Islamise Nigeria. The same thing is playing out in the farmer-herder crisis. It is a typical example of the blame game doing on between communities and the government. The state has not been able to capture perpetrators of the herder conflict because they don't agree with the narrative of the victims.

The people's narrative has been that they are constantly under attack by the Fulani herdsmen. Now, the blame period should serve as an early warning for the stakeholders of peace, because while the blame game between the government and the people is going on, the criminal elements; fifth columnists are taking advantage; they are winning. We hope that they don't win for too long. We need to put our thinking cap right and then do the right thing for the people.

Most of the factors that trigger conflicts in Nigerian society seem to have to do with governance structures. The participants' accounts about governance in the

northern part of the country reveal some enduring factors that have allowed extremism to thrive in the region. Other participant narratives indicate that religious extremism cannot be suppressed by the state. Even if the military succeeds in crushing Boko Haram unless the underlying issues that led to the group's violent formation are addressed, the success is temporary, and a more deadly violent extremist group is likely to emerge. These participants indicated that people are disenchanting and hungry, and most people cannot afford quality healthcare or primary education. The government will most probably militarily overpower the Boko Haram insurgency, yet the victory will be irrelevant if the root economic and social causes of the conflict are not addressed. Roads, schools, and hospitals need to be rebuilt as well as decommissioning people's mindsets so that the state must find ways to build real and sustainable peace that includes local people in the decision-making processes. Accordingly Kashim notes:

Imagine that the monies used in buying all the sophisticated military hardware to crush the Boko Haram group were used in infrastructural development. When a state of emergency was declared in Borno and Adamawa, no meaningful change happened because it was a militarized response. While Military involvement has its benefits, I think people's mindset needs to be changed as well.

In northern Nigeria, a reform program will go a long way because these fighters are stuck in what the former emir of Kano calls "16th-century Islamic ideology." They think that warfare in the name of Islam and they are killing in the name of *Allah*. So, government reform programs that cut across the religious divides is imperative because there are also Christians who think all Muslims are terrorists. This mindset is problematic and is psychological, hence cannot be addressed by the use of military combatants or regional troops.

Above all else, preventing the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency and its spillover into other countries is critical in addressing some of the underlying issues that my participants have raised in their interviews. The participants continue to raise the point that humanitarian services have helped to ameliorate their suffering after the attacks. They note that several humanitarian aid organizations help to alleviate the

crisis symptoms yet they agree that dealing with the root causes of the conflict in the north remains the job of Nigeria's government, and it can no longer neglect what is happening in the grassroots. Both the federal and state governments must draw up plans to fill the service delivery gaps that exist when these humanitarian aid organizations leave the area. In the opinion of Oche:

Even when the government attempts to embark on reconciliatory programs, it is often limited to the big cities or state capitals. Normally only the leaders are mobilized to travel to the big cities. At the end of the day, the people are not carried along in those meetings and programs.

The UNHCR hosted on its website that around two million people have been displaced in Nigeria's northeast and the humanitarian situation grows worse by the day (UNHCR). In 2019 the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that about US\$1.6 billion is needed to ease people's hunger and to provide them shelter and healthcare so that local communities can rebuild their livelihoods (Olojo, 2019). The situation remains urgent and several humanitarian aid organizations are helping to address the local community's difficult situation as well as those people living within IDP's camps. The present conflict dynamics offer a sense of the potential challenges that await communities over the coming years.

Since 2018, Maiduguri has hosted several NGOs involved in humanitarian work there at the grassroots and some of the participants indicate that state authorities have challenged some of these organizations over accountability and registration issues with their supervisory agencies. In addition, staff employed by several of these NGOs has secured house rental contracts for the next several years that indicates that the Boko Haram crisis might be around for some time. The Nigerian government should also pay attention to the socio-economic effects that are direct consequences of the humanitarian

aid to the region. For example, some government employees have left their civil service positions because of the attractive salaries offered by various NGOs. Business has never been better for Borno's local entrepreneurs as hotels, business centers, and restaurants are thriving due to the patronage of NGO workers. For example, Joyce averred that:

The Boko Haram crisis has come with some bad for many and good for a few. Some businesses are thriving amid the violence especially those businesses servicing the foreign humanitarian aid workers. Some people cannot leave despite the violence because they are experiencing a boom in their businesses now than it ever was.

We did not have as many foreign aid workers in Borno before Boko Haram violence began and now that we do seem them, it is an opportunity for some people to make money. The aid workers appear rich when they come to us in big vehicles (jeep) and this has made our people think that perhaps they could be making money from our misfortune.

Some of my interviewees reported that local transport workers' salaries have also improved as they ferry humanitarian aid workers around Maiduguri. Some of these drivers are now earning double or triple their salaries through short term contracts with humanitarian aid workers. This is an artificial situation because, in the post violence context, the state institutions and local economies might not be able to cope with the rising expectations in the local economy. The participants also complain about the hike in food prices and apartment rent.

Proactive policymaking is needed to reinforce the state's capacity to address societal challenges once the humanitarian aid organizations eventually leave the region. The local economy will have to deal with the consequences as the NGOs move out of the environment for other assignments. Both the federal and state governments need to be proactive in implementing a framework and action plan that engages with and builds resilience among local communities. To prevent and counter Boko Haram's violent extremism and recruitment of the youth in the wake of an economic collapse, the

Nigerian government also needs to include the youth in the decision-making process and strengthen its security plan with neighboring countries in the Lake Chad region due to Boko Haram's transnational terrorist activities. For example, Liman articulated the following in his story:

LIMAN: Even if we succeed in curtailing our immediate community, there is also the problem with our border we also need to think about the neighboring community. Our borders are very porous, and this is why having ECOWAS on board is such a good idea. Nigeria started off controlling the importation of food from Benin and Togo, but here in the north there is no such control, yet we keep hearing that some of the violence is caused by non-Nigerians from our neighbors in Niger and Mali.

The Nigerian government has to take action to check the ease of movement from within the ECOWAS member states. The alleged government corruption also extends to how Nigeria immigration and custom officials who monitor the borders of Nigeria. Free movement within the sub-region has heightened Nigeria's security risk due to the clandestine importation of weapons. Both the federal and state governments in addition to ensuring the strict movement of persons across the border in northern Nigeria should equally cater to the human security of local people beyond the conflict's life cycle. The post-conflict reconstruction in northern Nigeria must include the delivery of humanitarian aid and designed to address some of the root causes of the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency.

6.4 Contributions from nonstate actors

The Nigerian government, regional and international governments, and non-state armed groups have responded militarily to the crisis that killed off several Boko Haram's combatants over the years as well as innocent civilians caught up in the government's counterinsurgency operations. Boko Haram remains undefeated at both

the operational and recruitment levels. In the wake of this violence, local communities appreciate the security forces' efforts in protecting them. My participants note that although the government's militarized approach is deployed towards eliminating Boko Haram. Nevertheless, they have continued to live in fear of not just Boko Haram but also the soldiers deployed to protect them. The local people remain angry and frustrated with the federal government's overall response due to the ongoing threat civilians face, and its lack of using alternative peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes to address the insecurity. For example, Shehu from the Lugbe IDP camp articulated the following in his story:

SHEHU: If the military was doing its job professionally, they would seek our cooperation and there would have been many avoidable deaths of innocent civilians in our community. The military is trying its best to eliminate Boko Haram, but they are often too angry and, in some instances, have killed innocent people claiming them to be members of Boko Haram. When they hear of an attack in any community, they go there and just open fire on everyone, especially the young men. Even when they don't kill innocent people, they arrest innocent people arbitrarily, and we cannot challenge them for fear of what they might do to us.

Most of the state's reactionary interventions by public or private stakeholders are counterproductive or at best managing, rather than resolving the conflict and promoting peace. NGOs have invested many resources and have played key roles in preventing the escalation of the violent conflict gripping northern Nigeria because they are flexible and creative in addressing this traumatic situation, and in successfully mediating intergroup conflicts at various levels of the conflict. For example, the Kukah Foundation is combatting insurgency in the region through dialogue with faith-based organizations to preach love and peaceful coexistence among the Christians and the Muslims. The Foundation is also in touch with the federal government to provide feedback on some of the discussions held with relevant community stakeholders. For

instance, Peter expresses why he thinks their role as non-state actors is important in his narrative:

PETER: Our role is critical because sadly the state actor has focused mostly on a military solution, and this may be because of the military mindset of those in the position of authority. Unfortunately, these responses show that we have lost the human side of the conflict, and because it has become a military operation, this has thrown up so many other distortions that go with these conflicts, corruption, interagency rivalries, sabotage, counter penetration of the security forces, treachery and so on.

How many times have we had the Boko Haram getting information about movements of the military of planned attacks? Military operations have often left bitterness as innocent citizens are often collateral damage and are also victims of both the military and the insurgents, who both often charge innocent communities with treachery or collaboration with either side.

Boko Haram targets and recruits schoolchildren into the group's violent activities. Consequently, the Kukah Foundation is countering the recruitment of young people across northern Nigeria focusing on primary schoolchildren. My participant from the Kukah Foundation revealed that his organization is working closely with a company from Spain called Provocateur (For the Future in Spanish) to do so. Peter disclosed that education for the future hopes to digitalize primary education in northern Nigeria. He narrated the following in his story:

PETER: The foundation in partnership with Provocateur to building computer labs, equipping them with computers, training champions, and then allowing children in these schools to have access and get trained. The contract was signed between Provocateur, the 19 northern states' governors, and the Catholic Bishops' Conference at Hilton in 2018.

We have inspected schools in like 10 - 15 states and for the pilot scheme we selected 13 schools in each state and the training is ongoing. But the biggest problem is to import computers. We are just waiting to get an import waiver from the government so that Provocateur can go ahead with importation. We are being given the pieces of equipment for free to help get the kids to school.

There are many initiatives by non-state actors to build an effective and stable civil society in northern Nigeria. These actors are complementing the Nigerian government's efforts to deradicalize youth in the region and assisting young people to understand and define the violent situation. Others have assisted victims in acquiring useful work skills to assist them to resettle once the violence ends. Faith-Based Organizations such as Christian and Muslim groups have also mobilized charitable donations from their members and delivered resources to the survivors of the insurgency to ameliorating their suffering and need. For example, Rebecca recounted the following in her story:

REBECCA: The Catholic Relief Services has supported us right from when our community was first hit by Boko Haram. I have known the CRS even before Boko Haram started its violent activities when they came for a sensitization program on HIV and they also distributed mosquito net to us as well. We moved to the camp, I recognize some of their staff who came there and they brought some relief materials - raw foodstuff for the women and fertilizers for our men. There are a handful of other helpful organizations like the CRS that I can't remember their names.

These non-state actors' contributions cannot address political security problems that persist, which could have been addressed by the federal and state governments by developing an early warning system. For instance, the United States Department of State – Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) funded the project implementation of “Early Warning/Early Response Mechanisms in northern Nigeria specifically in Adamawa and Borno States (Search for common ground, 2017). These projects help to give the key actors the tool and information necessary to develop community-based responses to the drivers as well as general security risks to the government. Other non-state actors are involved in trying to build a community conflict prevention network on the ground, but they have not been particularly effective because

the government is either slow in response or refused to act on the information provided.

Tony opines:

Even with some inherent challenges with our internal system, we do get early warning reports from some of our partners in the northeast. So, the problem has not been a lack of early warning per se. But like I told you earlier, the buck stops with the government. We cannot force them to act. The Nigerian government will need to check its response system if it has any.

A number of my participants reported that in Borno State, the ICRC is present and doing a great job in rescue and safety operations as well as protecting and safeguarding them during Boko Haram's violent insurgency. Other non-state actors like academic institutions and research organizations have carried out research to contribute to our understanding of the Boko Haram insurgency. The government has mostly ignored research findings. Some of my participants also indicated that academic institutions can develop peace education, conflict resolution, and organize peacebuilding training programs for politicians and the military with regards to human security as well as provide knowledge about peace and security to the local people. For example, Theophilus believes that:

The politicians have no clear agenda on how to resolve the crisis in northern Nigeria. We have had, at least, two political parties capitalizing on the insurgency for political campaigns and making promises to eliminate the group, but they (the political parties) have both failed to restore peace in the region. I think there's been quality research done on Boko Haram in the academe, and that in itself is an intervention. The state actors must take responsibility to begin the implementation of recommendations from our universities.

In other climes, government policies are research-driven, so in Africa and Nigeria, we must do better. Moreover, we should organize conferences and seminars bearing peacebuilding themes with stakeholders periodically about northern Nigeria and its violent extremism crisis. This could transform into a thinktank for the north. But we promote the implementation of ideas rather than mere talk without corresponding action

The Centre for Conflict Transformation was renamed the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation (KAICT) at the University of Liberia. The KAICT promotes a nonstate actor's participation in the design and facilitation of community-led programs. A participant from the Institute for Peace and Conflict Research (IPCR) pointed out KAICT 's activities in communities across the northern region. This is what Gerald had to say on the issue:

GERALD: We got KAICT involved in one of our sensitization programs to help educate the people of northern Nigeria on aspects of international laws, particularly - human rights law, as well as humanitarian law. This way people become aware of not just their rights but their responsibilities in times of conflict. For instance, too many underage young boys were seen to be active agents in the Boko Haram violent extremism and the people were not aware of the age limits on those that can fight in an armed conflict. Our job was to let them know that certain ages must be protected and that based on the Geneva Convention fighting can occur, but the people must fight according to the law.

The private media has played a critical role in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. It is a key pressure group that has criticized the government for its failure in ending the Boko Haram scourge. The free and open press is one positive check on the government in Nigeria's fledgling democracy. Many of my participants acknowledged seeing TV anchormen and anchorwomen from both governments owned and private media reporting critically on the Boko Haram insurgency. Some participants noted that there are discrepancies in reportage between the government media and the free media. A participant from Adamawa State articulated how media agents provide conflicting reports about the violent activities in the northeastern area. Hauwa noted the following in her story:

HAUWA: Whenever there is an attack on our community, the news agencies come to the community to cover the destruction caused and talk to residents. Later we hear about it on radio and television, but the government sources

always report lower numbers of death toll than the free media report after a terrorist attack.

Even more disturbing, the state media has on many occasions denied the occurrence of terrorist attacks altogether, but the free media credibly reported the news eventually. Many of our people now think that the government is always trying to cover the facts up. Hence, we like BBC Hausa; because they always say the truth and we listen to them a lot.

Also, the media is important in providing warnings about violent clashes and their impact on forcing the state to act as well as informing international public opinion. This is critical in getting powerful states and international agencies to intervene in northern Nigeria. The media faces the conundrum of 'if it bleeds then it leads' versus informing the general public by disseminating objective facts in good investigative reporting. The media also educates the Nigerian general public and the government and international actors influencing them to implement conflict prevention strategies or general caution as they moved about in hot spots in northern Nigeria.

In addition, there have been media reports of Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau in pre-recorded videos warning of impending attacks. In his videos, he often ridiculed the efforts of the government to have him captured and his disdain for the Western countries helping the government of Nigeria to fight terrorism. Typically, in the Hausa language, Shekau would warn that he will continue to fight to propagate Islam and has on some occasions executed humanitarian aid workers that were captured by the terrorist. All these have been consistently reported by the media through different platforms. For example, Amina recognized the media's key role in providing the government and the general public with valuable information about the Boko Haram organization. In her viewpoint,:

One thing you cannot take for granted about northern Nigeria is the efficacy of the radio as a source of news. The people here are known for having their

radio on 24/7 and that is how we get to know what's happening in and around our community regarding the conflict

Also, social media has been a key driver in uncovering the atrocities in northern Nigeria. The whole world got to know about the abducted schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State via massive Twitter retweets. Allegations of corruption in the IDP contract and padding of the security budget were exposed by independent new media outfits like the Sahara reporter

The media has raised public awareness about Boko Haram's atrocities and put into perspective the government's misguided policies in not preventing violent conflict in northern Nigeria. So, the nonstate actors have kept the public aware of what is going on and this influenced the media to play a significant role in reporting on the anti-terror war. There is a need for a collaborative effort between the government's and the NGOs' intervention and prevention efforts.

6.5 Key Findings

This chapter highlights my participant's lived experiences and perceptions of peacebuilding activities on the ground. The narratives reveal some unsavory information about the government's commitment towards Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria. Their stories indicate that the Nigerian state must rectify and improve its peacebuilding and peacemaking practices in the region. Twelve themes emerged from the data in this chapter.

First, ECOWAS's role as a regional institution makes it important for it to sue for peace in the region confronted with violent extremism in and across its member states. ECOWAS' ability to make and implement regional peacebuilding and conflict resolution policies are critical to nurturing a peaceful region. However, ECOWAS' current disposition has shown a lack of strong political leadership in the region, which allows the Boko Haram insurgency to persist. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution policies without adequate representation of the local communities that fundamentally

suffer from Boko Haram's insurgency coupled with the bureaucratic constraints within the institutional decisionmaking process, strategies, approaches, and implementation that have made peace elusive in parts of the sub-region. Thus, the ECOWAS protocol recognition of national sovereignty over the internal conflict impacts negatively on its institutional power to influence and enforce some of its well-intended policies targeted towards preventing violent extremism or other regional threats to peace.

Second, the participant's experiences and perceptions towards peacebuilding efforts in northern Nigeria are enormous and their narratives were mainly focused on the following: their living conditions, the issues of self-development, peacebuilding efforts in terms of transparency, accountability, and justice, and the people's involvement in the peacebuilding processes. To understand ECOWAS's achievements in its peacebuilding efforts, it is imperative to inquire through the participants' lived experiences as victims of Boko Haram terrorism. There were allegations of misappropriation of funds meant for security purposes and a lack of accountability in the efforts to restore peace in affected communities.

Third, the participants' expressed how ECOWAS was ineffective because the locals who live in the communities ravaged by the Boko Haram insurgency are yet to feel the impact of ECOWAS's policies in the region. ECOWAS's bureaucratic style in the wake of Boko Haram terrorism has been adjudged to be ineffective and poorly managed. For example, a hand full of the participants reported that ECOWAS has not provided the necessary leadership in combating the violent crisis in the region. Further, they contended that the way ECOWAS officials appear in conflict-stricken camps in glamour and luxury possibly indicates that some people may be benefiting from the ongoing crisis in the region. As such, there seems to be a disconnection between the communities and ECOWAS' programs. The respondents remarked that ECOWAS and

other organizations have created the impression that they are doing so much work are not actually commensurate to their physical impact on the ground. However, these impressions may have been influenced most probably by propaganda through insufficient media reportage or because of biases towards them.

Fourth, the condition of Boko Haram's victims living in various IDP camps is problematic; the participants suggest that there is no hope in sight. These camps have very little supplies necessary to meet the needs of residents including basic requirements such as clothing, food, housing, power, and water. The participants' experiences portray a picture of the Hobbesian state of nature in which life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" with the war of all against all (Hobbes, 2004, p.XI). The victims' experiences on the ground paint a dehumanizing picture, especially because some of these victims had the freedom to move around, they owned property and were able to fend for themselves and their families. It is frightening to see their condition so deteriorated by Boko Haram's violent insurgency.

Fifth, other participants stressed the impact of corruption on the fight against Boko Haram terrorism. They pointed to corruption being the actual terror in Nigeria, insinuating that corruption has led to the deterioration of the quality of life in northern Nigeria and its sustenance. There were notions that foreign organizations have good intentions to confront the humanitarian crisis in the region; unfortunately, the Nigerian government is not responsible enough to create an environment for those intentions to manifest into pragmatic actions on the ground. Therefore, most of my participants blamed the government for the anarchic situation in the northern region because it is the principal actor in the conflict so that there is only so much that ECOWAS can do to address the internal security crisis of Nigeria. Nonetheless, my participants requested that in line with the ECOWAS protocol, it should be vested in conducting investigations

into allegations of corruption in the fight against Boko Haram. The ECOWAS Commission has failed to investigate to hold the Nigerian government accountable.

Sixth, other participants suggested that ECOWAS mobilizes funds to strengthen a community-based justice system and acts as an arbitrator or mediator with regards to truth and justice issues caused by the terrorism crisis since there is little or no confidence in the Nigerian government to follow through on a path toward truth, justice, coexistence, and reconciliation. This suggestion would lead to a peaceful restoration of people's hope for an equitable system that is just to everybody, irrespective of status. This is in line with the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice's commitment to accept individual complaints about human rights violations

Seventh, the role of the state was unanimously expressed by my participants as a fundamental part of the Boko Haram crisis. The failure to provide security, social welfare, and rehabilitation even after the attacks were some of the key problems faced by refugees living in the IDP camp that necessitated their migration to other cities. This was prominent in the escalation of Boko Haram terrorism to other northern states in Nigeria and to neighboring countries within West Africa. Nigeria is one of the key state actors and it holds the primary responsibility in preventing, managing, and de-escalating Boko Haram's acts of terrorism in and around its borders by providing law and order and ensuring peace and security for all its citizens. However, Boko Haram's incessant violence made my participants question the capacity of the Nigerian military. They concluded that the security forces are not fully engaged in combating crimes and the criminality of the terrorists so that the call for community policing is a way to protect themselves to feel safe, secure, and peaceful. The participants felt that the creation of Hisbah Corps in the north would fill the void for community policing as a

safer and secure approach in combating crimes and acts of criminality in the northern regions.

Eighth, the perceived ineffectiveness of the Nigerian military and the general dissatisfaction of victims was expressed in my participants call for the resignation of the country's service chiefs whose strategies have failed to quell the upsurge in terrorism in northern Nigeria. Amid these failures were allegations of corruption in the activities of the top echelon of Nigeria's security agencies with no real commitment by the government to punish those found to have been complacent.

Ninth, the people's perspective of the Boko Haram insurgency tends to present the origin of the Boko Haram insurgency as an intercommunal conflict that was badly managed and has now metamorphosed into an international jihadist movement spreading across Western Africa. The Nigerian government has yet to admit whether the Boko Haram insurgency is an ethnic, religious, political, or economic issue to devise an appropriate peacebuilding and counterterrorism strategy. This exposes the weaknesses and the fundamental incapability of the Nigerian government in clearly defining the conflict, let alone tackling the ruthless activities of Boko Haram terrorists. The government's critical understanding of the conflict dynamics particularly at the grassroots may see it on the path to seeking peace through alternative approaches that are embedded in traditional peacemaking. Some participants' narratives of the Hausa/Fulani way of communal living and dispute resolution can serve as a local peacebuilding model to embed in northern communities. The government is the primary actor of the state and should harness the opportunity to use indigenous peacebuilding methods to prevent the escalation of violence in local communities. Although the indigenous peacebuilding approaches have proven to be effective in handling communal clashes resulting from the Hausa/Fulani farmland encroachment, the

dynamics of fundamentalist violence in northern Nigeria are somewhat different. As such, this traditional conflict resolution approach may achieve peace in a communal crisis but not with a multinational terrorist network like the Boko Haram conflict.

Tenth, regrettably, the participants' overwhelming responses to the government's intervention in the Boko Haram insurgency are that the deployment of troops has resulted in more casualties, which include innocent civilians caught up in the government's counterterrorism operations. Thus, Boko Haram remains unsubdued at both the operational and recruitment level. My participants revealed that the rank and file military officers deployed to fight Boko Haram are ill-equipped and are often overpowered by the terrorist group resulting in the loss of military personnel. On this note, many participants believed that the government's militarized approach deployed towards the elimination of Boko Haram has produced mixed effects; however, the heavy-handed approach has had severe negative impact on civilians, thereby suggesting instead that the use of alternative peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes would address the insecurity problem.

Moreover, the facts on the ground seem to suggest that the government's highhanded peacebuilding method at best manages rather than resolves violent extremism in northern Nigeria. In other words, rather than suppress Boko Haram's violence, if the government and ECOWAS addressed the underlying issues promulgating the conflict in the first place would lead to positive peace in the long term. The Maitatsine sect gave Boko Haram the foundation to embed its radical teachings and Islamization agenda in northern Nigeria. The post-Maitatsine conflict could have helped the government and ECOWAS to advance a more proactive peacebuilding system to monitor religious leaders' activities that would have prevented some of the radical teachings from filtering down into a non-regulated education system (*almajiri*)

in northern Nigeria. Thus, the role of some non-state actors was extensively discussed by my participants. There seem to be more positive accounts of non-state interventions from my participant's narratives. The non-state actors have contributed immensely to complement ECOWAS and the government's efforts in the de-radicalization process of young people in the region. These have included providing medical supplies, food, and clothing as well as conducting research, and making some useful recommendations to the relevant government with regards to the current political climate. For instance, the Kukah Center's initiatives and a host of other local NGOs and CSOs are doing incredible peace work in relevant communities promoting civil society participation in peacebuilding for northern Nigeria.

Eleventh, my participants recounted that since the crisis began, some NGOs and CSOs have helped in vocational education and have also provided victims of the conflict with relief materials during times when the government failed to do anything. As much as my participants appreciated these contributions, they continue to seek the help of the government to come to their aid. Contributions from the academy and other related research organizations were also seen to have been richly involved in the Boko Haram discourse. Again, the government seems to be paying little attention to its recommendations and research findings. Other forms of intervention from the research institutions such as peace education, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding training programs for politicians and the military with regards to human security as well as providing knowledge about peace and security to the local people will form the bedrock towards peacebuilding in Western Africa.

Twelfth, the role of the media emerged in the participant's narrative of non-state interventions in the Boko Haram conflict. Generally, the participant's perceptions of the media hold that the private media has played a critical role in covering and reporting

fundamental events with regards to the insurgency than the government-owned media whose coverage of violent activities were mostly under-reported. According to my participants, whenever there is an attack on their community, there are distortions in the reportage of casualties by the state media outfits, yet the private media and social media have been able to expose a lot of what is happening on the ground. The abduction of over 250 schoolgirls from Chibok and the social media campaign that followed point to the significance of timely and adequate coverage of issues. For instance, after the schoolgirls were abducted in 2014, it took several days for the government to admit, let alone report the unfolding of events (Smith, 2015). However, alternative media sources (social and print media) reported the news which went viral with celebrities and powerful world politicians lending their voice to support the release of the schoolgirls in a “bring back our girls’ campaign.” Apart from the adequacy of coverage and timeliness in reportage, there were issues around the framing of the attacks. Some participants noted that the media reports of the violence had elements of ethnic bias that could potentially increase fear of the “other’ and further polarise the communities along ethnic and religious lines. Ultimately, the media plays a strategic role in raising public awareness about Boko Haram's atrocities and has helped in exposing the government's misguided policies in not preventing violent conflict in northern Nigeria (Anugwom, 2019). As such, the private media as a non-state actor has kept the public aware of what is going on in the north. Thus, there is a need to create a substantial collaborative effort between the people and the government in tackling and preventing the spread of violent extremism.

6.6 Conclusion

Chapter six explored peacebuilding efforts in northern Nigeria from the perspectives at the grassroots. It does seem that both the state and non-state agencies have missed authentic grassroots involvement in their attempts at harnessing some of the issues that emerged from the study such as youth unemployment, poverty, and radicalization of young men and women all of which have been outlined in a series of participants stories. For peacebuilding to be effective and sustainable, the reach for bottom-up processes is essential in northern Nigeria's terrorism crisis.

Contextually, bottom-up peacebuilding in northern Nigeria is complex and faces a long haul towards ensuring its full realization. However, the participants' narratives show that there are opportunities for more grounded peace work both by the government and other non-state actors. My participants expressed a lack of knowledge about ECOWAS's work at the local community level and the often dissonant relationship between the local community and the state security agencies, even though their hopes for justice, fairness, and peace lay in the hands of the federal and state governments.

Consequently, the state must rebuild its credibility with its partners and restore the people's confidence in their government. The government must include local community leader's in the facilitation of peacebuilding programs in northern Nigeria. Peacebuilding organizations in the region must earn local people's trust by nurturing interrelated peacebuilding activities that include dialogue, problemsolving workshops, and indigenous mediation practices that are grounded in inclusive cultural practices (See Byrne, 2007; 2017). To this end, the participants' narrative on peacebuilding in northern Nigeria has been somewhat general, the next chapter will hone in on ECOWAS's peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategies in northern Nigeria.

Chapter 7 - ECOWAS's peacebuilding and conflict prevention capacities

7.1 Introduction

ECOWAS includes conflict prevention in its peacebuilding tool kit. Within the context of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, ECOWAS, the Nigerian state, NGOs, and CSOs are pooling their strengths by investing resources, creating policies, and developing approaches towards the prevention of deadly violence in the region. However, their failure to fully incorporate conflict prevention processes on the ground has left local communities devoid of peace while they pursue justice. The Nigerian federal government has failed to defeat the insurgency on its own. ECOWAS also has responsibility in assisting one of its member states to implement a prevention process in both northern Nigeria and surrounding member states within ECOWAS's strategic interest.

Peacebuilding and conflict prevention include economic sustainability, freedom and justice, human security, mental wellness, political stability, and social security. Consequently, this chapter explores ECOWAS's peacebuilding and conflict prevention capacities in addressing Boko Haram's terrorist insurgency that is taking on a transnational dimension. ECOWAS has a rich history of responding to protracted and violent cross-cultural ethnopolitical conflicts. Specifically, Chapter Seven explores (1), dynamics of ECOWAS member states and the funding; (2), the role of external actors and partners in the struggle against Boko Haram's insurgency, and (3) ECOWAS's peacebuilding interventions in local communities.

7.2 Member states dynamics and ECOWAS funding

Governments of independent member states are responsible for implementing conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs that lie at the heart of the democratic peace theory (Donais, 2012). They can use their capacity and resources to act unilaterally or to cooperate with other states and NGOs and CSOs or do nothing at all. ECOWAS has both the capacity and the strategic incentive to engage with the Nigerian federal government in implementing a preventative strategy to thwart the Boko Haram insurgency. Nigeria is the dominant economy in the region accounting for more than half of the GDP, while other important ECOWAS members include Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and poorer member states including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Niger (Francis, 2018). While this integration may favor Nigeria's security ambition of playing a big brother role among member states, there seem to be limited benefits in terms of economic integration. Some of ECOWAS' wealthier member countries may be more open to economic and security integration as well as the poorer members that seek to access Nigeria's markets. Despite the possible benefit of having an integrated market, the economic gap amongst members would possibly frustrate the integration policy that the Commission is set to achieve. A staff of ECOWAS has this to say regarding the issue of economic integration:

KENNETH: Let's take the idea of a single currency that ECOWAS has been trying to implement for instance. You will discover that member states keep postponing the deadline for a single currency. A poor state in Nigeria has somewhere around \$8 billion in GDP and a country like Guinea has an economy of around \$7 billion in GDP. So naturally, a uniform trade currency policy will be difficult. A recent report says 2020 is the new deadline for the ECOWAS single currency, but nothing on the ground tells me the deadline will be met.

The ECOWAS initiative was put forward by Nigeria and Togo. Consequently, it is important to consider the membership dynamics as there are different official languages - English, French, and Portuguese spoken among the member states as well as the differences between Anglophone and Francophone political cultures. This division was evident in ECOWAS's early formation when Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire (two of the leading Francophone countries in the region) were keen to join to weaken Nigeria's strength in the organization. Similarly, France tried to prevent ECOWAS's establishment because it feared that Nigeria would become the regional power and would compete with France to dominate the region.

Their linguistic and cultural differences were downplayed by my interviewees. For example, they noted that vernacular languages often crosscut the Anglophone and Francophone cultural and linguistic divide. One of the study participants from WANEP recalled the ceasefire that was reached during the Ivorian crisis in 2002 mediated by Ghana under the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework. He noted that this example shows that future regional peacebuilding and security missions would not suffer from any linguistic barriers. However, as some of my participants divulged ECOWAS' challenges in reaching consensus on peace and security issues often arise out of the opposing cultural and political positions of the member states. Moreover, speaking different languages adds real practical challenges to member states conducting joint peace support operations under the ECOWAS umbrella. For example, Collins noted the following in his story:

COLLINS: ECOWAS is a supranational organization. Agreed! But there are way too many things that divide the West African region than international boundaries. Member states in the ECOWAS sub-region are struggling to relinquish some aspects of their states' sovereignty for a strong regional body due to, inter alia, the Anglophile and Francophile fault lines. Hence, there is always a cultural dimension to every policy success or failure. For instance, which do you think would be the commanding language in the case of a joint

peace support operation? The ECOWAS umbrella is a rainbow. As beautiful as it looks, its diversity poses a real challenge than could be imagined.

My participants noted that ECOWAS faces some challenges to its conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria and in West Africa; namely, the general population's lack of confidence, the fact that the conflict prevention and conflict resolution language is alien to the people, and the detachment of the ECOWAS secretariat from the communities. For example, the interviewee's disclosed that ECOWAS uses the English language to broker peace in northern Nigeria with a dominant population of the Hausa/Fulani people, who are mostly non-literate in a formal sense. Hausa is the lingua franca for all of the ethnic groups living in the northern region. My participants' view on the use of the English language in its peacebuilding programs and missions speaks to the elitist disposition of ECOWAS because the poor cannot truly be reached by its current efforts. Despite the language barriers, and the diverse ethnic composition of the peacekeeping force, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) founded in 1990 has addressed the security challenges in the region fairly well in the past (Adebajo, 2010). Consequently, ECOMOG as the military wing of ECOWAS could effectively be seen to enforce peace by addressing the anarchic security situation caused by Boko Haram's terrorist atrocities in northern Nigeria. However, ECOWAS would need to revise its charter to empower ECOMOG to confront the challenges of Boko Haram's terrorist behavior in the region.

A combined ECOWAS effort has made in some cases, strategic peace and security decisions at both the policy and operational levels to deploy peace support operations throughout West Africa. In other cases, ECOWAS's decision-making process was impacted by a lack of political unity among member states around certain

peace and security policies. The fragmentation in ECOWAS decision making accounts for some recent crises that involved Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. Moreover, Nigeria has used ECOWAS's regional interventions to shore up its global image as a peacemaker. A former employee of ECOWAS reiterated his optimism about the Commissions capacity this way:

MADUKA: Right from its hay day in Liberia to its visible hands and leadership role in the regional solutions to the regional problems in Sierra-Leone and most recently, the Gambia, Nigeria has sacrificed a lot for the stability of the ECOWAS region. This has been done for a little but very significant gain. It has bolstered its leadership role in the West African region; it has reinforced its commitment to West Africa as a fundamental circle of its foreign policy; it has shored-up its image and reputation and has used same to position itself strategically on things of regional and global concerns

In contrast to Nigeria's disposition towards peace in the region, fellow ECOWAS members states have yet shown much commitment as much as Nigeria. The ECOWAS's Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance empowers the organization to impose sanctions on any state in the region changing or maintaining government through unconstitutional means and recently some member states have been found wanting. For example, as a result of the coup in Guinea, the Gambia, and the ousting of the democratic government in Mali, the ECOWAS decisionmaking bodies intervened and arrived at a unified position on this issue. Nevertheless, one of my interviewees noted that member states are skeptical about ECOWAS's military interventions in the region. The question of leadership has also led to difficulties in ECOWAS arriving at integrated positions related to assigned duties and in terms of its institutional leadership. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) at its Participatory Review and Analysis Processes (PRAPs) submit in 2016, held that maintaining good governance and leadership in member states will help strengthen the internal processes of ECOWAS and enable it to get the desired level of external support.

Leadership struggles have been detrimental to the ECOWAS's ability to carefully mediate past conflicts. For example, the perennial problems in Sierra Leone and Liberia as well as the Coted'Ivoire crises of 2002 were relatively due to the absence of democratic governance to aid West Africa's progress towards peace³. Also, between Presidents Wade of Senegal and Eyadema of Togo, they had their leadership tussle, which led President Kuffour of Ghana taking over the mediation process. Similarly, the election to select the new president of the regional Commission between the former Senegalese Minister, Abdoul Aziz Sow and Burkina Faso's former Prime Minister, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo was characterized as a war of succession. Hence, Collins communicated on the issue of leadership within ECOWAS as follows:

COLLINS: There is this politics of position and leadership which manifests through the processes of filling up key positions. Positions in the Commission are politicized, not just for the privileges that come with them but balancing the cultural fault lines which characterize the ECOWAS sub-region.

The Francophone's dominance of Commission is resented by the Anglophones. Within the Francophones, the leadership struggle is still fierce as could be demonstrated in the present tussle between Senegal and Burkina Faso for the headship of the Commission. Leading negotiations is also given an intrinsic interpretation which often time places the square peg in a round hole.

Competition over positions is not unusual for member states of a collective organization and certainly not unique to ECOWAS. Nigeria's dominant role within ECOWAS together with its population and economy size poses an obvious challenge in terms of capability and political direction which seems to suggest that nothing could move within the organization without Nigeria's consent. For example, one of the participants pointed out that, 'other member states do not question Nigeria's hegemony,

³ Brittle West Africa. (2003). *Strategic Survey*

but they would want Nigeria to take their concerns more into consideration'. In contrast, Zainab who is a senior officer at the ECOWAS Commission stressed the following in her story:

ZAINAB: It is not that Nigeria doesn't have hegemonic ambitions, but rather Nigeria has always felt a duty to act for the security in the subregion. And because Nigeria is seen as the most powerful actor within ECOWAS, Nigeria would be criticized for acting and criticized if it did not. This is the burden of leadership and repeatedly we have seen other collective organizations face similar challenges.

Zainab's point of view was supported by another participant who opined that Nigeria was not trying to pursue its interests within ECOWAS to dominate regional politics, rather Nigeria has historically worked collaboratively with ECOWAS's member states that demonstrate its commitment to democracy, law, and peace and (Musah & Fayemi, 2000). Another one of my participants who work for WANEP mentioned that his country Ghana would be willing to mediate any conflict where his state's interests were at stakes such as with its neighbors affected by conflict and instability.

One of the key challenges to ECOWAS's effort to tackle the Boko Haram insurgency is the organization's internal dynamics. ECOWAS' has reduced its level of commitment and contributions to provide security in the region from what it used to be in the '90s. Some of the member states are impoverished and are finding it difficult to sustain their financial contributions to the Commission in its efforts to deal with terrorism. These countries recognize the urgency of winning the war against Boko Haram and preserving their state's interests within by waging micro internal conflicts that are equally important to their internal stability. For example, Francis reported on this issue as follows:

FRANCIS: Putting an end to insurgency in the West African region is ECOWAS's wish...ECOWAS has a robust strategy for pursuing these policy objectives but is constrained by the prevailing circumstance to cut-down its operations... Member states' commitment to the financial needs of the regional body has not been encouraging.

This is understandable as most of them are tiny polities with a very low annual GDP with their micro threats to worry about. It's not about them having and wouldn't donate but lacking the financial capacity to contribute meaningfully to ECOWAS funding. Dealing with terrorist groups in West Africa demands a lot of resources and will. ECOWAS lacks and must adjust to its resource capacity.

Some of my participants noted that many of the member states may not be as supportive of ECOWAS's preventive measures against Boko Haram if it is not directly impacting their state's interests. They tend to support ad-hoc processes that gradually escalate if the particular conflict gets out of hand. Consequently, Nigeria treated Boko Haram's insurgency as a domestic problem and was reluctant to support an ECOWAS response against the terror group in the northern part of the country. The Boko Haram problem snowballed and is now more intense and difficult to address.

The media attention and public opinion on the Boko Haram insurgency becoming a concrete regional threat has compelled ECOWAS to pool its resources together and to take the issue seriously and become directly involved in the northern Nigeria conflict to end the Boko Haram insurgency. However, the UN principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state muddies the prevention and intervention situation for ECOWAS to tackle the structural and systemic causes of ethnoreligious conflict in northern Nigeria. Many member states have ethnoreligious groups and are cognizant that precedents set might affect them in the future. For example, Jumoke articulated the following in her story:

JUMOKE: There is this pride in Nigeria, which is swollen by its leadership role in the West African region, which makes it eager to solve its problems even

when it is obvious that it needs international assistance. As strategically placed as Borno is, Nigeria believed the Boko Haram insurgency was its domestic affair.

ECOWAS, on the other hand, remained highly indifferent and wouldn't even condemn the atrocities of the insurgent group until it became a regular theme for media discussions. The fact that the Hausa-Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups crisscross the Nigerian border makes it conflict-sensitive, possibly contagious, and dangerous to volunteer assistance. This was the early story of Nigeria, ECOWAS, and the Boko Haram insurgency.

Regional organizations such as the AU, and ECOWAS have access to resources, but it still faces having insufficient resources and capacity problems that essentially limit their activities. In fact, this challenge for ECOWAS has made a preventive strategy a daunting task in the region. In other words, there has been an increased level of violent conflict across member states and the meager resources allotted for conflict prevention may not have been enough to help the Commission meet its humanitarian and development needs. Consequently, rather than invest resources in development strategies, ECOWAS' efforts have now been channeled towards providing humanitarian aid and dealing with ethnoreligious conflicts. For example, Grace from the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution recounted the following:

GRACE: Actually, there is an ethnic dimension to the Boko Haram insurgency, which is amplified by its spread across, and dominance by peoples of Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri descent. The Boko Haram insurgency is not the first violent conflict with an ethnic undertone that criss-crosses domestic border in West Africa, but ECOWAS is yet to develop a policy framework for the prevention and management of violent ethnic conflict for unique cultural and international zones. Interventions have majorly been reactionary with a focus on humanitarian and peacekeeping missions as exemplified in the Mano River campaigns and the ongoing fight against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

To effectively broaden the peacebuilding impetus of ECOWAS, more resources are needed, and the global financial institutions could play a significant role in supporting ECOWAS's structural and operational prevention and peacebuilding

programs. ECOWAS's lack of economic resources is an inherently problematic quandary, which impacts its implementation of a plethora of prevention strategies in a member state's going through an internal crisis or conflict of transnational dimension like the Boko Haram insurgency. The myriad of protracted and violent ethnoreligious conflicts in West Africa is indicative of the need for more conflict prevention and intervention programs that would provide economic assistance, security, and protection of the people's human rights (Byrne & Senehi, 2012). The scope of preventive actions in war-torn societies is better envisioned, coordinated, and integrated through different global and regional security, economic, and peacebuilding institutions like the UN, the AU, the ECOWAS, the EU, SADC, and the OSCE. These institutions can harness ideas, resources, and human power to address their collective issues.

7.3 The role of external actor's, and partners in the struggle against Boko Haram's insurgency

The role of the external actor in modern warfare has become increasingly common (see Kaldor, 2012). As we continue to witness modern conflicts, it is obvious that conforming to the traditional model of interstate conflict intervention has become inadequate. The Boko Haram insurgency involves an increasing asymmetry between the Nigerian state, and non-state actors, which should lead us to rethink intervention strategies to the conflict. The Nigerian government has resorted to the use of military force for addressing the Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria. This has had serious limitations and ECOWAS' involvement against terrorism in the region has its challenges too. Nevertheless, the critical process of envisioning a coherent conflict prevention system is important in understanding the role of external actors in peacebuilding interventions.

While investigating the role of ECOWAS in one of West Africa's deadliest conflicts, the participants expressed their worries and the dilemmas about the potency of state-led peace in their local communities. The dilemmas can be described as a choice between a top-down driven and a bottom-up driven peacebuilding process. The former has predominantly been applied with little meaningful impact, and the latter lends itself to an inclusive grassroots approach that has yet to be used in the interventions against Boko Haram terrorism. Underpinning the question of local participation, some participants stressed that the Nigerian state and ECOWAS ought to confine their activities to more operational issues given their political and financial considerations. Some of the participants made it known during our discussions that the Boko Haram crisis cannot be left solely to the Nigerian state to address, and it is increasingly becoming internationalized as part of the global war on terrorism. More concrete efforts are needed by these partners as well as states directly targeted by the insurgency namely Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, and Niger to rehabilitate survivors, provide humanitarian aid, gather intelligence, control the borders, and coordinate a rapid reaction force to defeat Boko Haram. For example, Collins narrated on this issue in the following manner:

COLLINS: There is no gainsaying the fact that the insurgency in northeast Nigeria has escalated beyond the management capacity of the Nigerian state. Nigeria has, for almost a decade, attempted to quell the violence but such efforts have not brought an end to the conflict. This means that Nigeria needs the support of the ECOWAS to better manage the troubled areas as the Multi-national Joint Task Forces that have proven to lack the needed central leadership, resources, and coordination necessary for proper containment of the violent group in the Lake Chad region.

Coordinating the little resources and intelligence available among the affected states also means that ECOWAS, as an umbrella body, has a very big role to play in human capital and capacity management in the crisis management.

Nigeria's public is often marveled at how Boko Haram gets access to weapons and funding, and why ECOWAS' member states have failed to align and defeat the insurgency as the group exploits their porous borders, garner supporters in the various states, and provide succor for its members.

Consequently, ECOWAS and the AU have critical roles to play in ending Boko Haram violence. These, among others, include: creating an early warning system to forecast crises before they escalate, and in promoting peace and security in northern Nigeria and the region. In 2004, when the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect was put forward by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), the AU in its bid to stop situations of the gross violation of human rights, launched its Peace and Security Council. The PSC Protocol defines its mandate as "collective security and early-warning arrangement to facilitate timely and efficient response to conflict and crises in Africa" (Murithi, 2014, p. 96). Similar to the AU's mandate, the ECOWAS peacebuilding approach is reliant on a package that is built on economic prosperity, good governance, and the rule of law which the sub-region struggles with. Hence, the view that ECOWAS has a top-down approach, which it does not enhance grassroots participation is evident in the situation of the Boko Haram insurgency. The spread of violent extremism and terrorism seems to have put ECOWAS in a catch 22 position, which would have been avoided if the member states were committed to living to their collective responsibilities. Unfortunately, ECOWAS requires more resources, and a stronger military network than it has ever needed to curtail the severely damaging violent conflicts that are pervading the subregion. A participant from the ECOWAS secretariat seems to suggest that although the Commission is poised to tackle some of its obvious challenges but expresses what she

calls the clog in the well of progress for ECOWAS. Adetutu explicated the following in her narrative:

ADETUTU: The lack of resources, the proximity concerns, capacity, and sometimes the will power and legitimacy to delve into our numerous conflicts across the continent has been a major set back for ECOWAS. I have often wondered why the collective security of West Africa would be debated when there are lessons to take for the intervention in the Liberia Civil War. I mean, the normative intent and responsibility of preventing and managing deadly crises in the subregion are compelling and every member state should be on board.

Here in the ECOWAS Commission, we keep telling ourselves that there is no other continent than Africa and we must do everything to make our region peaceful and economically viable. So, if West Africa is to become stable, then member states must be committed to delivering the existing protocols...

Even though the ECOWAS commission has positioned itself to be a peacebuilding bloc for West Africa, it does seem that there have been some setbacks in its ability to prevent the spread of violent conflict in the region. ECOWAS mustn't become dependent on external agencies and actors for resources and ideas. Rather it must forge a niche for itself in preventing its regional conflicts. Some of my participants note that the failure to develop a better system of conflict prevention in West Africa is connected to the entrenched dependency on external funding, which forces it to rely on the whims of donors, rather than the combined vision of its member states. The member states must show commitment to the establishment of peace for the people of northern Nigeria. For example, Ahmed who is a senior analyst with the ICRC expressed concern about the complacency of the Nigerian government in dealing with peacebuilding. His observation was based on his field knowledge about what goes on in northern Nigeria where he works.

AHMED: When we talk about the position of ECOWAS, I think that ECOWAS is well placed to act in making West Africa a peaceful subregion. But we must first look at the disposition of the local government in all the efforts restoring peace... I work for the ICRC and we work closely with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) which is one of the most visible government agencies in the conflict arena. NEMA knows what

ICRC is doing in communities that require humanitarian assistance. But when it comes to collaboration, NEMA would avoid us.

How can an agency that represents the Nigerian government be complacent in the field? The only time we may likely meet in the field is when the ICRC is making the distribution to victims of violent conflict at the camps. There you are likely to see NEMA staff with their cameras... They are cautious of being exposed to danger in the field but like to take credit when we act. Conflict intervention should not be for photo ops or political gain.

This kind of behavior is part of the reason why survivors of Boko Haram's insurgency perceive the government's actions to not be genuine. Instead, they praise the efforts of non-state organizations like the ICRC or other non-governmental agencies. Some of the participants' accounts suggest that insincerity of government agencies are connected to the scandal concerning the embezzlement of \$2 billion through the office of the National Security Adviser under the leadership of Colonel Sambo Dasuki (Yusha'u, 2018, p. 2). These "conflict entrepreneurs" mandated by the government to bring peace to northern Nigeria profited the money meant to purchase arms for the Nigerian armed forces to defeat Boko Haram.

The early warning system that is supposed to be West Africa's finest tool at conflict prevention is also confronted with human and financial capacity challenges. Some of my participants' revealed that the lack of resources and an insufficient military force undermines ECOWAS's role in engaging in conflict prevention and intervention. For example, Uzo expressed the following in his story:

Look, ECOWAS is one of the few regional bodies with the finest protocols, conventions, and policy objectives. Its conflict prevention and management protocols are carefully crafted such that if implemented, the ECOWAS region could boast not of peace, but positive peace. Billions of dollars are needed to kick-start and maintain these human development agendas while more billions are needed to expand, equip, and motivate the ECOWAS standing army. Lack of funds makes these only but a noble dream.

Another challenge within the ECOWAS system is the lack of consensus around its leadership. The question about who the regional hegemon is, could be a fundamental problem in fully establishing a viable regional preventive system in West Africa. There is a need for individual ECOWAS member states to strengthen and develop their capacities to better actualize a concrete and thorough conflict analysis and prevention system as well as a peace inventory. For example, Mathias summarized the problem in the following manner:

MATHIAS: Some member states have yet come to terms with what a collective organization like ECOWAS is about. They think it is a platform to show individual national strength. In some places, for instance, member states don't discuss their internal issues at the level of ECOWAS, because they see it as a sign of weakness.

This way the programs being implemented are misplaced. When you think education is the problem, you build a school, yet people don't attend school instead they would be better served if a market is cited... ECOWAS projects are not known at the grassroots because of the effort of the state to integrate its people.

Mathias works with the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). He captured the need to weld traditional views into externally formulated frameworks. He expressed his view on this issue as follows:

MATHIAS: No matter how you try to import mechanisms, it won't change my make up as this is how I am made. Even though you are in Canada, you will still think the way you are is because you are an African man. And how do you think as an African man? You wake up in the morning and you want to poke your nose into another person's affair; that is African.

No matter what you try to do with an African man, he wants to know what is happening with the other man. You fence the world. He wants to know what is happening with the other man, why does he need to fence the world. I need to know what is happening there. Those are the resources, instead of killing those resources, we can tap into it.

That the African man wants to know shows that we have the availability of early warning resources.

Similarly, Badams is an ICRC staff that has worked in one of the affected communities. He highlighted the importance of community involvement in the following way:

BADAMS: We try to ensure that our projects are community-driven. When we go to communities, we don't just get people together and facilitate them; it is the communities themselves that initiated what we do. It shows that they would sustain it; and I see them doing that. It's like this guy that I work with, who is now researching with the ICRC. He was a community stakeholder then, now he leads a program in the Hausa community in Jos. We have them like that in virtually all parts of the joint efforts.

So, I believe other NGOs should allow the communities to create platforms for engagement without necessarily micro-managing the process. I have seen this in communities where I have worked and as I equally told you of religious institutions crossing divides. The fact that these people are themselves doing it shows that they own the process and they can sustain it. Once in awhile for instance in Jos, you will discover that the fire is ignited but I think what quenches the fire immediately is this ability of the people to interact.

Funding is equally a key challenge to peacebuilding as both local and international NGOs and CSOs try to use the meager resources available to them to complete their projects while the challenges on the ground are far beyond what they can do. Donor agencies have their funding preferences in supporting certain peace-building NGOs and CSOs depending on what their agenda is. This limits which organizations are funded from donor partners as the aid comes with strings attached. Moreover, the Nigerian federal government provides more resources to roads, hospitals, and buying small arms rather than to peacebuilding and reconciliation organizations. It sees building peace as intangible, and therefore irrelevant as the politicians are not there to direct the federal budget towards peacebuilding organizations that are scattered all over Nigeria. Some of my

participants divulged that the federal government must change its budget priorities and direct adequate resources towards prevention, creating harmony, building coexistence among communities, towards early response mechanisms for the current Boko Haram situation to be much abated.

For instance, the almajiri system is very well known in the northern part of Nigeria. Yet the level of people's education and sensitization is very low. Kyola who works with the ICRC continued in the following way:

KYOLA: I don't think the problem of the almajiri teaching system is due to poverty in the north. It can be addressed if the federal government sees it as a priority. The government has not taken time to create awareness of the security implication of the system and you don't blame the kids for it.

I was in attending a conference in Jigawa state and I saw the state of the *almajiri* kids begging on the streets. Some of those kids are 4 years old and they have become a ready-made tool for recruitment by any radical sect. We need resources to get to the grassroots, let people know that you should be able to give birth to only the number of children you should take care of.

ECOWAS's key bilateral partners are the US, the UK, and France in the area of peace and security, and they are referred to as the P3 (Kabia, 2009). These countries provide support to ECOWAS in overcoming some of the institutional and financial incapacities discussed already. The P3 also acts as technical and military advisors to ECOWAS which should serve as a big boost to the region's conflict response capacity and humanitarian services. However, some of my participants recognized that sending technical assistants and consultants to ECOWAS institutions could undermine its local ownership of peace processes over the long-term. For example, Isaac from the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution expressed this point in the following manner:

ISAAC: The contribution of the external donor to the successful running of ECOWAS operations is quite significant and repercussive. Technical assistance from these donors, in the short term, has been highly invaluable and laudable. But has ECOWAS member states ever paused to imagine the lacuna that could emerge if they decide in the future to withdraw its support? Over-reliance on the external donor for technical support has already created a form of dependency which may hurt the regional body in the long run.

The EU is also a key supporter of the ECOWAS Commission's work on mediation and electoral observer mission. The external funding from agencies like the EU and other global institutions have provided ECOWAS with abundant diplomatic relations, funds, and technical advisers' support. However, little progress is being made in heightening the active involvement of member states within ECOWAS's institutions. Some of my interviewees noted that applying a purely Global North model, criteria, and perspective with regards to ECOWAS's peace and security architecture is likely to be ineffective. For example, Tony expressed the following in his narrative:

TONY: There is a growing urge of modeling institutions in Africa after similar ones that have succeeded in Europe and the Americas...The nomenclature change from OAU to AU is a good example of an African organization coveting a European Union. The price for these mimicking is enormous as there are unique challenges that would ensure that innovations that thrive in the West struggle to survive in Africa. The centrifugal nature in the implementation of ECOWAS peace and security architectural plans marks this sharp contrast in the place of communities in ECOWAS security plans

The external donors should try to comprehend West African cultures and continue to support ECOWAS, and be open to allow some flexibility in allowing local cultural norms and perspectives to inform and lead the organization so that its creative actions and local systems are successful. This lies in stark contrast with the position that ECOWAS must embed Global North values and norms within its structures and systems. ECOWAS must own the process and reject external influences and proposals when it deems it necessary and that will surely place a strain on these relationships.

ECOWAS must be accountable to its donors and work to eradicate systemic corruption that plagues some of its member states including Nigeria. Some of my participants disclosed that the EU is an important partner for ECOWAS contributing to

its to peacebuilding activities in northern Nigeria has benefited through direct support of specific projects, assisting local NGOs and CSOs working to empower civil society, and in rebuilding its security architecture. Participants acknowledge that the EU support has benefited Nigeria's federal and state governments as well as NGO and CSO efforts to provide security for the citizens despite Boko Haram's violent insurgency in the northern part of the country. For example, Tony further narrated the following in his story:

TONY: If you define security in the context of human, then the EU has played a fundamental role in supporting ECOWAS' efforts in Nigeria through its partnership with nongovernmental organizations and civil society groups in projects that have empowered and benefited lots of Nigerians amidst the Boko Haram violence in northern Nigeria

NGOs and CSOs are also providing important assistance to local communities in the region since the wake of Boko Haram's violent behavior. However, international NGOs (INGOs) often receive superior treatment over local NGOs and CSOs in terms of external funding opportunities as the local NGOs and CSOs are either not trusted by external donors or they lack the capacity to compete with the international ones. The local Nigerian NGOs and CSOs operating in the northern communities complain about the rather meager support from the global community to empower them to build their capacities and to implement the peacebuilding projects as they know and have the trust of the local people. Other Global North countries also provide bilateral development aid and security support such as DDR, counter-insurgency military training, and anti-corruption training to ECOWAS's member states as well as to NGOs and CSOs (Brechenmacher, 2019). For example, Grace asserts:

: Nigeria and other ECOWAS countries have one time or the other benefitted from bilateral and defense pact which they had entered with countries as the United Kingdom, the United States, Israel, France, China, Russia, among other friendly nations. Besides military exchange programs, ECOWAS countries

benefitted in the areas of counter insurgency military training, DDR, anti-corruption training, and strengthening of civil societies and human rights organizations.

To address some of the perceptions about the role of external donors by the participants, the Nigerian government and ECOWAS will need to step up their financial involvement in dealing with the Boko Haram menace. The worsening conditions in northern Nigeria and the lack of proper handling has caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the region. The donor agencies prioritize working with the Nigerian government, with little connections to the peacebuilding agencies that exist in the conflict context. However, there are indications that more could be achieved if the local NGOs and CSOs are sought and worked with directly. This will fill the expert and funding gap for much promising peacebuilding works at the grassroots. The federal government may blame the donor agencies for sidestepping the Nigerian authority, but in the few instances where donors work collaboratively with local groups much was achieved. Nigeria is a resource-rich country, and much can be achieved with less funding from Western donors if the priorities are set right.

7.4 ECOWAS's peacebuilding interventions in local communities

ECOWAS peacebuilding effort in northern Nigeria may be viewed from several angles, which includes the survivors' perspective, the government's perspective, and ECOWAS' perspective. ECOWAS plays an important role in exerting pressure on the Nigerian government to take preventive and peacebuilding actions to confront the Boko Haram crisis that necessitates interdependent coordination from member-states. However, the coordination problem long associated with ECOWAS is problematic in terms of addressing the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria as well as in

developing an effective early warning framework to predict, anticipate, plan, and respond to the crisis (Brechenmacher, 2019).

Some of my participants articulated that they were concerned about the lack of coordination around ECOWAS' peacebuilding activities. For example, Adetutu insisted that:

Some conflicts in the West African region precipitates from the topmost echelon of the government. Others brew from the bottom part of the community. While ECOWAS is best positioned to handle issues at the elite level, managing peacebuilding activities at the bottom level have been bedeviled with poor coordination which boils down to the criticism of ECOWAS being elitist and being too far from the people.

In addition to ECOWAS's efforts, INGOs, CSOs, and NGOs have provided humanitarian aid to local communities in northern Nigeria. These aids have been very important, yet it just manages the consequences of Boko Haram's violence rather than devising a just, holistic, and sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of the conflict. ECOWAS must move from humanitarian and securitized actions to peacebuilding, reconciliation, reintegration, transforming relationships, and dealing with the legacies of Boko Haram's violence in terms of trauma reduction and healing.

Local communities' perspectives have been overlooked, ignored, and excluded throughout the war between the federal government and Boko Haram. ECOWAS and the Nigerian federal government have consulted with community elders but have not authentically engaged with local communities. Some of my study participants' recounted that these traditional leaders may not represent the voice of their people because they have their own biases and prejudices and they may no longer live in their communities as they were displaced so they make decisions on their behalf based on

incomplete information. For example, Peter made his opinion known in the following manner:

PETER: It is all right that an institution like ECOWAS, in investigating a conflict, sought the opinion of community leaders as key actors and stakeholders in conflict situations. But assuming that their opinions are infallible or represent solely the position of the community is problematic. These community leaders sometimes take sides in disputes; some have their biases and stereotypes; others are pushed by their values and idiosyncrasies; some may even have turned refugees. Therefore, excluding the positions of average community members could distort reality and complicate peacebuilding processes.

It is important to engage with community leaders, yet ECOWAS' lack of engagement with the local population means that those communities have not been included in the development and ownership of peacebuilding processes that are informed by cultural practices, norms, and values. This means that the peacebuilding and reconciliation processes devised by ECOWAS may not be appropriate in addressing local issues and in some cases may have to exacerbate intercommunal tensions. ECOWAS' peacebuilding initiatives with Boko Haram should use negotiations to transform the conflict. The local communities in the northeast should be aware, prepared, and consulted within advance of any outcomes from ECOWAS' negotiations with Boko Haram that is a highly contentious issue in those communities. Most of my participant's believed that negotiation has an important role to play in ending the conflict however a small section of the local communities vehemently rejected the idea of any official engagement by ECOWAS with Boko Haram. The latter viewpoint emanates either from direct survivors of the Boko Haram insurgency who view ECOWAS and the federal government's ultimate military victory as the only form of justice for them and their dead as well as from political and economic elites or

communities less affected by the daily insecurity of terrorist attacks. For example, John averred the following in his story:

JOHN: As you already know [referring to the interviewer], we in this village have suffered for years from the unwholesome activities of the Boko Haram. We are told that the government wants to negotiate with sect members and reward them for years of attacks against our people, families, friends, and loved ones... Any means other than military victory would amount to injustice and disrespect to those who experienced death in the hands of Boko Haram sect members.

On the other hand, some of my participant's advocated for a hybrid security peacebuilding approach. They contended that engaging in negotiations with Boko Haram must be combined with military actions to resolve the insurgency as quickly as possible. Similarly, some security actors working in the context of the insurgency shared this viewpoint with me privately. Also, the local communities support ECOWAS to engage with Boko Haram to negotiate an end to the violent conflict. Generally, local people desire a negotiated end to the conflict before negotiating more contentious issues such as the release of prisoners and the creation of humanitarian corridors because they perceive that addressing these issues first would reward Boko Haram and heighten local people's anger and despair.

The reintegration of former Boko Haram combatants will be successful if the DDR strategy is developed jointly with local communities. Local communities have strong concerns and fears concerning the reintegration and reconciliation with former Boko Haram combatants. Some of my participants noted that they would find it hard to accept former Boko Haram combatants back into their community and that it is too soon to be thinking about their reintegration. For example, Kabiru averred the following in his narrative:

KABIRU: The night my wife and children were murdered, though three years ago, is still fresh in my mind. I was attacked and I lay helplessly watching sect members inflict injuries on Asmau [my wife]. The last thing I can do to honor her memory is to avoid cohabiting with the perpetrators of such violence. You talk about rehabilitation and reintegration, but I see no possibility in such a cowardly act designed to reward some people for committing evil against the others

Local communities have endured and suffered immensely with many losing family and friends, and their homes as they are permanently scarred from the violence. Local people continue to experience continuing traumatic disorders and they rely on cultural healing and reconciliation rituals and the few counseling services that are available to help support their healing process. They will find the reintegration of former Boko Haram combatants into their communities that are responsible for their trauma a difficult pill to swallow. ECOWAS and the Nigerian federal government are not preparing those survivors for the return of former Boko Haram fighters.

My participants narrated that ECOWAS' reintegration program must prioritize families and communities impacted by the violence so that they can prepare and get used to the return of people associated with Boko Haram. ECOWAS's peacebuilding program must also assist families and local communities to cope with their trauma and suffering while creating critical space for them to tell their stories and to get involved in coexistence, forgiveness, and reconciliation processes. These peacebuilding and reconciliation programs must build in local communities' concerns, perspectives, and cultural practices and not be imposed on them by ECOWAS.

ECOWAS failure to engage with local communities means that the reintegration process of ex-combatants fails to reflect justice for victims from the local population. Plus they have very little information or knowledge about the DDR program. Some of my participants noticed that local community members had no idea when former Boko Haram combatants were returned to them. For example, Tanko

explicated that many local communities were not informed ahead of time when ex-combatants were returning to their communities. He reported on this issue as follows:

TANKO: Just as they [Boko Haram sect members] brazenly came in number and attacked us and our families, they were packaged and delivered to us by the government people who claimed that they have repented from their old ways. This came without prior notice or efforts to prepare our minds to receive these men who for a long time have been the source of sorrows. We cannot trust their repentance; we believe they still pose several degrees of threat to our community.

ECOWAS's lack of sensitivity in alerting local communities to its reintegration initiatives can lead to local people's misconceptions about the process that ends up fuelling their anger so that it could derail the peace process. These people believe that former Boko Haram combatants pose a threat to local communities. Local people do not make a clear distinction between low-risk individuals and those that played an active role during the insurgency because ECOWAS failed to make it clear that these individuals are not a threat, so in many cases, they resist the reintegration process, even when the ex-combatants are not a security threat. My participants indicate that ECOWAS must inform local communities that low-risk Boko Haram members do not pose a threat, so that the reintegration process runs smoothly.

My participants also pointed out that Boko Haram's recruitment of men and women are shrouded in misperceptions and stereotypes. Local people seem to believe that men voluntarily joined Boko Haram while women were coerced to join this is even though women were used as shaheed suicide bombers. Local communities saw male Boko Haram recruits as a greater threat than women who are more likely to be tolerated and welcomed back into their communities. Reintegrated men are forced out of their communities. For example, Grace articulated that ECOWAS must work to sensitize

and educate local communities about the reintegration process so that former male and female Boko Haram members can move back into their communities:

GRACE: The men are considered very dangerous even more than the women sect members. The men could still be dangerous, unlike the women who have to be armed by the male to be able to embark on suicide missions. Female sect members are easily reabsorbed by the community as against their male counterparts. But to me, I believe they are all dangerous until proven otherwise. Authorities must work with the community to convince the people of the commitment of these repentant and as well educate our members on how to accommodate them since it is not an easy thing to do.

ECOWAS's reintegration programs must enlighten and inform local communities about the reality that men and women played a variety of roles within Boko Haram; some women were forced to join the insurgency while others did so willingly. Consequently, ECOWAS's reintegration program must include gender inclusion as well as local education and consultation with its risk appraisal process evaluating former Boko Haram members. Furthermore, local people are not enthusiastic about the Nigerian federal government making any propositions to Boko Haram about negotiating an end to the war. ECOWAS, as well as the Nigerian state, does not appear to have a clear-cut anti-terrorism and extremist policy agenda to could mitigate the Nigerian population's concerns about negotiating with the Boko Haram terrorists

7.5 Key Findings

Chapter seven explored my participants' experiences and perceptions regarding ECOWAS' prevention and peacebuilding capacities as well as the challenges it encountered in the pursuance of its regional governance role in the West African region. Their ambiguity with the terms could lead to conflict prevention and peacebuilding losing their distinct meaning in the northern Nigeria conflict. The study participants

revealed that conflict prevention is a structural and operational process to address the underlying root causes of violent conflict. They understood peacebuilding to use nonviolent processes to transform unjust structures and systems to create the conditions for positive peace so that all persons are treated equitably and justly. Both processes combined can de-escalate and reduce protracted ethnoreligious conflicts from escalating into violence and they can improve the party's capacities to resolve their conflicts with their conflict intervention and peacebuilding methods. Fourteen themes emerged inductively from the data.

First, West Africa, as the study reveals, is a cultural mosaic. Its diversity is demonstrated by the proliferation of crosscutting ethnopolitical groups across most of its borders. These may be a source of strength but as the findings demonstrate, they are also a source of contagious insecurity that hampers the character of ECOWAS member-states in reacting to ethnopolitical conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency, which could be extended or replicated in their respective domain by conflict actors. Complicating this factor, also, are cultural fault lines that delineate the West African region under the Portuguese, English, and French cultures and their spheres of influence. To this end, the language of regional security becomes political and poses a palpable challenge to the growing challenge of regional security governance. Conducting peacebuilding in the language of the victims of conflict is far more effective than the use of interpreters who might risk diluting the narratives of victims or peacemakers. The issue of language, also, may pose a secondary challenge in military/peacebuilding intervention similar to those recorded by ECOMOG, yet maintaining regional peace operations and command in protracted conflicts using a terror strategy poses a great challenge to ECOWAS's regional security governance.

Second, conflict prevention lies as an indirect contradiction between sovereignty and non-interference in a state's internal affairs. Realist theorists proclaim that preventing ethno-religious violent conflicts to protect people's human rights fulminates state sovereignty and the global community shouldn't prevent violence in states or regions where it doesn't have any strategic interests (Mac Ginty, 2013a). Others have associated conflict prevention with Global North neo-colonial expansionism, liberal capitalist globalization, and imperialism (Stewart, 2010). Moreover, states and regional organizations often miss key opportunities to prevent crises because of the lack of resources or in not having the political will to engage in these conflicts and create conflict prevention and peacebuilding systems to impede the escalation of these intrastate armed conflicts. Thus, my participants claimed that it is typical of the AU whose lack of resources, will power, and legitimacy concerns culminate in its indifference and delegation of responsibilities to sub-regional blocs like ECOWAS. The creation of early warning systems to forecast the escalation of these protracted ethno-religious conflicts could empower states and regional peace and security organizations like ECOWAS to create and implement effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding systems.

Third, ECOWAS is a key regional peace and security organization that has an important role to play to prevent and to intervene in both intra-state and cross-state conflicts like the Boko Haram crisis. ECOWAS' military arm, ECOMOG has a direct mandate to prevent regional crises. However, ethno-religious conflicts have sparked and evolved in the region over time whereas ECOWAS' conflict prevention and peacebuilding intervention processes have also not progressed to meet these new crises. In addition, ECOWAS's member states are too fragile to cope with the growing sophistication and complexities of these intra-state and transborder crises, and so they

need to pool their resources and ideas together within ECOWAS' institutions to build their conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacities to handle protracted and prolonged crises. As one of my participant's reflected, ECOWAS has had very little experience in the prevention and management of cross-border violent extremism such as Boko Haram's, and this affects the way it reacted to the upsurge of violent extremism in northern Nigeria. The further politicization of the conflict complicates it as some parties who profit in the conflict engage in subversive activities. Committing more effort to assuage people's humanitarian concerns, participants noted, was reactionary of ECOWAS, and depicts its lack of an adequate and practical framework for arresting cross-border ethnopolitical extremist groups in the ECOWAS sub-region.

Fourth, this study, also points out that crises like the Boko Haram insurgency have regional and global linkages (e.g., ISIS, Al-Shabab), yet their initial manifestation is purely domestic as they take on the state before they become regional or global actors. Consequently, states and regional bodies like ECOWAS are responsible for putting together robust conflict prevention and peacebuilding systems to prevent and transform the escalation of these conflicts before they spiral into ultimate chaos. For example, Boko Haram began as a struggle with Nigeria's federal government, and it has now metamorphosed into a cross-border crisis that now affects neighboring states and communities. Consequently, regional peace and security organizations like ECOWAS must coordinate their intelligence gathering network to accompany its interventions such as the use of force, early warning systems, and conflict prevention strategies. The rapid deployment of resources and a rapid reaction force have to be put in place as quick interventions at the regional level are necessary once the triggers that escalate ethnoreligious conflicts are identified.

Fifth, my participants observed that ECOWAS' purpose, function, and structure need to be more critically defined by its member states. ECOWAS is a regional economically integrated union as well as a multilevel regional peace and security organization with a military wing, ECOMOG that is supposed to address regional conflicts when they arise. However, ECOWAS has become less cogent and dynamic in its involvement in protracted regional conflicts. ECOMOG has mainly addressed rebellious and outright secessionist movements in states that were rather easy to handle with direct military intervention or a conflict resolution strategy that lies in stark contrast to the new terrorist networks attacking regional structures across porous borders. ECOWAS depended less on financial, personnel, and technical resources in engaging with domestic crises. In our changing global order, terrorist conflicts are taking on expansive and more complicated dimensions (see Kaldor, 2012), so that it is less straightforward for ECOWAS to evolve and shift to face these complex conflicts. Boko Haram is a complex decision-making dilemma for ECOWAS because it either has to decide between prioritizing its resources to withstand security challenges or in fostering economic integration amongst member states. However, as the Boko Haram crisis has indicated, economic resources are inevitably connected to peace and security, which leaves ECOWAS in a state of oblivion.

Sixth, ECOWAS is only a loose comity of states that is dependent on the goodwill of member-states. There is a growing movement of ECOWAS towards supra-nationalism. However, participants noted a general lack of political unity among members which hampers the regional body's making of and ratification of decisions. Additionally, "big" players such as Nigeria and Ghana oftentimes hijack and use the regional body to advance their interests and goals. Nigeria, specifically, was noted by our participants to use the regional body to launder its international image right from

the days of ECOMOG intervention in the Mano River conflicts. This does not question or undermine Nigeria's leadership role in the regional body but it provides insight on the possible gridlock that could fracture its decisions and the ambivalence that could stall security decisions, especially when the "big" players are the most affected. ECOWAS's classification of the Boko Haram insurgency as a Nigerian affair before intervening demonstrates the difficulty in separating Nigeria from ECOWAS and vice versa.

Seventh, the issue of ECOWAS' Commission and the composition of its political leadership also arose from some of the respondent's narratives. The urge for the state's inclusiveness and affirmative action in representation is a sustainable way of running the ECOWAS body and cementing its members' commitments. However, my participants worried that such policy and politics have oftentimes, complicate peace and negotiation processes and could hinder ECOWAS' efficiency and conflict prevention capacity. The hovering hand of Nigeria in the emergence of ECOWAS's leadership is reflective of Nigeria's power and natural leadership in the West African region. But it is also repercussive of the rivalry and bad blood by other members that could cost the regional body a stable polity for security governance and operations.

Additionally, the stability of this regional bloc becomes less certain because it appears weaker in the wake of its paralysis in the Boko Haram insurgency, which certainly affects all of the member states. Member states have to decide between placing their sovereignty and domestic interests ahead of membership of ECOWAS. My participants, for instance, noted that Boko Haram was regarded as a Nigerian problem that was a position that was reinforced by Nigeria's treatment of conflict as a domestic issue. ECOWAS's delayed response has been partially tied to the "religio-ethnic" sensitivity, which is further complicated by the fact some of the primary groups in the

Boko Haram crisis crisscross most West African boundaries. In contrast, Boko Haram has become internationalized posing a direct threat to these member state's national interests that demands a coordinated response from ECOWAS to thwart Boko Haram's agenda. Economically, ECOWAS should continue its multi-level integration and evolution in the same way that the European Economic Community (EEC) evolved into the modern-day European Union (EU) that can provide much-needed resources for its military arm so that it can deal with today's terrorist challenges and new wars. My research participants, however, faulted the westernization of the dynamics and structures of regional groupings in Africa without regards to the uniqueness and peculiarity of African problems. Albeit, with some optimism, that if this proven peacebuilding and security models are adopted and modified in line with the West African peculiar climate, a positive outcome could be recorded, especially in regional security governance.

Eight, ECOWAS's conflict prevention and peacebuilding architecture and strategy incorporates member states' openness and transparency, providing truth and justice for survivors, holding perpetrators accountable for their actions, facilitating intergroup reconciliation, and the rehabilitation and resettlement of displaced citizens and ex-combatants. ECOWAS, as an institution, possesses these beautiful policy frameworks yet is challenged by the incapacity of its member states who are mostly poor, unequally developed, with peculiar socioeconomic challenges. ECOWAS has the potential to be an imposing regional force, yet it is beleaguered by structural and systemic factors that limit its operational capacity to deliver regional peace and security by defeating Boko Haram and empowering local people in northern Nigeria. Fighting a terrorist group involves an irregular engagement that is not precise, unorganized, protracted, dynamic in tactics, draining, and very expensive to sustain. My participants

observed that West African countries with their domestic challenges lack the needed funds to support such operations against the Boko Haram group. Moreover, until recently, most perceive the Boko Haram threat as domestic and failed to commit to combatting it. However, global, regional, national, and non-state actors need to be ready and willing to coordinate their efforts to prevent new wars and terrorism.

Ninth, regrettably, ECOWAS has failed to effectively tackle the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria even when member states and external actors have poured a lot of resources into the regional organization. My participants recognized that ECOWAS needs to create a more effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy to prevent terrorism and ethnoreligious wars in the West African region. The participants reported that ECOWAS's present system is ineffective in protecting and securing a peaceful regional milieu due to the lack of political will by member states, and incapacitated institutions that are not capable of preventing violent conflicts in the West African region, and that are dependent on outside sources and actors to provide developmental and military aid. In line with the above, this international aid and assistance were adjudged by my participants to be very invaluable just as they could be very threatening and harmful in the long run in the context of dependency and breach in security.

Tenth, importantly, there is a general issue of distrust among ECOWAS's member-states that goes even beyond the narrative of sovereignty. This is repercussive in the ambivalence that surrounds the attempt by ECOWAS to manage and coordinate the West African counterterrorism campaigns in Nigeria and Mali. The MNJTF seems to override the prerequisite of ECOWAS because it allows for the flexible handling of material and human resources around the Lake Chad region in the mission to dislodge the Boko Haram insurgency. Albeit, the MNJTF has not been very effective as

geopolitics come into play in the command and coordination of the four commands which operate in the Lake Chad region. Invariably, the MNJTF has not been able to manage and negotiate the conflict of interests among these Lake Chad states affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. ECOWAS member states will have to negotiate with each other and accommodate their interests if ECOWAS is to create efficient policies and systems with regards to conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies in contrast to the prominence of each state's sovereignty issues and non-intervention in the internal affairs of states that curbs the formulation of an accepted, legitimate, and effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding architecture and procedures that prevent violent conflict or address its aftermath by dealing with its complex roots causes. To provide regional security in the twenty-first century, the idea of non-intervention in intra-state conflicts is impossible, so the suspicions of ECOWAS's member states must be mollified, so that legitimate conflict prevention and peacebuilding is enshrined into law and practice in the field.

Eleventh, also, the global system is fragile, and powerful political hegemons or regional organizations such as ECOWAS will not intervene in conflicts that do not have strategic interests for them. For example, during the Rwandan genocide, the US, the EU, and Russia failed to get involved to prevent the massacre and it was left to an emasculated UN force led by Canadian General Romeo Dallaire to deal with the consequences of Hutu led violence. Global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary fund (IMF) must create incentives for hegemonic powers and regional conglomerates to commit personnel and resources, and collaborate with NGOs, CSOs, and INGOs to implement preventive and intervention efforts into protracted ethnoreligious conflicts and states afflicted by terrorism. Concerning the politics of intervention, my participants noted that ECOWAS is always swift in

intervening on issues that mostly affect the elites of the domestic countries. To this end, ECOWAS' peacebuilding efforts seem to focus more on the elite level while issues predominantly affecting the masses in the middle and bottom grassroots levels are often delayed, and when addressed, are poorly coordinated and this reinforces the old position of ECOWAS being an elitist institution. The effect is that ECOWAS, by focusing on the elite as the core of its peacebuilding strategy, can barely understand the complexities of conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency from the perspective of local communities' stakeholders who are the most affected. The intermediaries between the affected communities, the domestic government, and the regional body, have their perspectives, biases, and stereotypes which are potent enough to distort and politicize the situation on the ground. Consequently, ECOWAS' and the community's definition of peacebuilding are not synthesized, and this could boomerang out of control in the long run. A good indicator of change and progress is the use of DDR as a form of the Boko Haram post-conflict justice system which is regarded by those at the community level to be deceitful and unjust. Hence, there must be some form of harmony at the institutional and community levels on what constitutes peacebuilding and restorative justice. Additionally, ECOWAS must sensitize local people about the reasons why DDR is the best thing to do especially as the community people valorize military campaigns as a form of justice.

Twelfth , as ECOWAS lacks the resources and general capacity to halt the spate of violent extremism and insurgency in the West African region, there is a need for more collaboration with other international organizations and countries that are fronting and are ready to support the global struggle against violent extremism. The US is the unipolar power and global hegemon. The US is the legitimate global leader in the war on terrorism, and it takes on the responsibility of policemen of the world in leading

other key states and regional actors like ECOWAS against this disease of terrorism that affects humankind. On the African continent, Nigeria and South Africa are regional hegemony leading the struggle against terrorism, and they have a responsibility to collaborate in working with ECOWAS, the Peace and Security Council, and the African Peace and Security Architecture, as well as the AU and, South African Development Community toward peace, security, and development on the continent. They must converge and collaborate on a preventive peacebuilding strategy for the continent because investing in such a system is cheaper and more constructive over the long term.

Thirteenth, my participants, additionally, revealed the need to integrate conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes as well as security operations within and between ECOWAS institutions addressing the Boko Haram insurgency within the West African sub-region. Specific ECOWAS departments must coordinate their efforts better and be provided with the much-needed resources that they require to complete these tasks. Most of the bureaucratic gridlocks result from poor communication, lack of consensus, and unsound competition between ECOWAS's departments and programs. ECOWAS often responds poorly to the myriad of non-state actors' needs and demands that are doing conflict prevention and peacebuilding work in the grassroots in part due to suspicions emanating from some member-states. The complete lack of ECOWAS's integration means that the implementation of policy on the ground stalls as non-state actors suffer the consequences of organizational inertia. Also, ECOWAS is made up of developing countries from the Global South. It does not have a pragmatic early warning process to forecast the escalation of conflict or a process to distill and decipher the information gathered by such a system so that conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes that are implemented become flawed when they are rolled out on the ground, and that impedes ECOWAS's overall effectiveness.

Consequently, ECOWAS, through the leadership of both Ghana and Nigeria, must commit efforts to build its capacity so that it can effectively handle conflict in the region. ECOWAS is the organization that is most proximate to the dangers of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, and it is the most pragmatic and significant apparatus in transforming the root causes of this protracted conflict and implementing viable and effective peace and security solutions working in harmony with local communities.

7.6 Conclusion

The dynamics of conflict, peace, and security in the 21st-century have markedly changed and have created the need for both international cooperation and regional integration. Boko Haram poses a security risk in the region that has raised the stakes for ECOWAS. Consequently, ECOWAS must transform and reposition itself in the current reality to be able to reach its full potential. The regional conflict prevention framework has not been fully implemented by international and regional organizations, states, and NGOs and CSOs in various protracted ethnoreligious conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. Much of the conceptual misunderstandings embedded within conflict prevention still seem to be present. This confusion seems to be linked to the stage in which conflict prevention should begin as well as the intervention tools and methods that could be engaged to address the underlying root causes of the northern Nigerian conflict. It remains difficult for the partners (ECOWAS, the federal government, NGOs, CSOs) to arrive at a consensus on what constitutes an effective preventive peacebuilding system.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that the issue of violent extremism in northern Nigeria has steadily escalated from a domestic problem in early 2009 to a regional crisis and presently, a global menace. Consequently, Boko Haram and its splinters groups' violent behavior have attracted the attention of the Nigerian state, ECOWAS and its partners, the AU and its partners, and the global community; because their existence threatens state, regional and global peace and security. For over a decade now, they have injected a plethora of energy and resources into the quest to restore normalcy and build peace in northern Nigeria and other affected Border areas. Efforts have also been made to contain and de-escalate the problem from moving from the community to the national and regional levels.

However, the peacebuilding trajectories of the contexts of the Nigerian state, the NGOs involved, and the ECOWAS regional body has been problematic and has failed to yield the expected results (Hoffman, 2017). Peacebuilding efforts have followed the top-bottom approach. Perspectives and evidence that shape peacebuilding policies are also sourced from the topmost echelons of government and politicians who do not represent the diverse opinions and positions of the bottom local community members (Anugwom, 2019) who are the most affected by Boko Haram violence. A misrepresentation of the problem, its roots, and processes impact the outcomes of peace efforts and peacebuilding processes both at the national and regional levels. It also distorts the understanding of communities affected by the violence of how to move along on the pathway to peace and how such a trajectory, within the context of their understanding of the problem, would be good for them that would not complicate the current situation. The exclusion of the locals from the design and implementation of

peacebuilding strategies means that local community members do not own the peacebuilding efforts. And the generalization of peacebuilding tactics negates the geo-contextual dynamics which, houses the same problem as well as posing unique causes within northern Nigeria such as the religious and ethnic mix in the northcentral states, extreme poverty, and porous borders in the northeast states, and the polarized communal politics in the northwest all of which have led to clashes over political and doctrinal authority.

Consequently, the research for this thesis utilized a grounded theory qualitative method in which 40 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to gauge the experiences and perceptions of the local population with regards to the effects of both local and foreign actors at preventing violent conflict in their communities. Specifically, the research sought to (1) analyze the participants understanding of the impact of ECOWAS' conflict prevention framework in addressing violent extremism and terrorism in northern Nigeria; (2) ascertain the effectiveness and capacity of ECOWAS' conflict prevention framework in achieving it's peacebuilding and conflict resolution objectives; (3) assess the level of successes recorded by the ECOWAS, the Nigerian state, and nonstate actors in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding in northern Nigeria; and (4) analyze the attributes of the ECOWAS's peacebuilding framework and its challenges in building peace in northern Nigeria.

The data used for this study was collected from 40 participants who were spread across several political units and about 15 state agencies, regional institutions, NGOs, and INGOs. Six of the participants (15 percent) were from the top political echelons; 10 (25 percent) were of middle-range level, and 24 of the participants (60 percent) represented the grassroots level.

The research was not done in isolation. It followed a contextual analysis of the study area and a review of related literature that offered insights, dimensions, and perspectives that aided the research to properly situate the study in the right frame. Also, the interview questions raised in the study were anchored on the existing PACS and peacebuilding literature. An analysis of the peacebuilding literature in northern Nigeria reflected the exclusion of grassroots stakeholders and justifies my adoption of the grounded theory. This will be further discussed in the course of this concluding chapter.

Chapter eight, therefore, focuses on: (1) the major key findings, (2) the grounded theory that emerged and structured the research findings is explained, (3) the limitations of the study are briefly outlined; and (4) and suggestions are made for possible future studies that could further advance research on community ownership of peacebuilding processes in northern Nigeria.

8.2 Overall key findings

Here, I present the overall key findings of the study. Chapter 5 explored the participants' understanding of the problem of violent extremism and the perennial menace of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. Their experiences and perceptions of the emergence and continued existence of the extremist separatist group was highlighted. The participants failed to unanimously agree about the deep root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. However, they identified religion as a key variable in the conflict. They generally agreed that religion was the livewire that caused radical and violent extremism, yet they also noted that the capability of sustaining insurgent groups like Boko Haram in northern Nigeria is based on the manipulation of the environment by poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and the *almajiri* school system (see Oluwaseun & Olanrewaju, 2019). The latter was particularly noted to be a “pond” where Boko Haram

fishes for recruits. The *almajiri* school system is poorly funded by the government, badly organized, and exposes young children and adolescents to a myriad of negative influences that obscure their worldview and make them easy prey and apostles of extremist ideas.

In addition, there is also the problem of religious fanaticism and the perennial ambivalence between Christians and Muslims that often makes killing a member of an oppositional religious group an option wherever there is a religious crisis. Our participants pointed out the instrumentation of religion in the analysis of the causality of the Boko Haram crisis. Politicians and elites use religion to mobilize and use adherents for vain and selfish purposes (see Smith, 2015; Thurston, 2018). Yet these “foot soldiers” are only available as a result of local socioeconomic deprivation which makes them very vulnerable to be used as cannon fodder against their compatriots in southern Nigeria who are comparatively advantaged in terms of education and opportunity for economic prosperity. There exists strong intersectionality between religion, politics, and socioeconomic problems in the emergence of the Boko Haram group (see Anugwom, 2019; Asuelime et al., 2015). The religious ingredient is immersed in the history of violent extremism which has bedeviled pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial northern Nigeria.

Further, my participants’ insights portray the insurgency in northern Nigeria as a Christian-Muslim fracas of which the northern Christians are the primary targets and victims in the Boko Haram scourge. The insurgent group’s ideology is to eradicate Western innovation that has links to Christianity. However, the insurgent group did not discriminate against one’s religious orientation in conducting its violent attacks in the beginning. The participants also noted Boko Haram’s series of attacks against mosques and prominent Muslims as well as against their Christian counterparts. At the bottom

level of the affected communities, however, Boko Haram attacks any group that is perceived to be against its doctrine or ideology (Smith, 2015). While the Christian minority groups perceive Boko Haram attacks as a ploy against northern minority Christian communities, the Muslims who are also not spared in these attacks see a common problem within diverse local communities.

Nevertheless, my participants noted that victims of Boko Haram's carnage transcend one's faith and religious orientation. Women, for instance, are victims of Boko Haram kidnappings, forced marriages, forced labor, slavery, and sexual abuse, and in fact, commodified by the insurgent group. Women are also weaponized as agents of suicide attacks against soft targets so that both women and children are the most threatened societal groups by Boko Haram's violence (Matfess, 2017). Local men also suffer forceful recruitment into the group. To say the least, everyone is affected by Boko Haram violence in northern Nigeria.

The participants articulated that an unfortunate situation is the lack of serious interventions by NGOs and ECOWAS to ameliorate the people's pain and suffering caused by Boko Haram's violence in northern Nigeria. The Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs) set up by the Nigerian government to provide succor to the victims of Boko Haram's insurgency are bedeviled by corruption, which further complicates the hardship experienced by the victims of its violent extremism in northern Nigeria. Some of the most visible organizations identified by participants that are active on the ground are the ICRC, the MSF, and others who offer supplies that satisfy some of the people's basic human needs. Additionally, ECOWAS and the UN's humanitarian intervention have gone a long way in rendering rehabilitative support for affected communities yet IDPs illuminate the connections of socioeconomic injustice to the upheavals in the northern part of Nigeria.

Peacebuilding efforts by the Nigerian state, ECOWAS, and NGOs must be de-politicized, carefully thought-through, and designed to allow communities affected by the violence to actively participate in all stages of interventions. Efforts must be concentrated to quench the embers of extremism by de-escalating the problem to provide hope through tackling socioeconomic problems that make the northern region conducive for Boko Haram to fill the power vacuum. Poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy must be treated as emergency issues in northern Nigeria and the youths must be actively engaged in productive employment and educational ventures that will keep their minds busy and their pockets full so that they do not easily fall prey to politico-religious manipulation by Boko Haram or the Federal government. My participants also noted that the government and ECOWAS' overreliance on the military option antagonizes troubled communities who suffer double jeopardy in the hands of Boko Haram insurgents and ruthless state soldiers. Community members must be included, whereas, in real peace and peacebuilding activities that must start from the bottom up. Peacebuilders must fix the *almajiri* system and regularize similar institutions as a means of combating extremist ideologies. Peacebuilding must be community-oriented and must respect the unique contexts and dimensions of the problem.

The findings in Chapter 6 related to how the participants' experienced and perceived conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding efforts by the states, ECOWAS, and NGOs operating in the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria. The participants' discussed the confidence and the living conditions of people, the level of transparency of peacebuilders, issues of accountability and justice, and the level of community involvement and ownership of the peacebuilding processes.

The participants alleged that the Nigerian government and ECOWAS' peacebuilding operations in northern Nigeria were opaque and lacked transparency that

impacted local people's confidence in these processes. The people's lack of confidence was further complicated by targeted misinformation that communities are fed by ECOWAS and Nigerian government officials. The participants argued that the federal government's attempts to censor some information has culminated in the telling of half-truths, and it has exacerbated the growing distance and diffidence which exists between affected community members, ECOWAS, and the Nigerian state. The participants noted that the Nigerian military is notorious for misinforming the public about the number of civilian casualties killed and wounded during terrorist attacks.

The participants also faulted ECOWAS's general leadership disposition towards the plights of the affected communities. For instance, the participants reported how ECOWAS personnel's display of affluence when visiting IDPs is a practice that is depressing to camp members who lack their basic human needs as they assume that ECOWAS employees are profiting from their misfortune. ECOWAS' celebrated interventions do not have visible impacts on the people at the grassroots level, people who happen to be the most hit by Boko Haram violence. However, some of my participants dissented from this view and blamed the bias in state media reporting, especially for the seeming unpopularity of ECOWAS' peacebuilding projects and interventions in the region, as there are tensions and a power struggle between the Nigerian government and ECOWAS (Akanji, 2019; Onditi, 2020).

There was, however, a consensus among my participants with regard to the failure of the Nigerian state to provide leadership in the IDP camps. Necessities such as water, food, clothing, and housing material are treated as luxurious by the government who fails to provide these essential survival items to people living in the IDP camps that are left to their own fate. My participants attributed the government's behavior to the pervasive nature of political corruption which manifests itself in the

camps. My participants recognized that political corruption could be problematic for the smooth execution of peacebuilding interventions. They accused the government's partnering agencies of diverting relief materials and funds away from people in need or sometimes frustrating the efforts of foreign NGOs as a ploy to conceal the political rot and corruption that exists in the system.

The findings also revealed that ECOWAS possesses the power to investigate the corruption allegations leveled against Nigerian government officials with regards to peacebuilding projects in northern Nigeria. Yet ECOWAS has failed to do so. My participants suggested that ECOWAS should step-up its game by arbitrating and mediating the peace process since there is a general lack of confidence in the Nigerian government to pursue a just reconciliation with Boko Haram. ECOWAS intervention could help in bridging the gap between the federal Nigerian government and afflicted communities who crave genuine leadership to step in and resolve matters in the face of the adversity they struggle with. The interviewees' demanded a people-centered approach to transitional justice in the northern Nigeria conflict, and they believed that ECOWAS is capable of facilitating such a process if it so chooses to live up to its responsibility.

Specifically, Nigeria has failed in its primary duty to protect the lives and property of Nigerians living within its northern territory as it fails to also provide humanitarian security to the IDP camps that have portended a life of misery for the people living there. The camp communities are not secure and fall easy prey to Boko Haram insurgent foot-soldiers. The federal government should be showing strong leadership. Even if it fails to defeat the insurgency, it should be able to look after the persons displaced by the violence and coordinate with external bodies and partners to push through a sustainable peacebuilding plan that includes local people.

The general weakness of the Nigerian defense apparatuses is evident in its failed attempts to deal with vigilantism, terrorism, and community policing. My participants proclaimed that a paradigm shift is needed from a centralized policing network to a community-based approach to detect and fight crime. They believed that the upper echelon of the Nigerian security system is highly inefficient and needs to be overhauled into something more efficient, effective, and human security centered. The participants explicated that the corruption problem in terms of security racketeering has become evident during the government's struggle with the Boko Haram insurgency. Additionally, the participants argued that the government's failure to ignore facts in making its policy has blurred its vision about the nature and causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. This has culminated in redundancy in the country's counterterrorism strategies, a political situation that my participants believed could be remedied with the government being transparent in communicating its counterterrorism and peacebuilding strategies. While some participants specifically advocated for a return to a traditional conflict management strategy, others advocated for a regional peacebuilding strategy on the grounds of the transnational nature of Boko Haram's violent activities. What is evident from the respondent's stories is that community members lack confidence in the present government's peacebuilding efforts in northern Nigeria. The government's confrontational approach in its struggle against the Boko Haram insurgency is counterproductive and is not demoralizing its fighters from continuing on the path of war. Instead, my participants contended that sustainable peacebuilding has to include socio-economic and infrastructural regional development.

NGOs and CSOs activities are insufficient in terms of sustainable peacebuilding as understood by my participants. These organizations do not try to maintain peace as their humanitarian efforts try to ameliorate the lives of those affected by the insurgency

in the northern region. These NGOs and CSOs provide education, basic needs, and other forms of supports that are directly felt by Boko Haram's victims of violence. My participants believed that these organizations have complimented the government's attempt at youth de-radicalization and that they have invested in human capital development through vocational education. The attempt made by USAID to establish an Early Warning System (EWS) for early detection and monitoring has yet paid-off in halting Boko Haram's violent activities.

Academic organizations have also contributed to our understanding of the Boko Haram crisis through research and publications. Yet they can still do more in terms of developing Early Warning System (EWS) and an Early Response System (ERS) for the military and policymakers alike as well as providing alternative peacebuilding models. In addition, the media, especially the free media, has played a very key and important role in informing the local masses about what is really happening on the ground. My participants noted that the mainstream media relies on official reports from the government that often deflate the intensity of the problem while social media searches for the actual 'facts' for its reports. My participants agreed that the media has played a key role in the peacebuilding process in northern Nigeria.

The findings in Chapter 7 outlined my participants' experiences and perceptions of ECOWAS' peacebuilding and conflict prevention capacity and the challenges it faces in its regional security efforts with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency. They argued that peacebuilding does not address the root causes of conflicts. Similarly, ECOWAS' conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy encompass and include transparency, transitional justice, intergroup reconciliation, and the rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs and ex-combatants. Moreover, my participants highlighted the

various challenges that derail ECOWAS from containing violent extremism in northern Nigeria.

First, ECOWAS' effort at building peace in the West African region is limited by the mosaic nature of the region. My participants, for instance, feared that ECOWAS member states could have been sluggish in reacting to the Boko Haram menace due to its cross-border pervasiveness of violent measures as it struggled to contain and prevent the spread of violence in the region. The historic-cultural fault lines that divide the countries of the West African region are as a result of Portuguese, English, and French colonialism. Consequently, pursuing a common security and peacebuilding purpose is threatened by the multiplicity of languages, political systems, and the language of peacebuilding, especially in prolonged campaigns, that is a concern for common regional security governance.

Second, ECOWAS lacks the financial resource and willpower to engage in some conflicts or to place early-warning systems to prevent ethnoreligious conflicts in the West African region. Most member states are poor and challenged by their domestic socioeconomic challenges. Fighting irregular warfare is very expensive. While ECOWAS' military wing ECOMOG has historically been competent in peacebuilding interventions, ECOWAS is yet to derive the capacity for proper intervention in ethnoreligious conflicts. My participants noted that so far the interventions by ECOWAS to the insurgency in Nigeria and Mali is demonstrative of the Commission's inexperience in combatting this new threat. Also, ECOWAS' attempt to narrow its peacebuilding endeavors to humanitarian intervention efforts in northern Nigeria against the insurgency was adjudged by my participants to be purely reactionary. It suggests that ECOWAS has a lack of adequate structure for combating such threats. The sophisticated nature of these emerging violent conflicts and wars, such as the Boko

Haram insurgency, means that individual states cannot combat them without support from its members. Thus, ECOWAS must build a strong system that can handle these new threats. It must also collaborate with other regional and international organizations and states in the global struggle against violent extremism.

Third, the threats posed by regional insurgent groups such as Boko Haram starts as a domestic problem before snowballing to a regional threat to security. This means that state and regional governments must always be on the alert to work out good conflict prevention and peacebuilding systems to de-escalate conflicts such as the Boko Haram insurgency. Consequently, the early deployment of resources and the sharing of intelligence among ECOWAS members would be in the interest of West Africa.

Fourth, my participants also identified the need for s balancing the challenge between ECOWAS' *raison d'être* as an economic organization and its emerging regional security governance. ECOWAS seems to prioritize the former, yet my participants believe that economic resources are connected to peace and security which ECOWAS must pursue with the same level of enthusiasm. Besides, political integration remains low on the list of priorities, this leaves ECOWAS at the mercy of its member states. Lack of political unity hampers its decisionmaking processes, which are further complicated by regional powers trying to exert control over the regional body, such that taking a major regional security decision becomes herculean. My participants noted that is the case between ECOWAS and Nigeria with regards to the Boko Haram insurgency.

In addition, there is the politicization of the leadership of the ECOWAS Commission and its negotiation teams. Some participants felt that there are some member states that are not interested in the collective work of the Commission and this could be detrimental to establishing its best practices, and in attaining maximum results

in negotiation processes. Additionally, member states' strong nationalisms within the ECOWAS organization means that the time between recognizing the emergence of a problem as a regional issue is problematic and leaves room for problems to deteriorate. The participants reported that collective early responses should be coordinated through greater economic and political integration of the West African region like what has happened within the European Union.

Also, my participants averred that ECOWAS has contributed a lot of resources to address the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, yet it has failed to effectively transform the conflict; indicating that the present decision-making system needs to be reconfigured. My participants also recounted that it is very challenging for ECOWAS to prevent violent conflicts in West Africa, especially when it depends on external aid, which poses a risk for long-term stability in the region.

The general sense of distrust among ECOWAS member states makes it difficult for the regional body to coordinate counterterrorism campaigns in the region. The poor management of the Boko Haram crisis by the MNJTF illustrates a leadership vacuum that ECOWAS is supposed to fill. My participants were of the opinion that ECOWAS member states must collaborate and not oppose each other in order to design overall efficient conflict prevention and peacebuilding framework to address regional conflicts.

My participants also noted that there is a political dimension to ECOWAS' interventions that negatively impacts the handling of conflict situations. ECOWAS intervenes in regional conflicts to protect the interests of the West African elite rather than to protect everyday local people using top-down intervention such as the recent deployment of troops to Mali and Guinea-Bissau as well as using other peacebuilding approaches that exclude people in communities yet benefits the elitist institution. My participants reiterated that ECOWAS must include local community ownership in its

peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategic efforts to build trust as well as encourage NGOs and CSOs to build local capacity. My participants averred that ECOWAS must urge the Nigerian state to invest in jobs and education in northern Nigeria as a means towards preventing extremism and radicalization.

8.3 Grounded theoretical concept

This study was anchored on the constructivist grounded theoretical framework to allow for my ease in moving the findings beyond the people's perceptions of the Nigerian state, ECOWAS, and non-state actors' peacebuilding practices in northern Nigeria to creatively proposing a problem-solving model suitable for a better understanding and remedy for violent conflicts in the troubled region (Charmaz, 2005, 2014).

I label my grounded theoretical concept as "Contextual Level Peacebuilding". The concept is not in any way *sui generis* but builds from the works of (De Coning, 2018; Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2006, 2011; Maiangwa, 2020; Chuck Thiessen, 2011) and other scholars who have contributed to the critique of the liberal peacebuilding through critical and emancipatory peacebuilding (Byrne & Thiessen, 2019; 2018; Lee, 2019). The idea of critical and emancipatory peacebuilding depicts a communitarian approach to peacebuilding interventions because it critically synthesizes local or community peacebuilding processes and resilient structures and shows a great degree of grassroots ownership of peace processes (Thiessen, 2011). The priority here lies in each community's definition of "needs, aspirations, and opportunities while adopting the central status of models, states, and institutions as the objects and subjects of peace" (Tadjbakhsh, 2010 cited in Thiessen, 2011, p. 85).

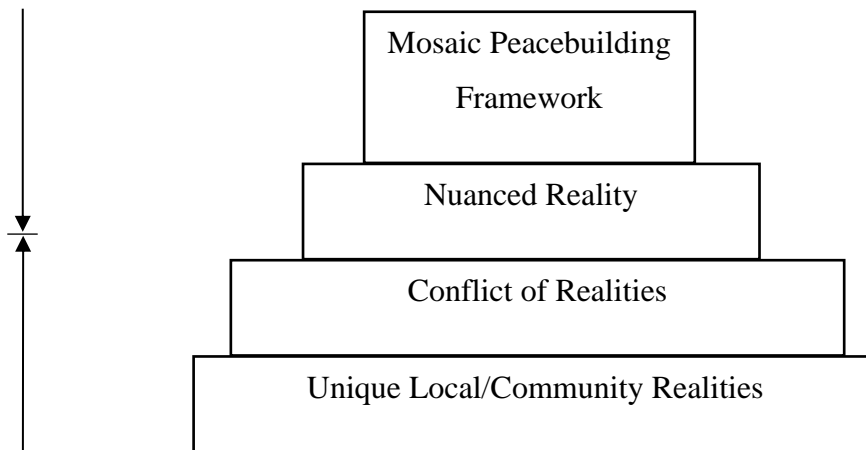
The context level peacebuilding method proposed here assumes that the conflict in northern Nigeria mirrors some unique patterns of cause and effect connections that pose a different array of threats and challenges that are unique to the northern region of

Nigeria. Therefore, the notion of specificity, or being local to a particular context is aimed at ensuring the voices of the local people are heard within the multitude of voices that are out there. The threats and challenges of terrorist insurgency in northern Nigeria are best understood within what the community members envision as causes and solutions to the larger problem (see Chandler, 2017; Randazzo & Torrent, 2020). In engaging with the conflict communities, the Nigerian state and indeed ECOWAS' approach should go back to being really local, because it then becomes possible to get noticed in the global. For instance, there are certain things that could only happen in Kano and no where else in the world. Therefore highlighting these specific contexts within a broader context is important for peacebuilding intervention in northern Nigeria. The context level approach is concerned about the people who are the direct beneficiaries of the peacebuilding practice while not negating other dominant peace paradigms. This approach could work well within different local contexts, as the first step towards a critical and systematic development of a general or an explicit yet nuanced peacebuilding framework or architecture (Tom, 2013). The local context is vast and extremely important, more so, because Africa has often been taken to be a homogenous entity. In understanding the undercurrent to the conflict in the Niger Delta region, Zainab Mai-Bornu delves into a context-specific analysis of the Ijaw and Ogoni people to unravel the nuanced trajectory and dynamics of choice by the two groups during the conflict. Rather than relying on the similar structural factor to explain the rebellion of the Niger Delta people (2020).

Hence, the context level peacebuilding is reminiscent of a bottom-up approach in which a wide array of local ideas and innovative methods about violent conflicts from the affected community becomes the primary consideration in framing peacebuilding interventions. The data is then analyzed, synthesized, and options

developed for a context level peacebuilding intervention to occur. It is based on the realization that one cannot reason, feel, or assume on behalf of others, what is best for them at a particular point in time (Mac Ginty, 2006). In addition, this approach recognizes that the causes, outcomes, solutions, basic human needs, and priorities could be subjective and must, in the context of peacebuilding, walk along the path where the basis of truth is in the reality of those who experience it (De Coning, 2018). If the local contexts are ignored then peacebuilding intervention projects could hurt the intended beneficiaries or even worsen their situation (see Anderson, 1999; Vos Fellman, et al 2015).

Processes of Context Level Peacebuilding model



D’Estrée & Parsons (2018) expresses concerns for the recognition and incorporation of unique cultural elements in traditional societies while devising western models in mediation practices. With emphasis on mediation, D’Estrée & Parsons (Ibid) note that there is a great deal of overlap or intersection between traditional mediation practices with stipulated western models and frameworks. Therefore, maintaining rigidity and pressure for uniformity and routine sacrifices the nuances and innovations in some cultural practices which could be very instructive in dispute resolutions. Therefore they make the case for a Context-Grounded Practice, which stresses the hybridization of cultural differences and contexts in the modelling of conflict resolution

strategies. By focusing on the identification of unique cultural innovations, the model is also emancipatory and overlaps with the Context Level Peacebuilding model being proposed. However, the context level peacebuilding model goes beyond ‘culture’, ‘mediation’, and ‘alternative dispute resolution’ practice, by focusing on the unique or specific challenges that has caused the disruption of peaceful co-existence as well factors that contribute to foment and sustain violent extremism and conflict in northern Nigeria. Such challenges are not just cultural but political, geographical, sociological, and religious in patterns, designs, and effects.

The violent insurgency in northern Nigeria reflects a scenario where some of the generalized conflict causes are unique to that place. For instance, identifying porous borders as a general factor in the Boko Haram insurgency would make little sense to local residents in Abuja or Kano, whereas people from Adamawa and Borno would appreciate that fact the most. The menace of the *almajiri* education system is quite palpable in Kano compared to the streets of Maiduguri and Yola. Addressing the problem demands that attention is also directed to border security and educational reforms yet doing so within the context level peacebuilding model would direct peacebuilding efforts to where they are needed most and where local communities deem them to be necessary for addressing their plight.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

This research could have been better but for a number of reasons. First, the study area in northern Nigeria poses plenty of security threats that disrupt normal life and prevented me from exploring all of the options in terms of collecting data, especially at the community level. During the course of this research, the Boko Haram threat remained very potent with daily attacks directed against agents of the state security forces and the general public. Complicating the security situation, also, was the

behavior of violent herders who have, attacked and disrupted local communities in the northwest as well as in the northcentral region where a bulk of my participants resided. The general (in)security situation also posed different restraints on my research participants who did not freely divulge some information out of fear. It was disappointing that I could not enter certain communities and interview certain people that would have been important for this study, and as a result, impacted the quality of my data.

Moreover, the distance between my research institution and the research field posed another limitation to the study. I was in the research field for only nine weeks, which can be considered a limited amount of time. After I conducted the pilot study and an initial meeting with some of my participants, I realized that there were some possible grey areas that I could have gotten more clarifications about but I could not due to the distance involved and the fact that both of my local research assistants were also not able to accomplish. However, I was able to reach some of the participants who owned computers through email for some clarifications while a good number were not able to respond to me.

My positionality also served as a limitation as I am not excluded from the conflict since I am a Muslim and of northern Nigerian descent. As an individual, I have my biases, my positions, and my idiosyncrasies which could have manifested during the research process. I was very conscious of that and made a concerted effort to remove my biases from the person-to-person interviews. I also tried to be objective in my analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data.

Also, the fact that the nature of the conflict did not allow me to collect primary information from Boko Haram members is another drawback that impacts a more

nuanced analysis to reflect the member's grievances, assumptions, positions, and interests. Boko Haram member's inclusion would have been invaluable in balancing the perceptions and perspectives of the other interviewees. Sadly, this was not to be due to the security situation in the northeast.

The tensions between the Nigerian state, and the NGOs and CSOs as well as with ECOWAS involved in peacebuilding activities could also influence the patterns of narratives from participants from both sides. The Nigerian government has been hostile to NGOs while the NGOs are bent on exposing the governments' inefficiencies and corruption and these issues could also have influenced the participants' choice of responses to my interview questions.

Importantly, the funding limitation for carrying out this study was also a fundamental limitation as the provision of adequate funding could have mitigated some of the limitations identified above and provided me with more time in the field. I could have been better positioned to visit the field multiple times and ensured that the intended numbers of local community participants were interviewed.

8.5 Future Research

The problem of the violent insurgency in northern Nigeria remains potent and demands divergent creative ideas and perspectives; proffered solutions should be examined and interrogated again and again until the Boko Haram threat becomes a thing of the past. There is, therefore, the need for a qualitative study(ies) that would include more interviewees, especially from the populations in the communities affected by Boko Haram's violence. The context level peacebuilding model requires a deeper application and indeed, an experiment with other related conflicts that share some common narratives and interventions and that pose unique difficulties and challenges to local

communities experiencing violence. For example, the farmer-herders conflict in the middle belt of Nigeria, tensions between IPOB and the federal government in southeastern Nigeria, the militancy in the Niger-delta, and cult/ritual killings could serve as good options for testing and evaluating this model.

8.6 Conclusion

Northern Nigeria remains a volatile region with spotty studies on the nature and dimensions of peacebuilding efforts by various institutions, governments, and ECOWAS. More research is needed to assess the contributions of these parties to separate fact from fiction, and properly situate the contributions and peacebuilding and security lessons drawn from the northeastern Nigerian theater. Peacebuilding interventions must be swift and based on local conceptions of what is best for them towards the definition of justice and the attainment of peace before, during, and after the conflict. In the case of West Africa, regional bodies, especially ECOWAS must step up their game, especially in the area of EWR, to foreclose degeneration of conflicts into violent crisis. For instance, at the time of the redaction of this thesis, Nigerians have embarked on a mass protest against police brutality. The protest lingered for over a fortnight and has resulted in violent confrontations, culminating in the shooting of unarmed protesters at Lekki in Lagos State by the Nigerian army. This incidence has caused, arsons and robbery by hoodlums, and has led to a general instability in many states across Nigeria. There is a possibility of the protest turning a violent and dangerous turn. ECOWAS is yet to release a statement nor take actions to forestall the looming danger. Peacebuilding must not come as a curative measure. It could best suffice as a preventive measure that is monitored through the EWS and acted upon through ERS mechanisms.

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