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PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF NON-VIOLENT RESOLUTION OF INSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA

INTRODUCTION

The Insurgency by Jama'atuAhlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, has lasted for more than eleven years now. During this period, 37,530 people have been killed, more than 2 million have been displaced internally, and 244,000 refugees have been created as a result of the insurgency.[1] Several communities have been completely destroyed and travel has been constrained in the region. Up until 2016, the insurgents controlled several local government areas in Borno State. Moreover, the insurgency disrupted economic activities in many parts of the northeast, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states.

There have been various efforts by the government, the international community and other actors to bring the insurgency to an end. The Federal Government has deployed two complementary strategies, a military onslaught on the insurgents and a soft strategy which focuses on winning the minds, especially of young people from the insurgents as well as de-radicalization and reintegration of repentant former Boko Haram members.

1. https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html

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There is a simple assumption that there are only two parties to the conflict. This assumption makes it difficult to see the interest and fears of other actors that are not visibly seen in the conflict arena but active behind the scene. Even within the Boko Haram influence, it is easy to assume that there is a homogenous movement with the same vision and goals. There are various insurgents with allegiances to different factional leaders; there are their supporters, profiteers and even associated criminals. All these are part of the conflict complex. A more nuanced understanding of the conflict complex and the positioning of different actors (seen and unseen) within the conflict complex map and what interests they have in the continuation or otherwise of the conflict is needed. We need to identify the factors that make the conflict protracted and what can be done to address these factors in such a way that the drivers of the conflict can be undermined and broken. We need to understand what interests each of these actors represent in shaping a post-conflict era. We need to know what they fear to lose if the conflict is ended and what can be done about these fears and how to address the post-conflict dynamics of reconciliation and justice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It was therefore important to undertake research aimed at the strategic generation of ideas that government can implement in addressing the conflict to bring it to an end. The research was meant to provide answers to the following questions:

1 In each state, what is the state of the conflicts?

2 What are the positions of government, non-state armed groups, religious and community leaders, on dialogue and reconciliation as option for resolution?

3 Which actors can best promote dialogue and reconciliation?

4 What is the best way to approach them?

5 What are the competing demands of major actors and how feasible are these demands?

6 What are the risks of non-violent resolution and possible mitigation strategies?

7 Which actors and approaches should be engaged in resolution initiatives?

This document is the outcome of an action and policy-oriented research meant to assist government and other stakeholders that are involved in exploring options for the resolution of the conflict. The research focused on exploring the prospects and possibilities, as well as the challenges of dialogue and negotiation, as an option for ending or creating the conditions for ending the insurgency. It was conducted in the three most conflict-affected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The research was also conducted in Kano to determine if there are lessons to learn from the way the conflict was addressed in that state.

The research team deployed three key methods. First, the research team undertook an extensive desk review to gain a better understanding of the complexity of the conflict and assess efforts aimed at finding a solution to the crisis, the methods deployed, the results achieved, the challenges faced, and why these strategies have not been successful.

The second method was key informant interviews (KII) with relevant stakeholders in the four states, including: government officials, religious and community leaders, youth, military personnel, other security officials, women, armed non-state actors, victims, former or repentant insurgents, internally displaced persons (IDPs), etc. Overall, 75 people were interviewed across the states.

The third method used was focused group discussions (FGDs) with religious and community leaders, youth, military personnel, other security officials, women, armed non-state actors, victims, former or repentant insurgents, and IDPs. A total of 20 FGDs were conducted in the four states, with over 200 participants. Both the KIIs and the FGDs were directed at interrogating key questions connected to the issues of dialogue and negotiation.

FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are presented according to the main research questions as follows:

The current state of the conflict

There is no doubt that the military has succeeded in containing and rolling back the insurgents as many territories previously in the hands of the insurgents have been recovered and the insurgents flushed out of many of those places. They have, as government and military officials keep saying, technically degraded the insurgents. The onslaught has also contributed to the divisions that have occurred within the Boko Haram. Major towns in the region such as Maiduguri, Bama and Mubi among others have seen a process of restoration of normalcy, even though there are still pockets of attacks.

However, the insurgency is far from being defeated. The end of the conflict is still a posibility, but not a reality at the moment. In spite of the military successes recorded against the Boko Haram insurgents, the conflict has continued to linger with spells of attacks. This stage of the crisis is unsettling and more insidious given that many of the insurgents that have been flushed out have somehow become embeded in communities, which makes it easier for them to spring surprising attacks. These sporadic attacks have made it difficult to resettle displaced people and restore normalcy in the areas and communities deeply affected by the insurgency.

Attacks, although with less frequency, still occur with human causality and destruction. Resettlement in a number of communities has been impossible as the insurgents have either direct control of these communities or they control the roads to these communities. Economic activities, without which normalisation cannot occur, are still not possible in some places. In some cases, the Boko Haram insurgents have strategic control of economic resources and activities. For instance, in the Bama and Lake Chad axis, they control fishing and fishing trade. They were able to create new fish markets in Kusiri market in Northern Cameroon and another in Kinchandi in Niger Republic, thus effectively neutralising the biggest fish market in West Africa, the Baga Fish Market. They have also redirected fish traders from Kano and Jigawa States to altenative markets in Niger, thus squeezing out Maiduguri of commercial activities. They have continued to abduct humanitarian aid workers, villagers and others. They have continued to attack communities, killing many more people including civilians and soldiers, blocking highways, making inter-city travel, especially in Borno State dangerous. For example, on 1 November 2020, the town of Chibok was attacked by the insurgents who killed 12 people and abducted seven others, in addition to burning several houses and looting food stores. Earlier in October, they had attacked a group of soldiers in Doska, Dambao LGA, killing seven of them. But the most audacious attacks were on the convoy of the Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Umara Zulum. The first was on 19 July 2020 when his convey was attacked on a visit in Baga town. Several people were either killed or

wounded in the Governor's convoy. On 26 September 2020, the governor's convoy was attacked a second time on its way to the same Baga town.

The divisions within the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad have, instead of weakening the insurgency, opened up new fronts of engagement for the military, thus further stretching their forces. In spite of the number of insurgents killed, detained or those who have repented, the various factions of Jama'atuAhlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad have continued to recruit, meaning that their recruiting grounds have not be destructed.

But bringing the insurgency to an end is imperative for Nigeria. How do we hasten the process of bringing the insurgency to an end? It is clear that military action alone cannot end the conflict. This means that military action will have to be complemented with a broader non-kinetic approach to winning the battle. Finding a solution to it will require a deeper understanding of the current state of the crisis, unearthing the factors that frame the continuing conflict and developing a framework within which a solution can come.

There is a simple assumption that there are only two parties to the conflict. This assumption makes it difficult to see the interest and fears of other actors that are not visible in the conflict arena but active behind the scenes. Even within the Boko Haram, it is easy to assume that there is a homogenous movement with the same vision and goal. But in fact, there are various insurgents with allegiances to different factional leaders; there are supporters, profiteers and even associated criminals. All these are part of the conflict complex. A more nuanced understanding of the conflict and the position of different actors (seen and unseen) within the conflict complex map and what interests they have in the continuation or otherwise of the conflict is needed. We need to identify the factors that make the conflict resilient and what can be done to address these factors in such a way that the resilience of the conflict can be undermined and broken.

We need to understand what interests each of these actors represents in shaping a post-conflict era. We need to know what they fear to lose if the conflict is ended and what can be done about these fears and how to address the post conflict dynamics of reconciliation and justice.

The nature of the conflict has changed both due to the military offensive against the insurgents as well as the internal dynamics of fanctionalisation among the insurgents themselves. At the height of the conflict, there was a single central organisation and authority within the Boko Haram structure. With factionalisation that set in around 2016, there is now not one single central authority and leadership, but competing factions, sometimes at war among themselves, at times cooperating with each other in attacking their targets. With this break up leadership, there are also now possibly other unallied groups who act on their own and are more or less independent of any of the factions at least at the level of command. This context has also given the opportunity for criminals to appropriate a franchise without any link to any of the factions of the

insurgents, operating and acting against targets and making it appear as if these were Boko Haram attacks.

Although territorially the insurgents are pushed to small rural areas, nevertheless, some of them are still embedded within communities and working with those in the formations to coordinate actions. Those embedded within the communities are responsible for generating information and intelligence gathering, identification of soft targets, handling logistics such as food supply, movement of ammunition, and other supplies that the insurgents need.

There is a decline in large scale attacks, even as the insurgents' capacity to launch minor incessant attacks on various locations and highways continue unabated and it has been observed that the frequency of attacks has recently increased. There is also a decline in the frequency of suicides and IEDs attacks, and disruption of their supply chains. However, rural areas remain relatively insecure. In addition, the Boko Haram has control of upper Borno North in local governments such as Abadan and the Lake Chad area. They are embedded in rural communities along the Maiduguri-Damaturu Highway, the Tarmuwa LGA in Yobe State and Kaga LGA in Borno State. Boko Haram is still in control of most of the Madagali LGA, except the local government headquarters in Gulak and a few other towns like Bebel, Vigirik, Vokolos, Vorkotok, Visik, which are considered as relatively safe. Many towns like Gubla, Sukur, Daurawa, Kamburu, Mazawa, Vengo, Borkoto, Hidik, Yibango, Makshe, Humshe, Jaje, Gatha, Chakama, Mandaka, Waga, Barngwaza, Gubla, are considered no-go areas because the insurgents control them.

Assessment of government efforts to win the battle

The military offensive embarked upon from 2015, along with the effort of the Multinational Joint Force against the insurgents has been uneven. At the beginning successes were recorded, not only in halting the advance of the insurgents, but also retaking territories that were in the control of the Boko Haram. Virtually all the areas in Yobe were retaken by the military; much of the areas of central Borno occupied by the Boko Haram were purged of the insurgents; and similarly, they were pushed out of occupied areas in Adamawa State. In partnership with the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the insurgents were flushed out of Maiduguri and most of the urban areas in the North East. Those pushed out of the cities and urban centres moved to rural areas where they camped and are operating from there, usually attacking communities for food, medication and money. The result was that the insurgents are holed up in isolated patches such as in the northern fringe of Borno and around the Lake Chad area, where the ISWAP operates, in the Sambisa forest and in the border region between Borno and Adamawa States where the Shekau faction controls as well as in the areas around Kaga LGA in Borno and Tarmuwa LGA in Yobe State along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway.

The strategy of the military at that time was to take the battle to the insurgents as a result of which the military created many small units that were dispatched across large terrain of operation of the Boko Haram insurgents. With the collapse of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), the military power appeared weakened and the insurgents exploited this, attacking these small units, killing soldiers and taking over their weapons, ammunition and equipment.

This weakened the morale of the soldiers leading to a change in strategy. In July 2019, the President announced that the military was changing its strategy of engaging the insurgents. Subsequently, in August, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), speaking at the COAS combined second and third quarter conference in Abuja explained that the new strategy was essentially about creating what they termed super camps - the concentration of weapons, equipment and personnel in a small number of large military formations. All the previous small units were thus disbanded and withdrawn and the personnel were posted to one of the super camps. While the military explained this was a response to a change in the war, it was clear that this was a move to protect and safeguard itself against the taking away of military equipment and ammunition by the insurgents. Lt. Gen Buratai revealed, "So far, 20 super camps have been established in the northeast with more platforms deployed to support the initiative/strategy."

Unfortunately, this created a new problem. With only a few super camps, many of the areas became totally with no military presence and thus became exposed to attacks by the insurgents. It was this that the insurgent groups capitalized upon and mounted a number of new attacks. For example, when they attacked both Magumeri and Gubio on 21 August, 2019, these areas had no military cover and the insurgents operated for many hours, looting and burning property. The success in this emboldened the insurgents who began a series of more daring frequent small size attacks. The most popularized was the attack at Auno, along the Damaturu-Maiduguri highway in which over 30 people were killed, and large number of people abducted. The most audacious was the attack on Biu LGA on the 23 of December 2019 where Boko Haram overran two villages but was repelled before gaining access to the town itself. However, they launched a second attack on same Biu within 24 hours. They also launched a deadly attack on Garkida in Adamawa State.

The general perception from the discussion with stakeholders is that the military successes recorded in 2015-16 are now been rolled back and the insurgents seem to be gaining ground. While the military has repeatedly said it has "degraded" the capacity of the insurgents, they have proved resilient in confronting the military. As it is now, there are clear signs of stalemate. The majority of respondents across categories are convinced that military action alone cannot defeat the insurgents or bring the conflict to a closure.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Dialogue and reconciliation as options for resolution
From the survey, respondents believe that the following can help to promote dialogue and reconciliation:

1 **Community and religious leaders:** A broad consensus in the findings indicate traditional and religious bodies play a central role in dialogue because of their historical roles in conflict resolution as more trustworthy and acceptable to all stakeholders.

2 **Community members are ambivalent about negotiations:** While they understand the place of negotiation in finding lasting peace, they feel too aggrieved as to easily forgive the insurgents but nonetheless, believe there cannot be a sustainable peace without negotiations.

3 **Military:** The military does not consider dialogue and negotiation as options. The military considers its role to fight and win the war, not to negotiate or dialogue with Boko Haram. They do not see the need to dialogue with the insurgents that they call terrorists.

4 **Governments:** The Federal Government has said it was willing to negotiate and, indeed, a number of times has negotiated with the insurgents to seek the release of abducted people. However, the message about willingness to dialogue with the insurgents is feeble and appears contradictory. This can be attributed to the lack of a trusted mediator, which is acceptable to the leadership of the insurgents. The state governments, while not opposed to dialogue and negotiation, think that responsibility for negotiation lies with the Federal Government.

5 **Youth and other non-state actor combatants such as the CJTF:** The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and vigilante both indicate willingness to support dialogue with Boko Haram if that will bring in end to the conflict. Although in Adamawa, they appeared to be skeptical about dialogue and reconciliation with the insurgents.

6 **Elders, including ethnocultural groups such as the Borno elders:** Most respondents among this category of stakeholders agree that dialogue is an unavoidable process that must be undertaken if the final goal is to end the crisis and obtain sustainable peace.

7 **The insurgents:** The insurgents are no longer a homogenous group. They are divided into factions, and even within the factions, along different hierarchies. Respondents think that Islamic State's West African Province (ISWAP) appears more willing to negotiate than Boko Haram as indicated by ISWAP's tendency to announce abductions or capture of civilians. But within the factions, there is a hierarchy with the top leaders and others who are ideologically committed and not interested in dialogue while the opportunists and the foot soldiers who are at the lower rungs of the hierarchy are amenable to dialogues.

8 **Women and girls:** As victims, they feel the need for retributive justice to take its cause so that a closure could be brought to the pains they endured. This group is not predisposed to dialogue.

Agency for promotion of dialogue and reconciliation
Respondents believe that there are four groups of people who are best placed to promote dialogue and reconciliation. These are:

1 **Religious and traditional leaders:** As these are respected, they can be relied upon to help with the campaign to not only address the negative perception of the population about dialogue and negotiation. They should also enlighten the public that negotiation and dialogue are not to placate the insurgents. They will be listened to because they are respected and trusted by their communities. They are seen as custodians of religious knowledge, mentors and role models. They exert influence on their followers and command loyalty, respect and followership. They are a dependable medium of information dissemination through weekly sermons and daily preaching. With respect to religious leaders, a selection could be made from Friday Mosque Imams as they have influence with their congregations and also a wide network that could enable them to reach out to insurgents. In general, the imam from the Izala sect from which the Boko Haram sect emerged from would be more acceptable to the insurgents in terms getting them to the negotiating table. For traditional rulers, the lower end (that is mai anuguwas, ward heads, etc) are either too compromised in the eyes of the citizens or too feeble to make an impact. On the other hand, the top, such as the Emirs are far removed as to have means to reach out to the insurgents. The middle level, such as district heads, should have agency in getting their citizens to listen and mobilise networks from within their communities to reach out to the insurgents. Farmers and people in the rural areas have a better chance of reaching out to the insurgents.

2 **NGOs/INGOs/humanitarian organisations:** These can help to reach both potential parties as well as talk to the parties that are either ambivalent or are out rightly opposed to dialogue. A number of INGOs are particularly considered by the Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) as neutral and reliable as they were involved in the past negotiations for the release of the abducted "Chibok" and "Dapchi" school

girls which is seen by most respondents to a larger extent, as successful.

3 **Youths and Civilian JTF:** Over the period, these have acquired influence and prestige among youth. They are an influential voice within the communities. They can be relied upon to promote dialogue among members of the communities. Youth will play an important role in convincing the skeptical population about the importance of dialogue and negotiation in finding sustainable peace.

4 **Government:** Ultimately, government has not only the resources but also the responsibility for working to ensure the restoration of peace. It has influence on the military without which respondents think there can be no dialogue.

Stakeholder engagement approaches
Regarding best approach of the engaging the actors, the study found that:

1 The people and organisations that will promote dialogues are not adversaries in this case, in which case, it is easy to approach them. However, government which should be the one to make the approach must be clear about what it wants from these groups.

2 An approach can be made by convening stakeholders' consultative meetings to discuss the possibilities and challenges of dialogue as a possible option for bringing the conflict to closure. All the groups should be identified and invited. These meetings should then discuss the subject matter and arrive at their own conclusions before government takes further action. Once the meetings agree through consensus on dialogue, it then discusses on who should promote and set up a committee for this purpose.

3 As part of the preparation, government should establish a dialogue and reconciliation committee and co-opt repentant Boko Haram members into the committee. In addition, negotiations with ISWAP can only be achieved through the involvement of traditional/religious leaders and excluding the military and other security agencies.

Feasibility of competing demands of major actors
There are basically four competing sets of demands that would require tradeoffs and balancing. These are:

1 **Communities are demanding for justice/accountability and the need to bring the leadership of the insurgents to justice:** The insurgents have committed, and indeed are still committing atrocities for which natural justice requires that they be made to account. Those who have lost their loved ones and those who have suffered emotional, psychological, physical and other forms of torture in the hands of the insurgents or as a result of the activities of the insurgents will want those who perpetrated these crimes to be brought to justice. On the other hand, dialogue and negotiation will at once seem to legitimise what the insurgents have done. It will imply some form of amnesty. In this

respect, it is important that as part of the Dialogue and Negotiation Framework, there is a firm post-conflict justice mechanism that should be arrived at through an inclusive consultation process.

2 **Short term versus long term peace:** Military action would bring short term victory to specific communities and would appeal to the public sense of justice that the insurgents have been adequately dealt with. However, this short term victory cannot guarantee long term peace as both history and reality of experiences with the Boko Haram show that insurgency is hardly ever defeated militarily. Thus, while they can suffer defeats, they could still hold residual power to inflict violence on the society. A long-term peace on the other hand has to be negotiated. This may require a cease fire with no guarantee that the other side will respect all the terms of the cease fire.

3 **Resources for IDPs and resettlement and reconstruction or for payoff to negotiation and meeting negotiation conditionalities:** It is clear that dialogue and negotiation will have to come at a cost. That cost may mean diverting some needed resources for the welfare and safety of IDPs as well for reconstruction and resettlement to go into servicing the conditionalities for dialogue and negotiation. How do we strike the balance? How will the Negotiation Framework deal with the perception that resource is being used to reintegrate killers while victims are not adequately cared for?

4 **The political agenda of the insurgents:** Although there is no coherent political agenda within the wider population of the insurgents, the ideological layer of the insurgents has a vague idea for the establishment of an Islamic state in the region. Such an idea clashes with the inviolability of the borders of Nigeria and the principle of secularity that guides the unity of the country. This demand cannot be met by the country and cannot be a point of negotiation. It will be a difficult point.

Risks of promoting dialogue
The study identified some risks that have to be anticipated and mitigation strategies proposed in promoting dialogue with the insurgents. These include:

1 Dialogue is largely seen by the population as rewarding insurgency. The notion that people who have committed atrocities could be invited for dialogue, is one that the people who lost loved ones would find hard to swallow.
Mitigation: Conduct an effective and sustained public enlightenment and education to make the people appreciate the need for peace and price required for peace.

2 Most are not even willing to accept and live with de-radicalized insurgents in same communities where the atrocities took place. This has the risks of pushing repentant and surrendered former insurgents to return to the insurgent groups.
Mitigation: It is important to involve all to understand that ultimately peace is more important than taking back our own pound of flesh. We need to consider all,

the insurgents inclusive, as victims. This would require sustained stakeholder engagement.

3   In the current stage of the conflict, there are many factions of the insurgents. Will negotiation be with multiple actors or will it be a series of parallel dialogues with different factions? This presents a series of unmanageable scenarios as well as the fact that there is no guarantee that internal conflicts within the factions will not undermine negotiation process.
Mitigation: A diligent study of the factions of the insurgents to proceed the articulation of the dialogue strategy. The study should be made to evaluate the various factions, their relative strengths, their leadership and what areas they control or are operating in as well as their links with external actors and their dispositions to dialogue as well as what they can bring to the table.

4   Also following from the fractionalisation is the mushrooming of independent groups which are not under the leadership of any of the factional leaders. While claiming to belong to some faction, they act independently and without authorisation. The leaderships of the factions have no control on this criminal fringe. Such groups would create a problem to negotiation.
Mitigation: Intelligence work must be done to understand the interface between criminals operating under the cover of insurgency and the operation of the insurgents and draw a line between the two.

5   The insurgents may demand for some amnesty as a precondition for dialogue and negotiation. There is no guarantee that if those they want released and granted amnesty will not renege and refuse to negotiate.
Mitigation: Amnesty should not be a one-off precondition for the negotiation, instead, it should be built along, on the basis of milestones and outcome. Each step or stage in the negotiation should have appropriate conditions attached to it.

6   Interest groups associated with the war economy in the region will work to frustrate dialogue.
Mitigation: Government must find strategies to deal with corruption in the counter-insurgency efforts.

7   The military leadership seems to be opposed to dialogue and negotiation even as solders themselves, are war weary and fatigued, and welcome dialogue. The risk is that if not properly taken on board, the military may take actions that can undermine dialogue efforts.
Mitigation: The Commander in Chief should play his role once the government is committed to negotiation and rein in any dissenting voice and deal with any infraction to the negotiation process.

8   Insurgents may see an opportunity in dialogue to extract additional demands from government. In addition, there are elements of possible betrayal, vengeance, threat to life and personal safety.
Mitigation: The safety of informants and negotiators must be paramount as part of the Negotiation Framework Document.

9   People who may provide entry points to the leadership of Boko Haram will be reluctant to do so for fear of being branded or even identified as Boko Haram supporters. There are also those who expressed concern over the possibility of being stigmatised by community members.
Mitigation: Adequate public enlightenment and protection mechanism will address this.

Reaching out to stakeholders

The general perception is that dialogue has to be as broadly inclusive as possible. In this sense, virtually all stakeholders have a role to play. These include:

1   **Communities:** In addition to direct contact through state governments, the media should be deployed here to mount sustained enlightenment around the need for negotiation.

2   **Repentant insurgents:** Government agencies responsible for their rehabilitation as well as development partners and CSOs can be relied upon.

3   **Professional negotiators:** Governments, development partners and media contacts as well as community leaders should be deployed for this purpose.

4   **The army:** The Legislature at the national level should engage the army as part of their oversight function with a view to getting them to accept the imperative of dialogue and negotiate with the insurgents.

5   **Armed non-state actors:** State governments, which have been supporting and regulating these groups, are best placed to reach out to these stakeholders.

6   **Youth groups:** State governments acting through their ministries for youth development and working with CSOs and development partners working on youth issues can make the approach.

7   **Women's groups:** Women can be reached through local women associations as well other CSOs and development partners working on women and peace issues.

8   **Religious and community leaders:** These groups can be reached using a variety of means. Governments can lead but CSOs can also make an independent approach. The approach by government can be in the form of consultative meetings, while CSOs can engage through sensitization and peace meetings.

9   **Local political leadership:** This can be accessed through state governments in the three states.

10 **Leaders of insurgents:** The insurgents can be approached through the NGOs. In fact, the government has already used this medium to secure the release of some abductees.

Pre-conditions and steps for negotiation

Dialogue especially over matters that have led to the killing of many people will be delicate, painful and slow. For this reason, adequate preparation must be made and the buy-in of different stakeholders must be established. The following steps are suggested as pre-conditions:

1 The government engages communities to understand and appreciate the need for dialogue as critical to lasting peace.

2 The government needs to deploy resources and demonstrate results in the resettlement of IDPs. Many respondents argued that a central element to defeating the insurgents is the return of IDPs to their original homes because it will enable the military to move further away and occupy more space thereby squeezing the insurgents into a tight position.

3 The military should fine-tune its strategy to ensure that there is adequate military cover and protection for both rural and urban communities against attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents as attacks will undermine the confidence of communities in any dialogue.

4 The government has to find ways to address the excesses and arbitrariness of the military which make citizens to not want to cooperate with them. In particular, without engendering a better civil-military relation, communities are not likely to contribute effectively in undercutting the recruitment base of the insurgents.

5 Effective measures must be in place to address corruption and self-serving interests that have become embedded in the counter-insurgency architecture of the government.

6 It is important for the process to be transparent, coordinated and context-sensitive while simultaneously empowering local communities to strengthen their participation.

7 It is important to understand the diversity and positions of the various stakeholders, of victims and perpetrators and identify where the red line lies and what happens to those who cross the red line.

8 The government must find a way to deal with corruption (both perceived and real) in the war against the insurgency. It undermines the morale of soldiers and the confidence of the communities in the capacity of the military to protect them.

9 There should be transparent monitoring of the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant insurgents to both ensure that they do not relapse and win the confidence of communities that rehabilitation is actually not a negative.

10 Dialogue should be carried out with an open mind, utmost privacy and security of the people involved and all agreements reached should be honoured by both the government and the insurgents.

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11 Finally, an element that will push the insurgents to the path of dialogue is depleting their number through surrender as well as making it difficult for them to recruit new members. In this sense both efforts to win more surrenders should be pursued while strategies to undercut further recruitment through enticement or forceful abduction must be in place.

The proposed dialogue process

As a first stage, community members drawn from various groups and supported by the government to engage in a community healing and counselling process which prepares them to understand and accept the wider version of the dialogue that encompasses both victims and perpetrators. The role of traditional and religious leaders in facilitating this phase is critical to the success and sustainability of the wider dialogue process.

Negotiation must be multi-layered, deployed at various levels and in stages. It is proposed that the negotiation would take the layering form as follows:

- A "thin" version (a simple agreement between former enemies to live together and use other means than violence to resolve conflicts);

- A "thicker" version (where former enemies agree to not only live together in peace, but also interact in areas of common interest with mutual respect for each other); and

- An even thicker version of reconciliation would involve a process of mutual forgiveness and healing.

At each level, the Negotiation and Dialogue Framework of the government must be explicit as to what are the expectations in terms of what level of peace can be achieved, what forms of transactions should take place and what challenges to anticipate therefore proposed mitigating strategies.
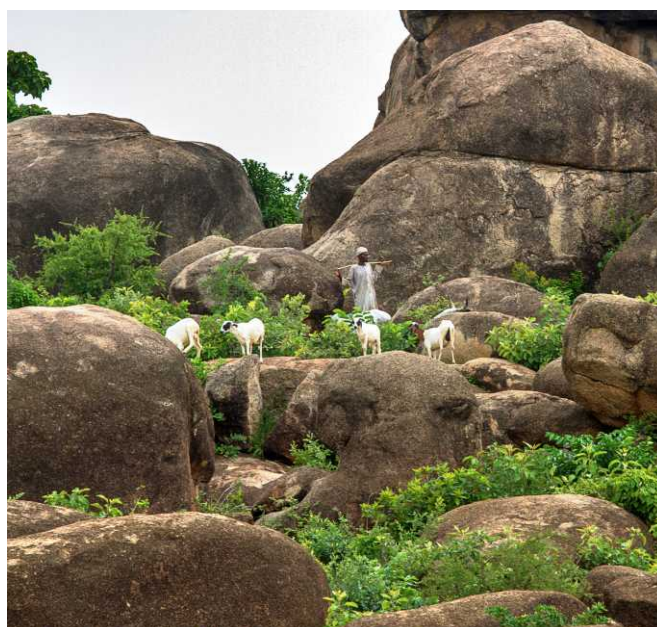
CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is important to note that contextual differences across the three states have helped in shaping attitudes to dialogue and negotiation. The most notable contextual factor is the level of violence and fatalities associated with the operations of the insurgent groups. Boko Haram activities were/are more widespread in Borno State than in Yobe and Adamawa states. All these have created a more hardened feeling among the Borno population who need convincing on why dialogue should be held with the insurgents.

This is evidenced by the deradicalisation programme called 'Operation Safe Corridor'. In Borno, communities dread and resist the return of repentant and deradicalised insurgents. Understanding this difference and other differences in social structure and religious identities of the different states will be useful when exploring options for non-violent resolution.

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