

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: A PERSPECTIVE ON BOKO HARAM ISLAMIC SECT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the theoretical understanding of violent conflict in Nigeria: A perspective on the Boko Haram Islamic Sect. The paper adopts eclectic approach that is, combination of relational/vengeance, the human needs/socio-economic/deprivation-frustration – Aggression, social learning and social identity theories) for this analysis. Based on this, using historical design which is qualitative and explorative in nature, the paper found out that there has been plethora of reason adduced to this development, each of the perspectives offers some degree of insight into the problem, as well as the general patterns of conflicts and violence in Nigeria, which Boko Haram merely epitomizes. Findings from the study show that the Boko Haram insurgency and indeed conflicts and violence in Nigeria is a direct consequence of cumulative sociological, political, (religious) and historical relationships, deprivation and frustration caused by inequality, economic deprivation, poverty, unemployment, corruption and bad governance in Nigeria, snowballing into frustration and leading to aggression on government officials, government agencies, institutions and members of the society.

Keywords: Boko Haram, conflict, violence, Islamic Sect

Introduction

Conflict, it is argued, a part and parcel of nature. Human beings, on individual or group basis often experience conflict. Conflict exists within individuals, between one person and another person, between one group and another group. No country or community is untouched by it. Wilmot and Hocker (2001) explains that conflict is “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals. Over the past few decades, Nigeria has been confronted by multiple violent conflicts based on overlapping ethnic, religious, political and regional divisions including, notably the resilient Boko Haram “Western education is forbidden,” in the north east, long-running discontent and militancy in the Niger Delta, increasing violence between herders and farming communities spreading from the central belt southward, separatist Biafra agitation in the Igbo south east, and kidnappings nationwide.. However, the Boko Haram (‘Western education is a sin’) conflict is the latest in the long list of such violent conflicts to afflict Nigeria in recent times.

In affirmative, Amalu (2015) argued that since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999, the Boko Haram sect is at the forefront. According to Abdulkarim, Abee Mohammed and Idriss (2018), Boko-Haram insurgency have been on for over a decade beginning from 2009- up-to-date. Their cruel activities have been so devastating; they kill people in mass and indiscriminately too. They also kidnap people too, especially women, youths and children. A notorious example of this was the brazen kidnapping of the Chibok Girls on 14 April 2014 (Olojo, 2015) and the Dapchi Girls (2018). These two incidents which attracted both national and international outrage demonstrate not only the brutal nature of the insurgency but also the complexity of the crises. The group was reported to have taken over some villages and local government areas in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states and proclaimed Gwoza, a village in the suburb of Borno state as the seat of their caliphate. The frequent ransacking of villages and the attendant displacements, loss of lives and property has made life nasty and brutish in this part of the country and there appears no end in sight for the hellish situation.

Furthermore, one of the outcomes of the security challenge imposed by the Boko Haram insurgency on Nigerian society has been the evolving preponderance of theories that attempt to explain the challenge posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. How relevant these theories are to the explanation of the current crisis is the question to which this paper addresses itself. Against the foregoing background, this paper is poised to examine the theoretical underpinning of violent conflict in Nigeria: A perspective on the Boko Haram Islamic Sect.

The activities of the BHT group in North eastern Nigeria pose security challenges to the country. The threat of the group to Nigeria, its neighbours and the international community cannot be ignored. Despite the efforts by the government of Nigeria to halt the increasing violence of Boko Haram conflict in the north-east, the activities of the sect seem to be unabated, the violent campaign embarked upon by the Boko Haram Islamic sect has refused to die down. So far, the conflict has claimed the lives of several thousand people, displaced more than 2.3 million and has left at least 7.7 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. Aside the human cost in the protracted Boko Haram conflict, the atrocities of the sect have socioeconomic implications, especially in the northeast where Boko Haram has dominance. According to Okereocha (2012) human capital and investors drain is hampering economic development in the northeast this is due to the attacks on banks, markets, parks and government departments. The attacks on these commercial areas have led to the migration of people to other parts of the country.

Also, the current challenges posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of its terror campaigns, it is also about confusion regarding the exact cause(s) of the violence. Several theories have emerged to explain the problem, broadly revolving around socio-economic, political, and religious themes. While each of the competing perspectives indeed may offer some valid approximation of the real cause(s) of conflicts and violence in Nigeria, the multiplicity has tended to frustrate a clear understanding of the problem and articulation of appropriate response to it. This paper set out to explore relevant and suitable theories that explain the brain behind the sudden rise of the Boko Haram in the

Northern region. How relevant these theories are to the explanation of the current crisis is the question to which this paper addresses itself.

Conceptual Clarifications

For the purpose of conceptual explanation and to limit the level of uncertainty, which is among the rules and characteristics of academic research, it is important to examine some of the concepts and terms that are used in this paper.

Concept of Conflict

Etymologically, the term conflict is derived from the Latin verb *confligere* meaning ‘to clash’, ‘engage in a fight’ (Osimen, Akinwunmi, and Adetula, 2015). Present conceptions are not particularly at variance with this but appear to have grown wider in meaning. Therefore, there are many definitions of the term ‘conflict’, the multiplicity of its definition however, has always pointed at one direction; that conflict is an enduring aspect of social existence (Musa, Shabu and Igbawua, 2016). Schmid (2000) attempted a synthesised definition of conflict. Here, conflict is viewed as an antagonistic situation or adversarial process between at least, two individuals or collective actors, over means or ends such as resources, power, status, values, goals and relations of interest. The ranges of outcomes include victory, defeat, domination, surrender, neutralization, conversion, coercion, injury or destruction and elimination of the opposite party or, alternatively, the solution, settlement or transformation of the conflict issue. Conflict reflects a determined action or struggle over a goal which may be overt or subtle, manifest, or imagining (Akpuru-Aja, 2007). Yecho (2006) asserted that conflict is a condition of disharmony within an interaction process. This usually comes about as a result of clash of interests between the parties involved in some form of relationship.

The Foundation Coalition (2012), defined conflict “as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals”. Kalu (2003), stated that “conflict is a process of interaction between two or more parties that seek to thwart, injure or destroy their opponent because they perceive they have incompatible goals or interests” (Kalu 2003). According to Swanstrom and Weissmann (2005) conflict is the result of opposing interests

involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustration. It happens when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, incompatible goals. Furthermore, Imobighe's (2003) submit that conflict represents a condition of disharmony within an interaction process usually as a result of a clash of interest between the parties involved in some form of relationship. Udomisor (2002) defined conflict as the "result of differences in opinion, attitude and behaviour; differences in the philosophical, psychological, sociological, political and economic orientation of the interactors in a given system."

Sequel to the above, one can easily perceive that conflict connotes the occurrence of dispute, disagreement, or controversy that may take the form of ideas, viewpoints or value interests between two or more individuals or groups, which results in a disharmonious interpersonal or intergroup relationship or in extreme cases, violent show of aggression.

Violence

Violence is a concept that has attracted huge attention among the scholars in peace and conflict studies, criminology and security studies as well psychology. Consequently, a lot of definitions have emerged. Jackman (2002) proposes a 'generic definition' he puts it as 'actions that inflict, threaten or cause injury. These actions may be corporal, written or verbal, psychological, material or social'. Elizabeth Stanko's often-cited definition is that violence is 'any form of behaviour by an individual that intentionally threatens to or does cause physical, sexual or psychological harm to others or themselves' (Stanko 2001). Fischer defined violence (conflict) as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence a process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced "protection," blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination (Fischer, 2002). In a similar vein Felson (2009) describes violence as 'physical aggression, i.e., when people use physical methods to harm others'. However, he continues that 'The harm they produce is not necessarily physical. It could be a social harm or a deprivation of resources'. In its 2002 World Report on Violence and Health, the World Health Organisation (WHO) proposes a definition of violence that has since become a working term for many international organisations

working in the field, as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (WHO, 2002)

The Historical Development of Boko Haram and Recent Trends

The evolution of Boko Haram is somehow shrouded in mystery and obscurity. The apparent confusion generated by the plethora of theories attempting to explain the Boko Haram challenge also characterizes the origin of the sect. The confusion not only reflects within the narratives about the precise date, and who the actual founder was, but also as to the true source of these expositions. For instance, Adibe (2012), has noted that while the popular belief is that it was founded around 2001 or 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in North eastern Nigeria under the spiritual leadership of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf., others trace the date to as far back as 1995, and argues that, one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, actually founded the Boko Haram sect. Under Abubakar, the sect was known as Sahaba, (Adibe, 2012). Elsewhere, these expositions are credited to Shehu Sani, a civil right activist in northern Nigeria, who helped broker the first peace deal with the sect with these revelations, which failed. While Uzodike and Maiangwa on the other hand acknowledge the version which traced the origin to an evangelical group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, who reportedly felt dissatisfied with Western education (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012).

Muhammed Yusuf, to whom the formation is now generally ascribed, according to the competing narratives only assumed leadership after Abubakar's departure and "indoctrinated the sect with his own teachings, which he claimed were based on purity" (Adibe, 2012). Yussuf's notion of "purity" and teachings were inspired by the works of Ibn Taymiyya, a fourteenth century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and is considered a "major theorist" for radical groups in the Middle East (Johnson, 2011), after whom Yussuf named his mosque in Maiduguri *The Nation*, May 23, 2012). The obscurity

surrounding its true origin perhaps informs why initially, the sect “had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local population” (Okereke, 2011). Such names include Taliban and the *Yussufiyyah*. The sect soon became formally identified as *Ahulsunna wal’jama’ah Hijra* –‘Congregation of Followers of the Prophet Involved in the Call to Islam and Religious Struggle.’ The name Boko Haram, to which it is now commonly referred derives from the sect’s anti-Western posturing, literally meaning ‘Western education (book)/civilization is sin.’

In the early stages, the Boko Haram sect was widely known to have mobilized its membership from women and children, school drop-outs and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates, most of who tore up their certificates; student members withdrew from school. Okereke posits that “these recruits were indoctrinated by Yussuf to believe that their state of hopelessness was caused by government which imposed Western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits” (Okereke, 2011). Although from the outset, the sect’s mission was to impose the Shari’a on Nigeria, the leadership went about its preaching peacefully, but not without attracting attention among other Islamic preachers who saw the preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affront to constituted authority (Okereke, 2011). Although incidents of violence have earlier been recorded against the sect, (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012), serious concerns over its violent tendencies grew only after the open confrontation between the sect and the government in July 2009 following the death of Yussuf while in police custody, as well as his father in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi, and the incarceration of members by state authorities.

Boko Haram regrouped under Yusuf’s former deputy, Abubakar Shekau, expanding operations to include large- scale bombings, assertions of territorial control, and cross- border attacks in neighbouring countries. It earned notoriety for its brutality, including its use of women and children as suicide bombers, and drew global attention with its 2014 abduction of 276 girls from a school in Chibok, Borno State, which gave rise to the “Bring Back Our Girls”

social media campaign. In 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to IS, and Boko Haram rebranded as IS-WA (the Islamic State West Africa Province - aka ISIS-WA or ISWAP). An internal dispute later fractured the group; IS recognized another IS-WA leader in 2016, and Shekau's faction reassumed its original name, continuing to be commonly known as Boko Haram.

IS-WA has distanced itself from the indiscriminate violence that came to characterize Boko Haram, renouncing the killing of Muslim civilians and vowing to focus attacks on Christians and state targets. It reportedly has provided some state-like services (e.g., basic law enforcement) in its areas of operation, forging ties with some communities. By 2020, U.N. monitors assessed that IS-WA had "outstripped" Boko Haram in size and capacity and was operating "with a high degree of success, including by conducting raids on security forces, which have yielded significant war spoils in the form of materiel and other supplies."

In May 2021, IS-WA militants killed Boko Haram leader Shekau, prompting thousands of people—including former Boko Haram fighters, their families, and civilians fleeing Boko Haram-held zones—to surrender to Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities. A number of Boko Haram commanders reportedly joined IS-WA following Shekau's death. One remnant Boko Haram faction remains active around Lake Chad, in far North eastern Borno State.

Shekau's death signified the demise of one of the world's most notorious extremists, and it appears to have left Boko Haram in disarray. Still, prospects for an end to violence in northeast Nigeria appear tenuous. Analysts and Nigerian officials have warned that IS-WA may prove to be a more resilient threat, citing IS-WA's efforts to build legitimacy in areas it governs and its reputedly strong resource base. As of early 2022, U.N. analysts estimated IS-WA to have 4,000-5,000 fighters. The group continues to attack military facilities, killing soldiers and looting materiel, and funds itself through raiding, kidnapping for ransom, and taxing local populations and commerce. Primarily active in northeast Nigeria, IS-WA also continues to mount attacks in adjacent zones of neighbouring countries, primarily targeting local military positions.

Amid rising insecurity in other parts of northern Nigeria and in the Sahel region, to Nigeria's north, concern has mounted over a possible convergence of security threats. U.N. investigators report that IS-WA has links to another IS faction, known as IS-Greater Sahara, active in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, though each group appears primarily focused on local aims. Some Boko Haram members have reportedly moved west, establishing a cell in Nigeria's Niger State that claimed several attacks in 2021. In neighbouring Kaduna State, another Boko Haram splinter group known as Ansaru, which claims affiliation with Al Qaeda, has apparently reactivated after a period of dormancy, preaching in local mosques and clashing with criminal groups. Other former Boko Haram combatants reportedly have joined criminal gangs in rural northwest and north-central Nigeria known locally as "bandit" groups.

Theoretical Understanding of Boko Haram's Violent Conflict

Among the most important notions of the behaviourist school are the belief that the root causes of conflicts and violence lie in human nature and human behaviour and that an important relationship exists between intra-personal conflict and conflict that pervades the external social order. Among the widespread micro-theories that this paper will review are: relational/vengeance theory the human needs/socio-economic/deprivation-frustration – aggression theory, social learning theory and social identity theory.

The Relational/Vengeance Theory

Relational theory attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, (religious) and historical relationships between such groups. The belief is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination, (Faleti, 2006). The differences in value invariably creates the "We" and 'Others" dichotomy: "The fact that 'others' are perceived as different makes us feel they are entitled to less or are inferior by reason of values. This disrupts the flow of communication between us and them and to that extent, twists

perceptions that we have about each other” (Faleti, 2006). Okereke (2011) notes that sect members “attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perceptions of the local population. In some communities, where it existed, the sect and its members were described as terrorists and persons with psychiatric challenges” (Okereke, 2011).

The state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram’s violence may indeed find it difficult to understand the sect’s penchant for blood-letting. On the one hand, the former group becomes in this context the “We” and all efforts are being to secure it from savagery of the “Others”, the Boko Haram members. On the other hand, the latter group bond either by the common purpose of fighting the “unbelievers” for Allah, or feeling of deprivation or both sees the remaining members of the Nigerian society as the “Others”. In the circumstance mutual antagonism exists and can be violently expressed. On the part of Boko Haram, killing of members by government security forces- the “Others” attracts reprisals from it, the “We”.

Similarly, to the “Others”, the sect is identified by the “prohibited name,” Boko Haram, (Western education is sin), whereas to the sect itself, the “We”, “our name is *Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah Lidda Awati Wal Jihad* (Saharareporters, online, January 22, 2012). Beside its pejorative connotation, in the sect’s perspective, the name does not capture its objective and has been a motivation to violence. Its spokesman, Abu Qaqa offered this, in particular, as reason for the sect’s targeting of the Nigerian media (Saharareporters, online, May 1, 2012).

The Human Needs/Socio-Economic Perspective

The perspective which blames social conditions for the violence is anchored on the human need theory of social conflicts. The socio-economic perspective of the Boko Haram challenge in Nigerian essentially attempts to de-emphasis the interpretation of this being a particularly Muslim or northern crisis (Alozieuwa, 2012). The fundamental thesis of this theory is that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfill and failure caused by other individuals or group to meet these needs could lead to conflict. The Human needs/ socio-Economic theory in the views of Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate (1990) is similar to the frustration aggression theory

of violence, which posits that aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate Jr, 1990). According to the theory, relative deprivation is a perceived disparity between value expectation and value capabilities and that the lack of a need satisfaction – defined as a gap between aspirations and achievement generally – relies on the psychological state of frustration and aggressive attitudes emanating from it (Midlarsky, 1975).

Unlike the relational/vengeance theory, the perspective goes beyond the trigger to focus on the underlying factor(s) that could have bred such groups. It has its largest proponents from the intelligentsia, and is particularly viewed by some foreign governments such those of the United States and Britain as explanations for the problem. Nigeria's socio-economic indexes seem to validate the assumption of human needs theory. The Human Development Index Trend, for instance, ranked Nigeria 156 out of 186 in 2011. The socio-economic factors being adduced as the root causes of violence in Nigeria include unemployment, especially among the youth, poverty and a deteriorating standard of living, especially in the north. But perhaps its relevance in the interpretation of the Boko Haram problem is that while its proponents admit of endemic poverty and hopelessness generally in Nigeria, they note its severity in the north. Hence for Professor Jean Herskovits of the *State University of New York*, to whom "it was clear in 2009 when the insurgency began that the root cause of violence and anger in both the north and south of Nigeria is endemic poverty and hopelessness," the government must address socio-economic deprivation, which is most severe in the north (Herskovits, 2012).

Indeed, the very high incident of poverty in Nigeria is generally seen as a northern phenomenon. A study by Professor Charles Soludo, shows the three northern regions having an average poverty incidence of 70.1% compared to 34.9% of the south's three. Ten states in Nigeria with the highest incidence of poverty also are all northern states, whereas the ten states with the lowest incidence of poverty are all southern states. Thus, "70% of the people living in the north live below \$1 per day. The high conflict potential of the developing areas could indeed be a function of frustration caused by economic deprivation, (Dougherty and

Pfaltzgrate, Jr. 1990). Frustration-aggression tendencies often also manifest misplaced aggression. This trend has featured in the series of violence inflicted upon the ordinary citizens of Nigeria, most of who have no direct connection with political and economic elites whose mismanagement of the country's resources engender the unemployment, poverty and deprivation that breed frustration and foster violence. As Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate Jr. have rightly noted, hostilities in such instances, are directed "toward someone or something not responsible for the original frustration" (Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate, Jr. 1990).

Further, relating this theory to Boko Haram, the group perceives themselves to have been economically and religiously deprived by the actions and inactions of the Nigerian government. For instance, at the formative stage of the BHT group, members needed Mohammed Yusuf as a leader and a mentor to guide them in their Islamic renaissance drive. The arrest and subsequent extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and other members of the group by the Nigerian Security Forces was therefore considered as a deprivation of the fundamental right to life of their comrades (Ordu, 2017).

Moreover, in their view, the refusal of the federal government to replace western education with an Islamic educational model in Northern Nigeria constituted a deprivation of their right of choice to select a model of education that is consistent with their Islamic faith. Furthermore, Boko Haram views the Nigerian government's opposition to the creation of the Islamic state for Northern Nigeria as a deprivation of their rights to self-governance (Raineri and Martini, 2017).

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is based on the hypothesis that aggression is not innate, instinctual but actually learned through the process of socialization. One acquires aggressive attributes by learning them at home, in school and by interaction with their environment in general. Interaction in society helps to focus and trigger stored aggression against economies. This is an important concept, particularly when the conflict is ethno-national or sectarian in nature. Social learning theorists have tried to understand the relationship of the individuals in their

environment and how this relates to sectarian aggression. Faleti (2006) looks at the causes of terrorist act in Nigeria through the lens of psycho-cultural perspectives. He contends that psychological, religious and other cultural contradictions are the basis of conflict and that such conflicts are intractably perennial. Religious influences in terms of Islamic jihads and solidarity with global Islamic fundamentalists motivate other jihadists. The terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda, Taliban and ISIS in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Mali and Middle East motivate others to learn their mode of operations and military tactics, which are eventually imported for domestic insurgencies (Faleti 2006).

Social Identity theory

Another theory of interest is the Social Identity theory. This was developed by Psychologist Henri Tajfel in 1998 and offers insight into the conflict in Northern Ireland. The basic focus of the theory is that we create our social relations. There is a human need for positive self-esteem and self-worth, which we transfer to our groups. We also order our environment by social comparison between groups. The concept of in-group and out-group is important in this analysis. The social identity theory has helped Social Psychologists at least to recognize that individuals are different in groups and that it is this difference which produces recognizable forms of group action. For example, ethnic identities are very strong because of their composition as extended in kinship groups. People in similar conditions, such as: abject poverty, unemployment, social inequalities and marginalized groups can be united together to fight a common enemy. The kinship groups are important in the development of in-groups and out-groups. This is a particularly important concept when dealing with ethnic conflict or social inequality. Jerrold (2008) attributed Boko Haram insurgency to psychology of group identity for marginalized or isolated group of people.

The paper, therefore, adopts a combination of relational/vengeance theory, the human needs/socio-economic/deprivation-frustration-aggression theory, social learning theory and social identity theory as the framework of analysis for the subject matter. The relational/vengeance theory elucidates that as efforts to combat the BHT group intensifies, the

government becomes the “we” and the group becomes the “others.” This opposes the way the BHT group sees itself as they consider themselves bound by a common purpose of defeating the “unbelievers.” Boko Haram members also consider themselves as deprived and regard the remaining members of the Nigerian society as the “others.” The relational/vengeance theory is thus a theory that can illuminate the BHT group’s resolve to avenge its members at all cost even in the face of the overwhelming military might of the Nigerian security forces against the group. The deprivation-frustration- aggression theory argues that aggression is the consequence of deprivation with resultant frustration. Individuals are motivated to achieve life ambitions and fulfil certain social expectations, but when these expectations are thwarted, frustration sets in and this leads to some form of aggression. In Nigeria, especially in the North East, majority of the people are deprived of basic infrastructure; there are pervasive unemployment, abject poverty and basic infrastructure. Consequent upon these, frustration and aggression result, which often manifest in the form of militancy, terrorism and insurgency as witnessed mostly in North - East of Nigeria.

The justification for the use of the social learning theory for this analysis is the attribute that aggression is acquired by learning them at home, in school and by interaction with their environment. The Boko Haram Jihadists were socialized to believe that other religious denominations other than Islam are infidels. Hence, their interactions with other Islamist groups in other parts of the world trigger stored aggression against common enemies. This explains Boko Haram’s insurgency against western education, Christians, churches, government officials and security officials.

The Social identity theory in the framework attempts to explain the social division among individuals in different groups. Members of Boko Haram Sect see themselves as distinct people that would Islamize the Northern Nigeria within Global Islamic Jihad. Hence, this difference produces group action and aggression against other religious groups and Islamic organizations believed to tolerate other religious bodies in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Theories examined point to the fact that economic deprivation, widespread poverty, social injustice, unemployment, corruption, and bad governance are the major reasons citizens take up arms against in conflicts and violence. The paper has established that the Boko Haram insurgency and indeed conflicts and violence in Nigeria is an offshoot of emerging cumulative sociological, political, (religious) and historical relationships, deprivation and frustration caused by inequality, economic deprivation, poverty, unemployment, corruption and bad governance in Nigeria, snowballing into frustration and leading to aggression on government officials, government agencies, institutions and members of the society.

The paper recommends that in order to curb the incidence of conflicts and violence in the country, government should tackle the root causes which include poverty, exploitation, unjust laws and reorder the political and economic systems of the country in such a way that the maximum well-being of all citizens will be assured. This will entail the at least address the issues related to the economic and social well-being of her people, among others. In sum, a holistic approach to the understanding of violence will help in the overall development of a country when its citizens are adequately taken care of. Additionally, government should ensure a wholistic approach is taken to fight insecurity.

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