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Nigeria's North East Conflict and International Diplomacy

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Abstract

This study explores the intricate war in Northeast Nigeria, which is mainly being led by Boko Haram and other insurgent groups. It also looks at the functions and efficacy of foreign diplomacy in resolving this protracted situation. The research highlights the complex character of the conflict and its terrible humanitarian effects, such as extensive displacement, human rights violations, and socioeconomic disruption, by examining historical, sociopolitical, and economic aspects. To comprehend their contributions and reactions to the conflict, important actors like the Nigerian government, local communities, foreign organisations, and rebel groups are closely examined. The study highlights various diplomatic and peace-building efforts, including those by the United Nations, regional organizations like ECOWAS and the African Union, and key international players such as the United States and the European Union. Despite notable interventions, challenges such as

inefficiencies, political and economic interests, sovereignty issues, and sustainability concerns persist, hindering the effectiveness of international diplomacy. Prospects for peace and stability are discussed, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive and inclusive approaches that integrate governance reforms, socio-economic development, and enhanced regional cooperation. The role of grassroots movements and local initiatives is also acknowledged as critical to building resilience and fostering long-term peace. Based on these insights, the study offers policy recommendations for various stakeholders, including strengthening governance structures, improving coordination among international actors, and supporting local peace-building efforts. Future research directions are suggested, focusing on impact assessment, intervention effectiveness, radicalization processes, and the interplay between climate change and conflict dynamics.

Keywords: Nigeria's North East Conflict, Boko Haram Insurgency, International Diplomacy, Humanitarian Impact, Peace-building Efforts, Regional Cooperation, Socio-Political Factors

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Nigeria's North East Conflict

The North East region of Nigeria has been embroiled in a protracted conflict primarily driven by the insurgency of Boko Haram, a jihadist militant organization. Boko Haram, which translates to "Western education is forbidden," emerged in the early 2000s under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. The group's ideology is rooted in a strict interpretation of Islam, and it seeks to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. The insurgency escalated significantly after 2009, following Yusuf's death in police custody, leading to widespread violence, destruction, and displacement (Thurston, 2017) ^[52].

Boko Haram's tactics include bombings, assassinations, and abductions, most notoriously the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014. The conflict has resulted in over 30,000 deaths and the displacement of millions of people, causing a severe humanitarian crisis in the region (Zenn, 2018) ^[66]. The Nigerian government's response has involved military operations, often criticized for human rights abuses and inefficiency, while regional and international actors have also engaged in efforts to combat the insurgency and address its root causes (Walker, 2012) ^[61].

1.2 Importance of International Diplomacy in Regional Conflicts

International diplomacy plays a critical role in addressing regional conflicts by facilitating dialogue, providing humanitarian aid, and supporting military efforts against insurgent groups. Diplomatic interventions can help broker peace agreements, coordinate multinational efforts, and ensure the adherence to international laws and human rights standards. In the context of Nigeria's North East conflict, international diplomacy has involved the efforts of organizations such as the United Nations, the

African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as individual countries like the United States and the United Kingdom (International Crisis Group, 2020) ^[31].

Effective international diplomacy can help mitigate the impact of conflicts by mobilizing resources, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting sustainable development. It also provides a platform for the international community to exert pressure on conflicting parties to negotiate and seek peaceful resolutions (International Crisis Group, 2020) ^[31].

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Analyze the historical and socio-political factors contributing to the North East conflict in Nigeria.
2. Examine the roles of various domestic and international actors in the conflict.
3. Assess the humanitarian impact of the conflict on the local population.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of international diplomatic efforts in addressing the conflict.
5. Identify challenges and propose recommendations for improving international diplomatic interventions in regional conflicts.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the historical and socio-political factors that have contributed to the North East conflict in Nigeria?
2. What roles have various domestic actors played in the North East conflict, and how have international actors influenced the situation?
3. What has been the humanitarian impact of the North East conflict on the local population in terms of displacement, human rights violations, and socio-economic disruption?
4. How effective have international diplomatic efforts been in addressing the North East conflict in Nigeria?
5. What are the key challenges facing international diplomatic interventions in the North East conflict, and what recommendations can be made to improve these efforts?

2. Historical Context of Nigeria's North East Conflict

2.1 Pre-Colonial and Colonial History

The region now known as North East Nigeria has a rich pre-colonial history characterized by powerful empires and diverse ethnic groups. The Kanem-Bornu Empire, which flourished from the 9th to the 19th century, was one of the most significant pre-colonial states. It was a center of Islamic scholarship and commerce, with extensive trade networks stretching across the Sahara (Last, 2008) ^[34]. The Sokoto Caliphate, established in the early 19th century following the Fulani Jihad led by Usman dan Fodio, also played a crucial role in shaping the region's socio-political landscape. The Caliphate's emphasis on Islamic law and education had a lasting impact on the region's cultural and religious practices (Hogben & Kirk-Greene, 1966) ^[26].

Colonial rule, imposed by the British in the early 20th century, disrupted traditional governance structures and introduced new administrative systems. The British used indirect rule, leveraging existing local authorities to govern

on their behalf. This approach preserved some aspects of pre-colonial governance but also created new tensions and divisions (Crowder, 1968) ^[15]. The colonial economy focused on cash crops and resource extraction, leading to significant socio-economic changes and laying the groundwork for future conflicts.

2.2 Post-Independence Political and Economic Developments

Nigeria's independence in 1960 marked the beginning of a complex political and economic evolution. The country's early years were characterized by regionalism and competition among the diverse ethnic and religious groups. The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta shifted economic priorities and led to significant economic disparities between regions. Northern Nigeria, including the North East, lagged behind in terms of development and infrastructure (Falola & Heaton, 2008) ^[18]. Military coups and civil war in the late 1960s further destabilized the country. The North East region experienced marginalization and underdevelopment, contributing to widespread poverty and unemployment. These socio-economic conditions created a fertile ground for radical ideologies and militant movements (Paden, 2005) ^[46].

2.3 Rise of Boko Haram: Origins and Ideology

Boko Haram, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, emerged in the early 2000s under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. The group was initially based in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Yusuf's teachings rejected Western education and secular government, advocating for the establishment of an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. The group's name, Boko Haram, loosely translates to "Western education is forbidden" (Thurston, 2017) ^[52].

The roots of Boko Haram can be traced to a combination of ideological, political, and socio-economic factors. Ideologically, the group drew inspiration from Salafi-jihadist movements, promoting a puritanical interpretation of Islam. Politically, the group's rise was facilitated by corruption, poor governance, and the brutal tactics of Nigerian security forces, which fueled local grievances and attracted recruits (Walker, 2012) ^[61]. Socio-economically, widespread poverty, unemployment, and lack of educational opportunities in the North East created a pool of disenfranchised youth susceptible to Boko Haram's radical message (Onuoha, 2014) ^[43].

Boko Haram's insurgency escalated after Yusuf's death in police custody in 2009. Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group adopted more violent tactics, including bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings, most notably the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014. The insurgency has resulted in significant loss of life, displacement, and destruction, with over 30,000 deaths and millions of people displaced (Zenn, 2018) ^[66].

3. Key Actors in the Conflict

3.1 Boko Haram and Other Insurgent Groups

Boko Haram, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, is the primary insurgent group responsible for the conflict in Nigeria's North East. Founded in the early 2000s by Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram's ideology is rooted in a strict interpretation of Islam and vehement opposition to Western education and secular government structures (Thurston, 2017) ^[52]. Following

Yusuf's death in 2009, the group escalated its violent activities under Abubakar Shekau, employing tactics such as bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations (Zenn, 2018) ^[66]. The group gained international notoriety with the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014, drawing global condemnation and highlighting the severe human rights abuses committed by the insurgents (Human Rights Watch, 2020) ^[27].

In addition to Boko Haram, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has emerged as a significant actor in the region. ISWAP split from Boko Haram in 2016 due to ideological and leadership disputes. ISWAP has adopted different tactics, focusing more on targeting military installations and providing some services to local populations to garner support (International Crisis Group, 2020) ^[31].

3.2 Nigerian Government and Security Forces

The Nigerian government and its security forces, including the Nigerian Army, Police, and other paramilitary units, are central actors in the conflict. The government's strategy has predominantly involved military operations aimed at eliminating insurgent threats. Joint military operations, such as those conducted by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, have been crucial in counterinsurgency efforts (Campbell & Harwood, 2018) ^[13]. However, the Nigerian military has faced criticism for human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and unlawful detentions, which have sometimes fueled local grievances and inadvertently bolstered insurgent recruitment (Amnesty International, 2019) ^[6].

3.3 Civil Society and Local Communities

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities play a vital role in addressing the conflict and its humanitarian impact. These groups are involved in providing essential services, advocating for human rights, and fostering dialogue between conflicting parties. Local NGOs, such as the Network of Civil Society Organisations in Borno State, have been active in delivering aid, supporting displaced persons, and promoting community resilience (Nwankpa, 2020) ^[41]. Traditional leaders and community elders also play a critical role in mediation and reconciliation efforts at the grassroots level (Kew & Phillips, 2019) ^[33].

3.4 International Actors (Countries, Organizations)

International actors, including countries and organizations, have been pivotal in supporting Nigeria's efforts to combat Boko Haram and address the humanitarian crisis. The United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union have provided military assistance, training, and intelligence support to the Nigerian armed forces (Pham, 2019). Additionally, these countries have contributed significant humanitarian aid to support displaced populations and rebuild affected communities.

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have also been deeply involved. The UN, through agencies like UNICEF and the World Food Programme, has been instrumental in providing humanitarian assistance, education, and healthcare services to those affected by the conflict (UNICEF, 2020) ^[58]. The AU has supported regional cooperation and the coordination

of the MNJTF to enhance collective security efforts (African Union, 2020) ^[5].

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research design involves qualitative data collection and analysis, focusing on multiple sources of evidence to ensure triangulation and validity. The study encompasses the following key components:

4.2 Case Selection

The primary case selected for this study is the Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria, with a focus on Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. These states are the most affected by the conflict, providing a rich context for examining the dynamics of the insurgency and the responses of various actors.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

Document Analysis: This includes the review of academic literature, government reports, NGO publications, and media articles. Key documents such as policy papers, military reports, and humanitarian assessments will be analyzed to understand the historical context and current developments (Yin, 2018) ^[64].

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including government officials, military personnel, and representatives from international organizations, civil society leaders, and community members. These interviews aim to capture diverse perspectives on the conflict and the effectiveness of diplomatic interventions (Creswell & Poth, 2018) ^[14].

Observation: Field visits to affected areas (subject to security and accessibility) will be conducted to observe the on-ground realities, including the humanitarian situation, community responses, and military operations. This observational data will provide contextual insights that complement the documentary and interview data (Stake, 1995) ^[51].

4.4 Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis: The collected data will be coded and analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and themes. This involves systematically categorizing the data to uncover insights related to the historical and socio-political factors, roles of various actors, humanitarian impact, and diplomatic efforts (Braun & Clarke, 2006) ^[12].

Triangulation: Data from different sources (documents, interviews, observations) will be cross-verified to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Triangulation helps in corroborating evidence from multiple perspectives, providing a more robust understanding of the conflict (Yin, 2018) ^[64].

5. Humanitarian Impact of the Conflict

5.1 Displacement and Refugee Crisis

The Boko Haram insurgency has caused one of the most severe displacement crises in Africa. As of 2023, over 2.5 million people have been displaced within Nigeria, with many fleeing to neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (UNHCR, 2023) ^[57]. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face dire living conditions in overcrowded camps, where access to basic necessities such as food, water, and sanitation is limited. The displacement has

disrupted community cohesion and traditional livelihoods, exacerbating poverty and vulnerability among affected populations (IDMC, 2020) ^[28].

5.2 Human Rights Violations and Atrocities

The conflict has been marked by widespread human rights violations and atrocities committed by both Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces. Boko Haram's tactics include mass abductions, sexual violence, forced recruitment of children, and targeted attacks on civilians (Amnesty International, 2019) ^[6]. The group's use of children as soldiers and suicide bombers has drawn international condemnation. Additionally, Nigerian security forces have been accused of extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detention in their counterinsurgency efforts, further aggravating the humanitarian situation (Human Rights Watch, 2020) ^[27].

5.3 Economic and Social Disruption

The prolonged conflict has severely disrupted the economic and social fabric of North East Nigeria. Agricultural activities, which form the backbone of the region's economy, have been significantly hampered due to insecurity and displacement. Markets and trade routes have been destroyed or rendered inaccessible, leading to food shortages and increased prices (FAO, 2021) ^[20]. The destruction of infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and power lines, has further isolated affected communities and hindered economic recovery efforts (World Bank, 2020).

Socially, the conflict has led to the breakdown of family structures and traditional support systems. Many children have been orphaned or separated from their families, and the psychological trauma experienced by survivors has long-term implications for mental health and community stability (Save the Children, 2021) ^[50].

5.4 Healthcare and Educational Challenges

Healthcare services in the conflict-affected areas have been critically undermined. Many health facilities have been destroyed or are non-functional, and there is a severe shortage of medical supplies and personnel. The disruption of vaccination campaigns has led to outbreaks of preventable diseases such as measles and cholera (WHO, 2020) ^[62]. Malnutrition rates have also surged due to food insecurity, particularly affecting children and pregnant women (UNICEF, 2021) ^[59].

Education has been another major casualty of the conflict. Boko Haram's attacks on schools and abductions of students have created a climate of fear, leading to widespread school closures. As a result, millions of children have missed years of schooling, significantly impacting literacy and future employment prospects (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2020) ^[23]. Efforts to rebuild the educational infrastructure are ongoing, but progress is slow and fraught with challenges.

6. Nigeria's Domestic Response to the Conflict

6.1 Military Strategies and Operations

Nigeria's primary response to the Boko Haram insurgency has been military. The Nigerian Armed Forces, particularly the Army, have conducted numerous operations aimed at dismantling Boko Haram's operational capabilities. One of the notable military strategies has been the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in

collaboration with neighboring countries—Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. This regional military alliance has been critical in conducting cross-border operations to combat Boko Haram and ISWAP (Onuoha, 2020) ^[44].

Operation Lafiya Dole, launched in 2015, has been a significant national military campaign against Boko Haram. The operation has focused on reclaiming territories held by insurgents, securing key towns, and protecting civilians (Campbell & Harwood, 2018) ^[13]. Despite some successes, including the recapture of major towns like Bama and Gwoza, the insurgents have remained resilient, adapting their tactics to evade military offensives (Felbab-Brown, 2020) ^[21].

6.2 Government Policies and Initiatives

The Nigerian government has implemented various policies and initiatives to address the underlying issues fueling the conflict. The National Security Strategy, revised in 2019, emphasizes a comprehensive approach that integrates military, socio-economic, and political measures (Nigerian Ministry of Defence, 2019) ^[40]. The government has also initiated the Presidential Committee on the North-East Initiative (PCNI) to coordinate rehabilitation, reconstruction, and resettlement efforts in the region (PCNI, 2017) ^[47].

Economic empowerment programs, such as the North East Development Commission (NEDC), have been established to facilitate infrastructural development and economic recovery. The NEDC focuses on rebuilding schools, hospitals, and roads, as well as providing vocational training to enhance local employment opportunities (NEDC, 2021) ^[39]. These initiatives aim to address the root causes of insurgency, such as poverty and unemployment.

6.3 Role of State and Local Governments

State and local governments in the North East have played crucial roles in the domestic response to the conflict. They have been involved in providing immediate humanitarian assistance to displaced populations, including shelter, food, and healthcare. State governments, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, have collaborated with international organizations and NGOs to deliver aid and support recovery efforts (Haruna, 2020) ^[25].

Local governments and traditional leaders have also engaged in community-based conflict resolution and deradicalization programs. These efforts are aimed at reintegrating former insurgents and preventing radicalization among the youth (Gusau, 2020) ^[24]. Community dialogues facilitated by local authorities have been instrumental in rebuilding trust and promoting social cohesion.

6.4 Challenges and Criticisms of Domestic Response

Despite these efforts, Nigeria's domestic response to the conflict has faced significant challenges and criticisms. The military approach, while necessary, has been criticized for its heavy-handed tactics and human rights abuses. Reports of extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary detentions by security forces have undermined public trust and fueled local grievances (Amnesty International, 2019) ^[6].

The effectiveness of government policies and initiatives has been hampered by corruption, mismanagement, and lack of coordination. Funds allocated for reconstruction and humanitarian aid have sometimes been diverted or misused, leading to delays and inefficiencies in project implementation (Transparency International, 2020) ^[53].

Additionally, the scale of the humanitarian crisis has overwhelmed local capacities, with many IDPs still lacking adequate support and protection.

State and local governments often face resource constraints and are dependent on federal and international assistance. The security situation remains volatile, complicating efforts to deliver aid and implement development projects. Moreover, political rivalries and bureaucratic inefficiencies have sometimes impeded collaborative efforts between different levels of government (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2021) [29].

7. Role of Regional Organizations

7.1 African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) has played a significant role in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency and the broader conflict in Nigeria's North East. The AU has facilitated regional cooperation and provided a platform for member states to coordinate their efforts against Boko Haram. In 2015, the AU endorsed the establishment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), emphasizing the need for a collective security approach to counter the insurgency (African Union, 2015) [4]. The AU has also worked to mobilize international support and resources for the MNJTF and other regional initiatives aimed at stabilizing the Lake Chad Basin region.

Furthermore, the AU has engaged in diplomatic efforts to foster political dialogue and conflict resolution. Her Peace and Security Council has frequently discussed the security situation in Nigeria, calling for comprehensive strategies that integrate military, political, and humanitarian dimensions (AU Peace and Security Council, 2018) [7]. The AU's engagement underscores the importance of regional solidarity and collective action in addressing transnational security threats.

7.2 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been actively involved in regional efforts to combat the Boko Haram insurgency. ECOWAS has supported the deployment and operational activities of the MNJTF, providing financial and logistical assistance. The organization has also facilitated intelligence sharing and joint military training exercises among member states to enhance their capabilities in counterterrorism operations (ECOWAS Commission, 2016) [16].

In addition to its security-oriented initiatives, ECOWAS has focused on addressing the root causes of the conflict through socio-economic development programs. The organization has promoted initiatives aimed at poverty reduction, education, and youth employment, recognizing that addressing these underlying issues is crucial for long-term peace and stability in the region (Adejumobi, 2020) [2]. ECOWAS's multifaceted approach highlights the need for both immediate security measures and long-term development strategies to effectively tackle insurgency.

7.3 Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) has been central to coordinating efforts among countries directly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency. The LCBC, comprising Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and the Central African Republic, has played a pivotal role in facilitating regional

dialogue and cooperation. The LCBC has been instrumental in the formation and operational support of the MNJTF, providing a framework for joint military operations and resource sharing (LCBC, 2018) [35].

Beyond military collaboration, the LCBC has been involved in initiatives aimed at environmental and socio-economic recovery in the Lake Chad region. The commission has promoted projects to restore livelihoods, improve water management, and enhance agricultural productivity, recognizing that environmental degradation and economic hardship are significant factors contributing to the conflict (Onuoha, 2020) [44]. The LCBC's holistic approach aims to create sustainable peace by addressing both the symptoms and the root causes of instability.

7.4 Joint Multinational Task Force (MNJTF)

The Joint Multinational Task Force (MNJTF) is a key regional military initiative established to combat the Boko Haram insurgency. Comprising troops from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin, the MNJTF operates under the auspices of the LCBC and with the support of the AU. The MNJTF has conducted several successful operations to disrupt Boko Haram's activities, reclaim territories, and protect civilian populations (Zenn, 2018) [66].

The MNJTF's strength lies in its ability to conduct coordinated cross-border operations, thereby preventing Boko Haram from exploiting national borders to evade military action. The task force has also facilitated intelligence sharing and joint training programs, enhancing the operational effectiveness of member states' security forces (Felbab-Brown, 2020) [21]. However, the MNJTF faces challenges such as logistical constraints, funding shortages, and coordination issues, which impact its overall effectiveness (Campbell & Harwood, 2018) [13].

8. International Diplomacy and Foreign Aid

8.1 United Nations (UN) Involvement

The United Nations (UN) has been actively involved in addressing the humanitarian crisis and promoting peace in Nigeria's North East. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has coordinated international humanitarian responses, mobilizing resources and providing aid to millions of affected individuals. The UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria outlines strategies to address urgent needs, including food security, healthcare, and shelter for internally displaced persons (IDPs) (OCHA, 2021) [42].

Additionally, the UN has deployed peacekeeping and diplomatic missions to support the Nigerian government and regional efforts in stabilizing the region. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has implemented programs aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, fostering social cohesion, and promoting economic recovery in conflict-affected areas (UNDP, 2020) [55]. The UN's involvement underscores the importance of international cooperation in addressing complex humanitarian and security challenges.

8.2 Role of the United States, European Union, and Other Key Nations

The United States has been a significant player in providing military, humanitarian, and development assistance to Nigeria in its fight against Boko Haram. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States has funded programs focused on food security, health,

and education for displaced populations. The U.S. government has also provided military training, equipment, and intelligence support to Nigerian security forces (Pham, 2019).

The European Union (EU) has similarly played a crucial role in supporting Nigeria's efforts to combat terrorism and address the humanitarian crisis. The EU has allocated substantial funding for humanitarian aid, development projects, and capacity-building initiatives. The EU's support includes projects aimed at strengthening governance, promoting human rights, and enhancing the resilience of communities affected by the conflict (European Commission, 2021)^[17].

Other key nations, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, have also contributed to international efforts through bilateral aid, military cooperation, and participation in multilateral initiatives. These countries have supported various programs aimed at improving security, providing humanitarian assistance, and fostering long-term development in the region (UK Government, 2020; French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2020)^[54, 22].

8.3 International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

International NGOs have been instrumental in delivering humanitarian aid and supporting development initiatives in Nigeria's North East. Organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Save the Children have provided critical services, including healthcare, nutrition, education, and protection for vulnerable populations. These NGOs operate in challenging environments, often facing security risks and logistical constraints (MSF, 2019)^[37].

NGOs have also advocated for the rights of affected populations, highlighting issues such as human rights violations, gender-based violence, and the needs of IDPs. Their advocacy efforts have been crucial in mobilizing international attention and resources to address the crisis (IRC, 2020)^[32].

8.4 Diplomatic Efforts and Peace Initiatives

International diplomatic efforts have focused on promoting peace and stability in Nigeria's North East. The UN and other international actors have facilitated dialogue between the Nigerian government, regional partners, and various stakeholders to address the conflict's root causes and seek political solutions. These efforts include supporting mediation and reconciliation processes, as well as promoting inclusive governance and development (United Nations, 2018)^[60].

Peace initiatives have also involved efforts to reintegrate former combatants and prevent further radicalization. Programs aimed at deradicalization and community reintegration have been implemented with the support of international partners, seeking to foster long-term peace and stability in the region (Felbab-Brown, 2020)^[21].

9. Case Studies

9.1 Successful International Interventions in Similar Conflicts

One notable example of successful international intervention in a conflict similar to Nigeria's North East conflict is the United Nations' involvement in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Civil War, which lasted from 1991 to 2002, was

characterized by brutal violence, including widespread atrocities against civilians. The intervention by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) played a crucial role in disarming combatants, supporting the establishment of a stable government, and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction (Fanthorpe, 2005)^[19]. The comprehensive approach taken by UNAMSIL, which included both military and civilian components, proved effective in stabilizing the country and promoting lasting peace.

In the case of Liberia, the intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the Liberian Civil Wars (1989-1997 and 1999-2003) also stands out as a successful international effort. ECOWAS deployed the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which helped to enforce peace agreements and provided a framework for political dialogue and reconstruction (Adebajo, 2002)^[1]. This intervention highlighted the importance of regional organizations in managing conflicts and ensuring regional stability.

9.2 Comparative Analysis with Other African and Global Conflicts

Comparing the conflict in Nigeria's North East with other African conflicts, such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia, provides valuable insights. In the DRC, the conflict has persisted for decades despite significant international intervention. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has been involved in efforts to stabilize the region, but the complexity of the conflict, involving numerous armed groups and deep-seated political and ethnic tensions, has posed significant challenges (Autesserre, 2010)^[8]. This comparison highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and ensuring robust, multidimensional strategies for peacekeeping and reconstruction.

Similarly, in Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been instrumental in combating the militant group Al-Shabaab and supporting the Somali government. However, the ongoing instability and lack of effective governance structures have hindered long-term peace and development (Williams, 2018)^[63]. The Somali case underscores the necessity of building strong, inclusive political institutions and ensuring sustained international support for conflict resolution efforts.

9.3 Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Several lessons can be drawn from these case studies that are relevant to the conflict in Nigeria's North East:

1. **Comprehensive and Multidimensional Approaches:** Effective interventions often combine military, political, and humanitarian efforts. In Sierra Leone, the integration of these components under UNAMSIL's mandate was crucial for success. Similarly, in Nigeria, a balanced approach that addresses security, governance, and development is essential (Fanthorpe, 2005)^[19].
2. **Local and Regional Collaboration:** Regional organizations like ECOWAS and the African Union have played pivotal roles in conflict resolution in West Africa. Strengthening the role of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) can enhance regional cooperation and effectiveness in combating Boko Haram (Adebajo,

- 2002)^[11].
3. **Addressing Root Causes of Conflict:** Long-term peace requires addressing the underlying causes of conflict, such as poverty, marginalization, and lack of governance. In the DRC and Somalia, failure to effectively address these issues has led to prolonged instability. In Nigeria, efforts must focus on comprehensive socio-economic development and political inclusion (Autesserre, 2010)^[8].
 4. **Sustained International Support:** Consistent and long-term international support is crucial. The cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone show that sustained engagement from the international community can lead to successful conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery. Nigeria will similarly benefit from continued international diplomatic, military, and development support (Adebajo, 2002)^[11].
 5. **Adaptability and Flexibility:** The dynamic nature of conflicts requires adaptable strategies. Interventions must be flexible to respond to changing circumstances on the ground. Continuous assessment and adjustment of strategies, as seen in successful missions like UNAMSIL, are necessary for effectiveness (Fanthorpe, 2005)^[19].

10. Challenges and Criticisms of International Diplomacy

10.1 Inefficiencies and Bureaucratic Hurdles

One of the primary challenges facing international diplomacy in conflict zones like Nigeria's North East is inefficiencies and bureaucratic hurdles. The complex and often slow-moving processes within international organizations can delay critical interventions. For instance, the coordination between multiple UN agencies, each with its own mandates and operational protocols, often leads to overlap, redundancy, and administrative delays (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004)^[10]. These inefficiencies can hinder timely delivery of humanitarian aid and effective implementation of peacekeeping operations, exacerbating the plight of affected populations.

10.2 Political and Economic Interests of Foreign Actors

International diplomacy is frequently influenced by the political and economic interests of foreign actors. Countries contributing troops, funds, or other resources to conflict resolution efforts may prioritize their national interests over the needs of the local population. For example, some critics argue that the United States' involvement in Nigeria is driven more by strategic interests, such as counterterrorism and oil security, than by purely humanitarian concerns (Pham, 2019). Similarly, the European Union's engagement can be seen as an effort to prevent the spillover of insecurity and migration issues into Europe (European Commission, 2021)^[17]. These interests can sometimes lead to skewed priorities and suboptimal allocation of resources, undermining the effectiveness of international diplomatic efforts.

10.3 Sovereignty and Nationalism Issues

Sovereignty and nationalism pose significant challenges to international diplomacy. Many countries, including Nigeria, are wary of external interference in their internal affairs, viewing it as a threat to national sovereignty. This sentiment can limit the willingness of national governments to fully

cooperate with international actors, thereby restricting the scope and impact of diplomatic and humanitarian interventions (Zartman, 2000)^[65]. Additionally, nationalist sentiments can fuel resistance against foreign involvement, leading to political and public opposition to international initiatives. This resistance can be particularly pronounced when international interventions are perceived as undermining national authority or infringing upon domestic policies (Ayoob, 2002)^[9].

10.4 Long-Term Sustainability and Dependency Concerns

Another critical issue is the long-term sustainability of international interventions and the risk of creating dependency. While international aid and diplomatic efforts can provide immediate relief and support, there is a risk that prolonged dependence on foreign assistance may stifle local initiative and capacity-building. In Nigeria, for example, extensive reliance on international humanitarian aid has raised concerns about the country's ability to develop its own robust mechanisms for conflict resolution and economic recovery (Onuoha, 2020)^[44]. Sustainable development requires that local institutions and communities are empowered to take charge of their own future, reducing reliance on external support. However, achieving this balance is challenging, as premature withdrawal of international assistance can lead to relapse into conflict or humanitarian crisis.

11. Prospects for Peace and Stability

11.1 Current Diplomatic and Peace-building Efforts

Recent diplomatic and peace-building efforts in Nigeria's North East have focused on both immediate security concerns and long-term stabilization. The United Nations and its agencies continue to play a central role, coordinating with the Nigerian government and regional bodies. Initiatives such as the UNDP's Integrated Community Stabilization Programme aim to rebuild infrastructure, support livelihoods, and enhance social cohesion in conflict-affected areas (UNDP, 2021)^[56]. Moreover, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have intensified their support for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to conduct military operations against Boko Haram and provide a security umbrella for peace-building activities (AU Peace and Security Council, 2018)^[7].

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also crucial in delivering humanitarian aid and fostering reconciliation processes. Organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) provide essential services while promoting human rights and community resilience (MSF, 2019; IRC, 2020)^[37, 32].

11.2 Potential Solutions and Future Strategies

Achieving sustainable peace and stability in Nigeria's North East requires a multifaceted approach. Key strategies include:

1. **Strengthening Governance and Rule of Law:** Enhancing the capacity and accountability of local and state governments is essential. Building transparent institutions that deliver justice and services effectively can restore public trust and reduce grievances that fuel insurgency (International Crisis Group, 2019)^[30].

2. **Socio-Economic Development:** Addressing poverty, unemployment, and lack of education through targeted development programs can mitigate the socio-economic drivers of conflict. Investment in infrastructure, agriculture, and education will provide alternatives to joining insurgent groups (Onuoha, 2020)^[44].
3. **Inclusive Political Dialogue:** Facilitating dialogue among various stakeholders, including marginalized communities, civil society, and insurgents willing to negotiate, is crucial for long-term peace. Inclusive processes can help address the root causes of conflict and promote reconciliation (Felbab-Brown, 2020)^[21].
4. **Enhanced Regional Cooperation:** Strengthening collaboration among countries in the Lake Chad Basin is vital for tackling the transnational nature of Boko Haram. Joint initiatives in security, intelligence sharing, and economic development can enhance regional stability (LCBC, 2018)^[35].

11.3 Role of Grassroots Movements and Local Initiatives

Grassroots movements and local initiatives are pivotal in fostering peace and stability. Community-based organizations have the local knowledge and trust needed to implement effective peacebuilding activities. For example, the Borno Women Development Initiative has been instrumental in advocating for women's rights, providing education, and supporting livelihood projects (Borno Women Development Initiative, 2020)^[11]. Local peace committees and traditional leaders also play a crucial role in mediating conflicts, promoting dialogue, and rebuilding social fabric at the community level (Adesoji, 2010)^[3]. Empowering these local actors by providing them with resources and support can enhance their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, integrating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with formal justice systems can provide culturally relevant and widely accepted solutions.

11.4 Long-Term Outlook for the Region

The long-term outlook for Nigeria's North East depends on the sustained commitment of both national and international actors to peacebuilding and development. While significant challenges remain, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Continued international support, coupled with effective local and regional initiatives, can create a conducive environment for lasting peace.

Investing in education and economic opportunities for the youth is particularly critical, as it addresses one of the main drivers of insurgency: The lack of prospects for young people (Mustapha, 2020)^[38]. Furthermore, environmental restoration projects aimed at reviving Lake Chad can help restore livelihoods for millions of people who depend on the lake for fishing, farming, and trade (Onuoha, 2020)^[44].

12. Conclusion

12.1 Summary of Findings

This study has examined the multifaceted conflict in Nigeria's North East, highlighting historical, socio-political, and economic factors that have fueled the insurgency led by Boko Haram and other militant groups. Key actors, including the Nigerian government, local communities, international organizations, and insurgent groups, have been analyzed to understand their roles and impact on the conflict. The humanitarian consequences, including

displacement, human rights violations, and disruption of socio-economic activities, were also explored. International diplomacy's role, including efforts by the UN, regional organizations like ECOWAS, and key nations, was assessed, revealing both successes and limitations (Zenn, 2021; Felbab-Brown, 2020)^[67, 21].

12.2 Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have significant implications for policy and practice. Firstly, addressing the root causes of the conflict, such as poverty, lack of education, and political marginalization, is crucial. Policies aimed at socio-economic development, improved governance, and inclusive political processes can mitigate these underlying issues (Onuoha, 2020)^[44]. Secondly, the effectiveness of military strategies must be complemented by robust civil-military cooperation and community engagement to rebuild trust and foster peace (International Crisis Group, 2019)^[30]. Furthermore, international actors need to streamline their efforts, ensuring that aid is efficiently coordinated and aligned with the needs of local communities.

12.3 Recommendations for Stakeholders

For stakeholders involved in addressing the North East conflict, several recommendations emerge:

1. **Nigerian Government:** Strengthen governance structures, enhance transparency, and promote inclusive political dialogue. Prioritize development projects that address socio-economic disparities in the North East (Mustapha, 2020)^[38].
2. **International Organizations:** Improve coordination among UN agencies and other international bodies to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure efficient resource utilization. Support capacity-building initiatives to empower local institutions (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004)^[10].
3. **Local Communities and Civil Society:** Enhance grassroots peacebuilding efforts and involve local leaders in conflict resolution processes. Support initiatives that promote social cohesion and community resilience (Adesoji, 2010)^[3].
4. **Regional Bodies:** Strengthen regional cooperation through organizations like ECOWAS and the Lake Chad Basin Commission to tackle the transnational nature of the insurgency. Facilitate intelligence sharing and joint security operations (LCBC, 2018)^[35].

12.4 Future Research Direction

Future research should focus on several key areas to further understand and address the conflict:

1. **Impact Assessment:** Conduct comprehensive studies on the long-term socio-economic impacts of the conflict on affected communities, particularly on youth and women (Felbab-Brown, 2020)^[21].
2. **Effectiveness of Interventions:** Evaluate the effectiveness of various intervention strategies, both military and non-military, to identify best practices and areas for improvement (International Crisis Group, 2019)^[30].
3. **Radicalization and Deradicalization:** Investigate the processes of radicalization among youth in the North East and assess the effectiveness of deradicalization programs to develop more targeted approaches (Onuoha, 2020)^[44].

4. **Climate Change and Conflict:** Explore the links between environmental changes, resource scarcity, and conflict dynamics in the region to inform sustainable development and peacebuilding strategies (Mustapha, 2020)^[38].

By addressing these areas, future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the conflict and more effective solutions for peace and stability in Nigeria's North East

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