

State Fragility and the Drivers of Insurgency in Nigeria

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Abstract

What drives insurgency in fragile states? Is insurgency sustenance a function of ideology, economy, or something else? These and other questions have confronted scholars and government officials since the advent of insurgency activities in Nigeria's Northeast region. These questions are germane as actions and inaction taken to eradicate insurgency and its disruptive actions have met with little success. Using primary and survey data, this article probes and contextualizes the factors that spawned insurgency activities in the region including its adaptive features. The purpose of the article is further to assess policy options that could help contain and eradicate insurgent activities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Ideology; State Fragility; Insurgency; Nigeria



1. Introduction

What drives insurgency in fragile states? Is insurgency a function of ideology or purely economic? Or is it tied to deprivations that are not just economic but reflective of different aspects of individual human existence within African polities? What happens when ideology might not fully capture the driving force of an insurgent that has metamorphosed and diffused, straddling several countries like Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region? In this article, I propose to foreground these key questions by examining different aspects of insurgency within the context of state fragility and other drivers. I do so because I think that examining these questions is helpful to understand the unending instability in contemporary fragile states that are faced primarily by unrelenting antagonism, militancy, and insurgency due to low capacity, authority, and legitimacy within the overall ambit of inability to secure and provide for its citizens. The article anchors and explains the sociology of the insurgency in a charged ethno-religious region that sees Western education as an erosion of its cultural and religious foundations. Generally, I suggest that continuous insurgency problems in multi-ethnic postcolonial African states are situated within how best to approach increased livelihood, public education, diversity, and economic prosperity. The failure to address these challenges is often why insurgency persists, as exemplified in the Nigerian case.

Ideologies play a very important role in insurgencies. This is tied to the assumption that every human action, including insurgencies, has certain beliefs and driving principles which guide its operations and by which it operates to achieve a predetermined objective(s). In several ways, ideology influences the *modus operandi* of insurgencies (Medina & Sarkar, 2022).

The article uses primary and survey data gathered from questionnaires and interviews with three (3) groups, consisting of parents, former Boko Haram fighters, and community leaders. These groups were purposively selected because they form the structure from which the insurgent leaders originate and from which the followers are recruited. The purpose of this selection is to explain the contestations about ideology in insurgency and its long-term effects. I examine the primary variable of the work, which is to first understand what insurgency is as different from terrorism, as there appears some confusion about where to place Boko Haram between the two. A key variable in state fragility is then considered, followed by the examination of the underlying issues of fragility in post-colonial states. After this, I give a background of the Boko Haram

insurgency before examining its drivers within the purview of its sustainability and metamorphosis over some time in Nigeria. This is followed by the need for rethinking insurgency in post-colonial fragile states. The conclusion summarises and emphasises what needs to be done in policy terms.

2. Understanding Insurgency

What is insurgency? What categorises armed, non-state actors as insurgents? These questions are necessary given the various labels that have been ascribed to Boko Haram's violent activities in Northeast Nigeria. I begin this section by asserting that the activities of Boko Haram (BH) and its splinter group, Islamic State West Africa (ISWA), are insurgencies or insurgent groups rather than terrorist groups or organisations, even though insurgencies could adopt and use terrorist tools and tactics (Zenn, 2019; CIA, 2012; Merari, 2007). Given this reality, some scholars have argued that it is futile to distinguish between insurgency and terrorism (Mashimbye, 2022). Yet, it would be simplistic to assume there is no distinction and that both are the same. To resolve this confusion, it is therefore necessary that insurgency is conceptualised correctly and an explanation offered for what distinguishes it from terrorism. In doing this, ideological postulations of insurgency provide solid ground for a better understanding of the Boko Haram insurgent violence and disruptive activities, especially as is evident in the restive North-Eastern Nigeria.

Insurgencies, by their nature and ideology, are political first and then military, even though they may cloak their activities in humanitarian and religious garbs. In most cases, insurgencies seek to create a political order that would allow their ideology—mostly religious—to flourish, initially through violence and militarily, and later through a designed political order. This, in essence, defines what Boko Haram represents and espouses in Nigeria. Therefore, insurgency is a “protracted political-military activity directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government and completely or partially controlling the resources of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations” (Jones and Johnston, 2013:1). Indeed, insurgencies are synonymous with violence through which they, from a non-ruling platform, seek to challenge, change, and reconfigure the basis of authority of the state in their areas of operation to the form of their ideology. While rebellion might be the first building block of insurgencies through its ideological postulations, the shift to actual engagement in violent insurgent activities is nonetheless systemic and

structural. Systemic, through the exploitation of societal causes and their incorporation into insurgent ideology; and structural, which entails who determines what, when, and who gets what. It is obvious from this that insurgent groups like Boko Haram seek to determine the political and economic configuration of a given space (Nigeria's Northeast) with its avowed commitment to destroying Western education, instituting its version of governance, and creating its own space and political institutions (Zenn, 2019). That is why Larry Cable (1993:231) viewed insurgency as "the armed expression of organic, internal political disaffiliation". Furthermore, it is instructive to note that insurgency can be seen in seven forms and, by operation, be classified as anarchist, egalitarian, traditionalist, pluralist, secessionist, reformist, and preservationist. This division speaks to the ideology of each insurgent group and what its ultimate goals are. Therefore, an insurgent group may take one or more forms but scarcely does a particular insurgency possess all the forms. It is also necessary to concede that insurgent forms may change due to the exigencies of time and the difficulties of waging insurgent wars. Thus, while insurgency becomes one when it combines political ends with military engagements to achieve its aims, the point must not be missed that at the heart of contention is power, specifically political power. The struggle for and the challenge of political power underlies virtually all insurgencies. In Nigeria, irrespective of the stories about its origins, Boko Haram (BH) was sufficiently minded about the control of political power and sphere of influence in terms of its ideological postulations and vision of political organisation (Zenn, 2019). Boko Haram's avowed decision and violent insurgent activities to control territory belie its ideological pursuits to create an Islamic state, inclusive of political structures, institutions, and the general way of life of those within its territorial space. As has been alluded to, three main factors necessary for continuous insurgency are: to what use and extent does terror feature in insurgent ideology and modus operandi; the drive for and the scale of recruitment of followers mostly drawn from the lower class of the society, and the relationship between the leaders, mostly drawn from the elites within the insurgents and followers; and third, insurgent organisation in terms of its infrastructure and acceptability by both passive and active followers. The active presence of the aforementioned factors has aided Boko Haram to flourish in conjunction with the conducive topography of the Lake Chad region for insurgent activities. As it is with Boko Haram in Nigeria, "the more vast a country, particularly in its rural areas, the more marginal areas there are in which revolutionary political activity can operate with minimal fear of government intervention" (Jones, 2008: 24). Therefore, in countries where State governance capacity

is weak, authority is low or not respected, and legitimacy is generally disputed and/or acknowledged by few, insurgency is most likely to foster and flourish (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2009; Jones, 2008). This has been the Nigerian experience of Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State of West Africa. In Nigeria and the rest of the Lake Chad countries, the seeming lack of state governance capacity, including the lack of effective policing of its borders, has led to the diffusion of Boko Haram insurgency and the helplessness of these states in combating it. The incapacity of each state contiguous to the Lake Chad region (Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroun) influences and emboldens the Boko Haram insurgency to continue unabated. The questions of insurgency and state (in)capacity for effective governance cannot be dismissed lightly given the historical weakness of most states in Africa and Nigeria in particular, especially considering her population and landmass. The World Bank report (2019) alluded that most countries with low capacity will likely experience insurgencies, civil war, and acts of rebellion that may or may not metamorphose into insurgency. Insurgencies are therefore not only creations of religio-socio-economic factors but also of systemic and institutional disorders inherent in weak states. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the issue of state fragility in weak states, specifically in Nigeria and how it influences, aids, and emboldens insurgency.

3. Post-coloniality and State Fragility in Nigeria

Every state has its strengths and weaknesses. Yet, some states are weaker than others such that the capacity to govern becomes suspect. Such states are classified as fragile. Thus, state fragility is evidenced by a state's inability to rule and assert its influence over all the segments of its territory. It is important to note that fragility is both a process and a condition where a state does not have the capacity nor possess the ability to effectively manage its population and territory. A state must be seen as fragile to discuss state fragility. However, such descriptions of state fragility or fragile states are subject to accusations of being value-laden, without objectively examining the socio-cultural, economic and political environment of such states (Lewis and Wallace, 2015; Saeed, 2020). Examination of several factors that are not necessarily quantifiable might help reduce the contestation over the definition and description of which state is fragile. But then, how do we objectively determine fragile states? It is within this context that indicators or indices have been developed to measure the ability of a state to cater for and meet the basic needs of its people (Fund for Peace Index, 2018). Therefore, state

fragility speaks to the inability of states who are 'unable to meet [their] population's expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political process' (OECD, 2008). This is in agreement with DFID's characterisation of state fragility evident in countries 'where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor' (DFID, 2005). Without prejudice to fragile states, a key inability is the lack of capacity to provide security to its population. This harkens to a lack of effective coverage of the state territory. Therefore, for Cilliers and Sisk (2013:2), state fragility is the 'low capacity and poor state performance with respect to security and development'. It is in line with the above emphasis on security that Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen, & Stepputat (2008:6) believe that state fragility is concerned with 'institutional instability undermining the predictability, transparency and accountability of public decision-making processes and the provision of security and social services to the population'. Given this definition, it can safely be said that the majority of African countries can be categorised as fragile states. Fragile state indicators like weak governance structures, porous borders, high poverty levels, poor public administration and services, wars of various kinds, and interminable conflicts are synonymous with African states (Marshall and Cole, 2009; European Report on Development, 2009). In real life, fragile states induce mass migration, allow transnational insecurity, condone organised crime, are seemingly helpless to stop violent crises and conflicts, and give room for insurgencies and terrorism. Common to all fragile states and aiding insurgencies are the presence of (1) a high level of poverty or the poor, (2) a high level of repeated or cyclical violence, (3) a high level (repeated experience) of economic exclusion and inequality, and (4) suffer from poor/weak governance (Cilliers and Sisk, 2013; McLoughlin, 2012). What has been left unsaid by Cilliers and Sisk is that fragile states are prone to perennial conflicts that may or may not result in insurgency. When it results in insurgency, it may be linked to both internal and external influences. For instance, the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency was initially linked to internal influences, particularly exploiting Nigeria's inability to provide for its citizens and effectively rule its territory. So, while it started as a local insurgent outfit, it has since been influenced by external insurgent groups, sharing training, intelligence, and strategies with fragile countries ravaged by insurgent/terrorist violent activities. Therefore, violent conflicts and insurgencies have come to be synonymous with fragile states, particularly in Africa. It is indeed particularly important to note that countries that do badly on governance indicators have experienced more wars and social disruptions than those that have performed better on the same indicators (Fearon,

2010). It has, therefore, become imperative to know why African states are chronically fragile. In Nigeria, the focus of this paper, state fragility is high. The question is, could colonial origins of the modern state in Africa be said to be responsible for its fragility? This question becomes important, without prejudice to other contending reasons, that the state in Africa has been historically weak given that its emergence was without the input of and recourse to the people (Afolabi, 2014). This is why some scholars view the post-colonial state in Africa as weak (Alaye and Fakoya, 2024; Olaitan, 2004; Bayart, et al 1999, Clapham, 1996), while others see it as being prone to exploitation by different groups (Afolabi, 2020a, 2014; Osaghae, 2006), yet, others believe the post-colonial state can be plundered and constricted (Mimiko and Afolabi, 2012; McGowan, 2006; Olaitan, 2005), and, lately, captured (Bhorat, 2017; Report of the Public Protector, 2016; Wilson, 2001). While state capture is often used in terms of a state being held through corruptive means, it is not farfetched to posit that fragile states in Africa are being captured through insurgencies and other violent rebellious activities that have further limited the ability and resilience of post-colonial African states to fulfil its social contract obligation with its citizens. This therefore speaks to the fundamental defects inherent in post-colonial states that are seen as unrepresentative of the people and as such, are treated as an alien. With such an outlook and relationship with the people, the post-colonial states are bound to be weak, and subject to manipulations and challenges. This has played out in virtually all sub-Saharan African states.

In Nigeria, state fragility has been identified as a crucial factor in the emergence and proliferation of rebellious and insurgent groups (Jones and Johnston, 2013). The critical ability to govern effectively and provide qualitative services to its people has been lacking and becoming worrisome. As a measure of its governance indicator, the World Bank in its 2018 report noted that the country has the highest number of poor people with over 87 million living in poverty (The World Bank, 2018; Vanguard newspapers, 2018). With its colonial heritage, the Nigerian state has been traditionally weak and cannot enforce its rules over its territory. Challenges to its authority have marked its history, culminating in a three-year civil war from 1967 to 1970. Furthermore, all objective indicators have shown their inability and incapacity to meaningfully provide and meet societal expectations. As shown in the Fund for Peace fragility index (see CS Stats table), the Nigerian state fragility is perennial and predisposes it to insurgent activities. With twelve indicators including the security apparatus, it is obvious from the data that the country has an extremely high fragility status that continues to place it as one of the most fragile states in the world (Fund for Peace, 2018). This arguably

indicates that the country is prone to continuous insurgency and its related debilitating activities on an existing weak capacity, rendering the state weaker.

CS Stats										
2024	15th	96.6	8.7	9.6	8.3	8.9	8.0	6.6	8.3	8.9
2023	15th	98.0	9.0	9.6	8.6	8.8	8.1	6.7	8.2	8.8
2022	16th	97.2	8.9	9.3	8.9	8.3	8.0	6.6	8.5	9.1
2021	12th	98.0	8.8	9.6	8.8	8.6	7.7	6.5	8.4	9.3
2020	14th	97.3	8.7	9.9	9.1	7.9	7.8	6.6	8.1	8.9
2019	14th	98.5	9.0	9.9	9.4	7.8	8.1	6.9	8.0	8.9
2018	14th	99.9	8.9	9.6	9.3	8.0	8.3	7.2	8.3	8.9
2017	13th	101.6	9.2	9.6	9.2	8.0	8.6	7.2	8.6	9.2
2016	13th	103.5	9.7	9.9	9.4	7.7	8.8	7.4	8.8	9.4
2015	14th	102.5	9.9	9.8	9.9	7.6	8.8	7.1	9.1	9.1
2014	17th	99.7	9.5	9.5	9.8	7.3	8.9	7.0	8.8	9.0
2013	16th	100.7	9.5	9.4	9.8	7.5	9.2	7.3	8.8	9.3
2012	14th	101.1	9.2	9.8	9.7	7.5	8.9	7.6	9.1	9.1
2011	14th	99.9	9.1	9.5	9.6	7.3	9.0	7.7	9.0	9.0
2010	14th	100.2	9.3	9.4	9.5	6.9	9.3	8.1	9.4	9.1
2009	15th	99.8	9.4	9.6	9.7	6.6	9.5	8.3	9.2	9.0
2008	18th	95.7	9.2	9.3	9.4	5.9	9.2	8.2	8.9	8.7
2007	17th	95.6	9.2	9.5	9.5	5.4	9.1	8.5	9.1	8.7
2006	22nd	94.4	9.2	9.0	9.1	5.4	9.0	8.5	9.0	8.3

Figure 1: Nigeria's ranking on State Fragility Index (2006 – 2024)

Source: Fragile State Index, Fund for Peace (2024)

The fragility index shows that the state would continue to experience grievance-based rebellions and armed challenges as other groups might join Boko Haram and ISWA to militarily challenge the Nigerian state. This is because, from the data and the figure shown, group grievances, security challenges, and factionalised elites top the critical factors that have consistently rendered the Nigerian state incapacitated. This has facilitated more grievances and security challenges, making the state's fragility more precarious and an ongoing dilemma for the country's rulers. It is important to note that factionalised elites have played an important role in Nigeria's state fragility, as those who lost power struggles (electoral or otherwise) often resort to actions that directly challenge state authority and legitimacy (Afolabi, 2020b).

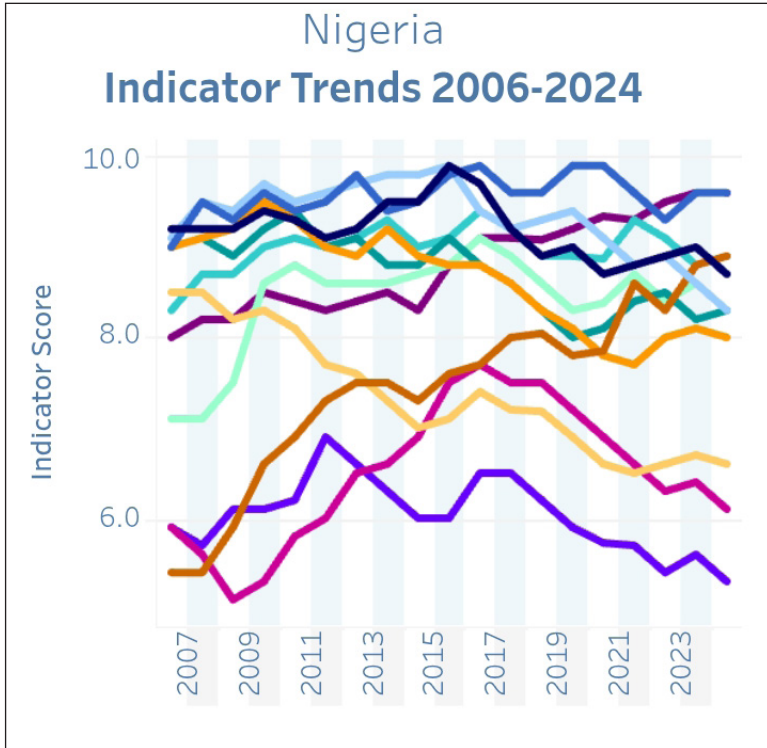


Figure 2: Indicators Trend 2006-2024

Source: Fragile State Index, Fund for Peace (2024).

The Nigerian civil war, June 12 electoral debacle and the Boko Haram insurgency are some of the instances where elite conflicts and factionalised elites have contributed to the fragility status of the country (Babangida, 2025). Figure 3 shows the composite picture of the state of fragility in the Nigerian state.

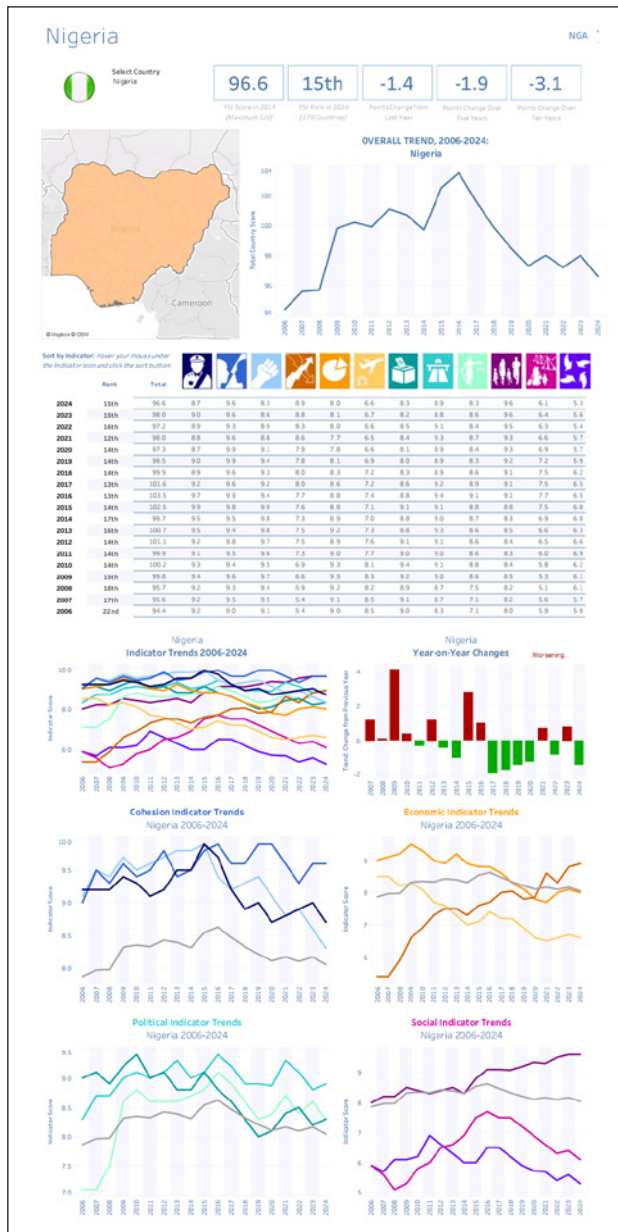


Figure 3: Overall Country Fragility Status
Source: Fragile State Index, Fund for Peace (2024)

However, more useful to the analysis of post-colonial state and state fragility would be the simpler data and analysis that focused on key indicators bordering on legitimacy, capacity, and authority. These three indicators encompass the key fragility index missing in the political context and its governance structures. For Nigeria, figure 4 represents a further confirmation of the abysmal level of state fragility.

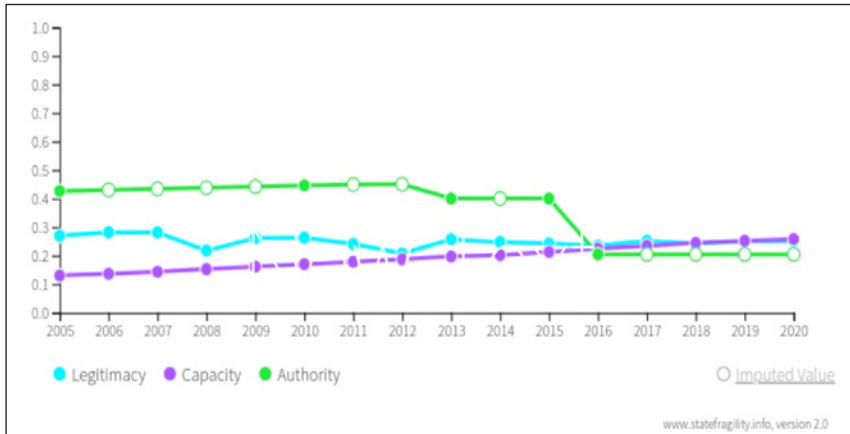


Figure 4: Constellations of Nigeria's State Fragility

Source: Ziaja and Gravingholt (2023). Constellations of State Fragility (2.0.0)

With a measure of 0 to 1, signifying different levels of performance, 1 signifies excellence and 0 reveals deficiencies that depict the extreme fragility of a state. From the figure, it is evident that Nigeria's capacity for effective governance hovers around slightly above 0.1 and less than 0.2, signifying substantive deficiencies. The low capacity has been shown graphically in the number of poor people, the high crime rate, the lack of law and order, the multiple centres and organisations challenging state authority as a result of its perceived weakness, unemployment, and negative economic climate (The World Bank, 2018). A natural outcome of low capacity (0.15) is a high proportion of dissatisfied citizens that are easily recruited into rebellion generally, and insurgency (Boko Haram) in the Northeast of the country in particular. This happens when the state is 'incapable of controlling its territory, this weakness creates opportunities for insurgent groups to control these areas and challenge the state authority's rule' (Jones and Johnston, 2013:4). This is further buttressed by former president Buhari's assertion that 'the answer, at least in the case of Nigeria, is lack of social and economic inclusion'

(Buhari, Punch Newspapers, 6 April, 2019). This directly reveals the lack of state capacity to cater for its people, create economic opportunities and maintain its role as an arbiter. This also speaks to the Nigerian state's lack of resilience, magnifying its fragility.

In terms of legitimacy, the Nigerian state has suffered from a historic legitimacy crisis from the colonial to post-independence eras. While a long period of military rule has eroded legitimacy claims pre-1999, the post-1999 democratic period has not fared any better. With electoral contests often based on zero-sum and winners-take-all, electoral outcomes are often disputed and little or no legitimacy is accorded the party that won. Most electoral contests are often said to be rigged, denying the winner's legitimacy (Afolabi, 2020; 2017; Ham and Lindberg, 2015). Even the 2019 general elections have raised legitimacy issues for the winner (Onuoha, 2019). Thus, the legitimacy rating has remained low, and many Nigerians are dissatisfied with the government in power. While legitimacy is primarily concerned with the acceptance of authority as lawful, flowing from credible elections and electoral outcomes (Election Integrity Project, 2015), the low legitimacy as reflected in the ranking (0.27 average) as can be seen in Figure 4, is not only related to flawed electoral outcomes but from perceived and actual incompetence of the state in meeting and addressing a large proportion of the populace, except the ruling elite. This has provided platforms to militant and insurgent groups like Boko Haram and justifications for their actions, as they have zero recognition of the rights and authority of the state. These justifications, it must be noted, are shared by the leadership of the insurgency (Boko Haram) and its followers, who are its foot soldiers, exploiting this key foundational variable (legitimacy) of the modern state to foster insurgency. This has been at the heart of the problem of Nigerian state fragility.

In terms of authority, signifying a state's right to issue orders and commands and the willingness of the people to obey them, there is not much improvement. Rather, a lack of authority, or better put, a lack of obedience to and recognition of state authority, has become associated with the country. With a less-than-average score of 0.43, the data shown in Figure 4 reveals that where the authority of a state is less than average, the tendency is for various groups to challenge, ignore, and resist state laws, regulations, and commands. In Nigeria, state authority is routinely ignored, challenged, and unenforced. In many cases, even the state is afraid to impose its authority, knowing it may be ignored, challenged, and/or not obeyed (Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi, 2009). As had been demonstrated in several countries, lack of authority resulting from bad/poor

governance, electoral debacles, corruption resulting in failed or captured state, high poverty levels, economic problems and unattended to ethnic cum religious grievances, among other factors, can foment, encourage, and sustain wars and insurgencies. As has been argued, the Boko Haram insurgency as an insurgent group has benefited from Nigeria's State's low authority to launch and sustain insurgent activities.

It is therefore necessary to interrogate and pay particular attention to the origin and character of Nigeria's post-colonial state, which helps to explain its historical weakness in terms of legitimacy, capacity, and authority. The imposed nature of the post-colonial state, no matter the arguments to the contrary, makes the state alien and alienated from the people, robbing it of its connection to the mass of the people. The effect is that the state suffers from people's denial of its authority and legitimacy. In addition, military rule and electoral infelicities have further reinforced the alienation as the state is viewed as belonging to no one in particular, and thus, its laws and commands can and should be challenged, ignored, and disobeyed. While this is experienced in varying degrees across Nigeria, it has been exploited by Boko Haram to foster insurgency. Therefore, in Nigeria, state fragility is a derivative of a post-colonial state steeped in rent-seeking behaviour. This has been aptly demonstrated and shown in the thread that runs through post-colony, state fragility, and insurgency in Nigeria. While the Fund for Peace State Fragility Index is a Western construct, the Afrobarometer and Mo Ibrahim Governance Index ratings that are African-driven are similar to what the Fund for Peace ratings are for Nigeria, hence its use in this work.

4. Boko Haram: Towards an Understanding of Insurgency in Nigeria

The current insecurities and displacements in Northeast Nigeria started when a jihadist group, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram, led an armed rebellion against the Nigerian state. It was deeply rooted in religious fundamentalism and primarily directed at disrupting orthodox Western education and wiping away all vestiges of Western lifestyles in Northeast Nigeria (Olaniyan and Asuelime, 2017). Boko Haram, which started in 2002 and from its inception was more about radical religious teaching and condemnations, did not engage in violent activities at the beginning. However, its teachings were an extreme version of Islamism, and Western education was viewed as bad and a corruption of the religious and moral values of the society (Walker, 2016). However, after a security clampdown in 2009, resulting in the death of its chief ideologue, the organisation became violent and has since engaged

in a series of hit-and-run insurgent activities (Zenn, 2019; Adeniyi, 2012). Northeast Nigeria has remained its main theatre of operation, with Borno State being the epicentre of the insurgent campaigns and violence. Insurgency in the northeast has flourished as modern insurgency conflict stems from three basic realisations: (1) the recognition that many of the insurgency conflicts fought within states are no longer restricted within the confines of their states of occurrences but are diffusing into neighbouring states (towns and villages) to involve and affect surrounding states/regions (Chad, Niger, and Cameroun); (2) that while pursuing their locally-driven agenda, many of the modern insurgencies are also committed to regional expansion; thus most states contiguous to Nigeria are affected by the spread and attack of the insurgency; and (3) the increasing realisation that modern insurgencies are driven by religious fundamentalism that reject the concept of Western-styled educational and democratic values but advocate a theocratic system of government in their states and sub-regions as well as education that is defined by the insurgents. This is underpinned by states where state fragility is high, like Nigeria. Therefore, more than one million people have been displaced from their homes and are now known as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), residing in military-secured IDP camps. Of the over one million that are internally displaced, more than 60% are youths, with women and children accounting for over 80% of displaced persons (ActionAid Needs Assessment Report, 2019). The remaining are usually old men who are either too invalid or weak to be useful to the insurgents. This situation has had a deleterious effect on both formal and informal education opportunities, with access to education severely limited and public infrastructure severely damaged. More than 8,000 girls and boys have been recruited and used as child soldiers in different roles by armed groups (UNICEF, 2022). I now turn to what the drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency are.

5. Ideology Displaced? Understanding Drivers of Insurgency in Nigeria

The incidence of insurgency cannot be divorced from several factors that are mostly complex. A single explanatory factor cannot satisfactorily show why insurgencies spring up and what sustains them. Therefore, reliance on ideology as an explanatory factor or tool would not illuminate why insurgency persists nor demonstrate its resilience, unlike countries with 'extreme' fragility status (Jones and Johnston, 2013). Its predictive value is also zero as to why insurgency persists. As well, the incidence of insurgency in

fragile states cannot be divorced from the desperation to access and maintain power in Africa, especially political power that is reflective of its socio-religious and economic norms and values. It is becoming increasingly clear that the more fragile a state, which can be taken advantage of through a state's low/lack of authority, legitimacy, and capacity (state fragility), the more likely are rebellions and insurgencies to develop and flourish. But this is not all. Other reasons have been discovered to foster and sustain insurgencies. These are weighty and could be construed as further evidence of state fragility. It is necessary to bring these factors into bold relief to know and understand the drivers. For this paper, the following are the drivers of insurgencies in Nigeria:

5.1 Religious Ideology and Patriarchal Hierarchies

It is proper to start the discussion of the drivers with the most obvious and the most talked about in the sustenance of insurgency in Nigeria. While religious ideology played (Salafi-Jihadi ideology to be specific) and still plays a prominent role in the incubating phase and giving birth to insurgency in Nigeria, its role in sustaining it has remained peripheral as other contending realities have set in. Factors like financial needs, insurgent economy and daily life sustenance, ethnic differences between and among leaders and fighters, as well as continuing methods of prosecuting the insurgency, have shown that religious ideology does not last throughout an insurgency. Even though religious ideology was a powerful tool in recruiting followers with the promise of paradise (allijannah), economic factors became a stronger pull factor in the later years of the Boko Haram insurgency. From the respondents interviewed, while many are of the view that religious ideology plays a key role, the particular type of ideology that should drive the insurgency has also been a source of contention. Questions of whether it should be the extreme version of Salafi-Jihadi ideology as opposed to a more moderate one that builds relationships with 'liberated' communities have been a fundamental point of disagreement. The contention over ideology is reflected in what should be the modus operandi of the insurgent group, its military targets, its communal relationship with civilians, and back-channel dealings with the government. The inability to resolve basic and emerging issues/problems over ideology finally resulted in a split, with Islamic State West Africa emerging from Boko Haram in 2016 (Zenn, 2019). For example, Abubakar Shekau, who became the leader after the death of leader Yusuf, was excessively aggressive towards dissents within and without, with violence towards all including Christians, children, State and non-state actors, and non-cooperative Muslims.

It was a marked shift from the initial pre-2009 non-violent proselytization ideology to full-blown insurgency. To those who endured this overt aggressive violence within the group, the ideology espoused by Shekau was problematic and eventually resulted in a coup and split. Even with its contentions over ideology, the point should be made that religious ideology still plays a prominent role in sustaining the ideology, though no longer the main recruitment tool for the insurgency. This has led some commentators to regard ISWA, with its more humane religious ideology approach to insurgency, as more a “peoples” champion (Hassan, 2018).

Even beyond the religious ideology explained above is the religious patriarchal hierarchies that feed into the insurgency vision of how societies should run and be governed. For virtually all those interviewed, the male-dominated community leadership have sympathies for Boko Haram, as most of the sentiment expressed by the group found ready recipients who share similar religious views and the corruptive influence of Western education. For many respondents interviewed, the issue/question is the undue emphasis on formal Western education as opposed to informal Qur’anic education that emphasises the dominance and prominence of the patriarchal hierarchy of societal ordering. The infusion of this core element of patriarchy into the Boko Haram insurgency initially won it many admirers and supporters but was frittered away under Shekau. But this is regained under ISWA civilian-friendly insurgent activities (Hassan, 2018). The ideology clashes within the insurgency within Boko Haram, resulting in a strategic manoeuvre by ISWA of being seen as civilian-friendly, also shows the degree of state fragility given its inability to reach the vulnerable and the problematic parts of the country (Maina, 2018). Having not felt the presence of the state, the poor of the country, Northeast Nigeria in particular, fell prey to Jihadi ideologies that suits their religious inclinations and helped sustain, in large part, insurgency in the region. The religious ideology stance of the driver of insurgency in Nigeria is consistent with other research works in this regard (Jones and Johnston, 2013; Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2002).

5.2 High Poverty and Low Economic Power

The high incidence of poverty in the Northeast has been identified as another factor that has kept the insurgency going. For most of the Northeast, particularly Borno State, the average family size is between 15-18 persons with an average income of 300-350 Naira, which is slightly less than a dollar (ActionAid Needs Assessment Report, 2019). According to the AAN report, ‘the most vulnerable in the family are women

and children with the children (mostly males) susceptible to recruitment by Boko Haram and engagement for child labour (mainly street begging)'. As has been seen in the Northeast of the country, there is a high birth rate with parents unable to cater for the high number of children they have given birth to. Many of these children are primarily found in the streets begging, with only a few found productively engaged in education pursuits or vocational schools. The children that roam the streets readily provide Boko Haram the opportunity to recruit them as followers and foot soldiers. In many instances, the promise of free food, stipends in the form of financial tokens, and shelter have proved irresistible to these often hungry and homeless children (Sotunde, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2016). Likewise, the low economic and purchasing power in some instances has led parents to accept monetary gifts as the price for their children to be recruited into the Boko Haram insurgency. The Northeast has the highest number of poor Nigerians (The World Bank Report, 2018). Therefore, the higher the number of poor people due to state inabilities (fragility), the more the number of people that see the state as lacking the *capacity* to affect and regulate their conduct, which gives rise to disobedience of state *authority*. As state fragility becomes extreme, so does the tendency to challenge and, in some cases, ignore state *legitimacy* to issue commands and obey them. This has been compounded by the alienation of many people from the state due to 'an additional setback to poverty reduction and increased violent conflict' (World Bank Poverty and Equity Brief, 2009). Following this, the cost of insurgency has been high and pervasive, resulting in huge displacements, internal refugees, food insecurity, and deaths (WHO, 2017; WFP, 2016). In this manner, there is a mutual reinforcing relationship between state fragility, poverty, and low economic power/opportunities that has helped to sustain the insurgency in Nigeria and other poor states (Afolabi, 2015; Jones and Johnston, 2013; Le Bullion, 2001).

5.3 Ethnicity and Ethnic Support from The States Contiguous to Nigeria

The sustenance of the Boko Haram insurgency cannot be divorced from the shared ethnicity that is found in the states around the Lake Chad region. The Kanuri ethnic tribe is dominant in Borno State and other surrounding areas in Northeast Nigeria and the contiguous states of Niger, Cameroun, and Chad. While operating primarily from Nigeria, Boko Haram has operated in and found safe havens in these neighbouring states (Nkwi, 2013). Shared language, culture, religion, ethnic ties and solidarity has

been identified as key factors that have aided insurgency in the Lake Chad region with preachers from Nigeria found in these states spreading the Boko Haram Jihadi religious ideology and finding acceptance (Zenn, 2012). The cross-border support of the insurgency within the Lake Chad region is predicated on the idea of shared memory of the former Kanem-Bornu Empire, an Islamic Kingdom which territorially includes parts of modern-day North-Eastern Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, Southwestern Chad, and South-Eastern Niger in the 19th century (Barkindo, 2014). Therefore, the receptive audience in these states of insurgent ideology and practice with their shared ethnicity is predicated on the visions of a resurrection of the empire through the Boko Haram insurgency. It should be noted that the Boko Haram insurgency did not spill over into the Lake Chad states as some scholars assume (Pieri and Zenn, 2017; Oluwadare, 2016). Rather, as can be deduced from the foregoing explanation, Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region was a coordinated and planned strategy to make use of existing ethnic ties, historical affinities, and geographical congruity in the region to sustain the insurgency (Elden, 2014). More importantly, all the states in the Lake Chad region share the extreme state fragility status. Niger, Chad, Cameroun, and Nigeria are among the states that are extremely poor, difficult to reach expansive territory and with poignant absence of government presence. In other words, the conditions in the four countries are conducive to insurgency, with Cameroon practically in the throes of civil war and armed insurrection. The other two states (Niger and Chad) do not fare better. In all, some parts of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria were once part of the Kanemi empire and inhabited by the Kanuris before they were split into four countries, and this has sustained Boko Haram through its diffusion throughout the region. The diffusion and sustenance of the insurgency, therefore, plays into the four states' extreme fragility status and other drivers identified in this study. Combined, ethnic solidarity and fragility shared by the four states have continued to support, provide cover for, and sustain the Boko Haram insurgency.

5.4 Porous Borders and Difficult Terrain

The issue of open and porous borders has plagued African states since the scramble for the continent by European powers. The untidy delineation, demarcation, and partition of the different parts of the continent into new states was done without recourse to existing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affinities. As earlier said, the Lake Chad region is noted for ethnic, linguistic, and religious ties that transcend the European arbitrary state

system fostered in the region, making secured borders virtually impossible. International borders have simply been ignored (Hentz and Solomon, 2017). For example, the borders between Nigeria and Cameroon are so porous that people, especially itinerant preachers from both countries, can cross the border at will. Aside from the fact that there are no physical barriers, it is a common fact that there is hardly any government/state presence in the form of customs and immigration from both sides (Nigeria and Cameroon) to checkmate legal and illegal activities. This scenario is replicated at the Nigerian-Chad and the Nigerian-Niger borders, allowing for the free movement of persons and weapons (Elden, 2014). Thus, territorial proximity inclusive of porous borders among the four states provides the conditions for insecurity and the sustenance of the insurgency in the Chad region, which is made easier by the presence and mobility of the Kanuri ethnic tribe in the region (Starr, 2005; Buzan, 1991). Hence, it can be argued that the indiscriminate partitioning of the Lake Chad region has resulted in four states without borders.

As a corollary, a key driver identified by respondents and from literature is the existence of a rugged and difficult terrain from which insurgencies operate (Beckett, 2005; Jones and Johnston 2013). The Lake Chad region of Northeast Nigeria, within which the Sambisa Forest falls, provides the enabling territorial cover for Boko Haram insurgency. This cover is particularly important as Boko Haram insurgents often carry out attacks and retreat into the Sambisa Forest. For security agencies, the terrain is unfamiliar, difficult, and impenetrable. But for the insurgents, the rugged and difficult terrain serves as a home and training ground for foot soldiers while simultaneously providing a place of refuge and safety from security agencies. This also links insurgency to state fragility because as ‘the state is incapable of controlling its territory, this weakness creates opportunities for insurgent groups to control these areas and challenge the state authority’s rule’ (Jones and Johnston, 2013:4). The combination of the difficult Lake Chad terrain, effects of climate change in the region and the Sambisa Forest have proved daunting in tackling Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, while at the same time sustaining and prolonging the lifespan of the insurgency (Doukhan, 2017; Hironaka, 2005).

5.5 Ill-equipped Military and Security Saboteurs

The Boko Haram insurgency has also continued due to the ill-equipped military and security saboteurs that are embedded in the Nigerian security institutions. It is common

knowledge, attested to by the respondents, that Boko Haram has sympathisers within and outside the Nigerian security outfits. For instance, several high-placed individuals have been alleged to be sponsors of Boko Haram's violent insurgent activities for personal Islamic and political gains (Taiwo and Wakili, 2015: 4). In Nigeria's Northeast alone, more than 100 prominent indigenes, with most of them from Borno state, are under a security watch-list for alleged involvement with and sponsorship of Boko Haram insurgency. Even within the official security agencies, especially the military, there are allegations of informants and saboteurs. Information about military strategies, movements and actions is mostly known to the insurgents. According to transcripts of an interview from one of the insurgents, security measures and the bombing of insurgents don't work because 'before their helicopter leaves, information has already reached us. Before the helicopter leaves any base, the information will reach us, and even where it will land if they bomb any place, they will only kill birds and animals, which are there. Also, on land, soldiers were sent to attack us. But before they come, information has reached us. We know how we will attack them and know all areas where they will follow' (Saharareporters, 2019).

Likewise, the Nigerian military is ill-equipped to combat insurgency due to a combination of factors including obsolete operational equipment, lack of experience, and low morale. To expatiate on this point, it should be noted that the Nigerian military has been conventional and has no profound knowledge of and arsenal to fight the Boko Haram insurgency. The poignant lack of military equipment, technology, and hardware has aided and served as part of the drivers of the insurgency. Even military equipment procurement has proved difficult. Also, as previously noted, the rugged terrain and mountainous environment of the Lake Chad region has provided extensive and expansive cover to the insurgency and its prolongation. The Nigerian military is relatively inexperienced and often unable to match the insurgents' suicidal activities. All these have graphically shown the ill-equipped nature of the security agencies in the fight against insurgency and why it continued unabated. Combined, these drivers have changed the narrative of insurgency from ideology to several factors that are essentially existential to the survival and sustenance of the insurgency.

6. Conclusion

Insurgencies are propelled and sustained by specific drivers. In examining what the drivers are, this article demonstrated that ideologies, especially religious ideologies,

played a crucial role in its emergence and sustenance. Yet, in practice, insurgent ideology differs from one group to another. In the case of Boko Haram, the adoption of the Salafi Jihadi ideology by its leadership was initially predicated on the rejection of Western education, its values, secularism, and democracy (Walker, 2012). In its place was the need to have an Islamic republic that would be administered by the Boko Haram sect. However, the article has shown that with time the BH insurgency ideology is essentially contested. The contestation of this ideology has led to a split in the sect and led to the emergence of the ISWA. More specifically, contesting ideologies have shaped each group's (BH and ISWA) *modus operandi*, insurgent-civilian relations, external relationships with other groups, and engagement with the Nigerian state. Understanding this dynamic is a crucial point to note when dealing with the insurgency.

However, central to the foregoing analysis sourced from primary sources and other data sets is the extreme status of Nigerian state fragility. With a very high fragility status confirmed by both the Fund for Peace and the DIE Constellation of State Fragility, Nigeria's low ratings on authority, legitimacy, and capacity have been the main instigator and driver of the insurgency. As an oil-dependent and primary commodity-producing status, Nigeria's ability to effectively rule over its territory is severely constrained and restrained to a few parts of the country, primarily the urban centres. Even in the urban centres, state capacity is limited; authority is challenged, ignored or disobeyed, and legitimacy is questioned due to the zero-sum nature of the electoral contest and fraud. In several places, primarily rural, where the presence of the state is less felt, the situation is worse. It was in such circumstances that Boko Haram grew and flourished. It is such areas that have continued to sustain the insurgency.

It is therefore essential to state that other drivers of the insurgency discussed in the article are tied to and indicative of the extreme state fragility status of the Nigerian state. Religious ideology and patriarchal hierarchies, high poverty and low economic power, ethnicity and ethnic support from states contiguous to Nigeria, porous borders and difficult terrain, and ill-equipped military and security saboteurs identified as drivers of insurgency in Nigeria point to its development, sustenance, and adaptive features. These drivers are crucial as they underline the state fragility components and make tracking, tackling, and subduing Boko Haram insurgency very difficult.

The article has made clear that insurgency in Nigeria is not limited to a single subsisting ideology but adapts to changing circumstances that are both internal and external. It is, therefore, incumbent on those involved in fighting insurgency in Nigeria to adopt strategies that recognise this distinction and seek ways to exploit this obvious

chasm within the insurgency. While all ideologies appeal to emotions and beliefs, they don't provide daily economic means of survival. Thus, at different stages of combating insurgency, specific measures that counter Jihadi religious ideology in its entirety should be adopted and pursued. A programme of deradicalization of this is necessary. Likewise, efforts should be made by the Nigerian state to institute measures that move it away from its fragile status. An increase in legitimacy through credible elections, increased capacity through a reduction in corruption and judicious use of resources, authority through effective security architecture, and provision of state services would be steps in the right direction. Effective policing of the borders should be of paramount concern. So also is the need to have the military better equipped to confront and subdue the insurgency. Foreign military assistance should be limited to tactical support and training rather than ground military campaigns that might not achieve much due to the rugged and difficult terrain they might not be familiar with.

Lastly, given the operations of different state and non-state actors in the region through combat, mediation, interventions, and other critical engagements, it is important to take into consideration the contesting ideologies within the insurgency, state fragility issues, and other noted drivers aiding and sustaining the insurgency when devising policies and programmes in the lake Chad region. Such strategies should include increasing state capacity, community stabilization, human and economic empowerment, containment of insurgent activities through kinetic and non-kinetic actions, including de-radicalization, transitional justice, and re-orientation of the affected communities towards mediation, respect for human rights of others and provisioning of access to justice. Understanding the contending narratives of ideology helps to situate insurgency and provide the context for policy actions to reduce or better still, eradicate the drivers of insurgency in Nigeria.

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