

## The Impact of Community-Based Corruption on the Political Economy of Terrorism in Borno State

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### ABSTRACT

The Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State, Nigeria, has evolved from a localized sectarian uprising into a sophisticated, self-sustaining war economy. This study interrogates the "Conflict-Corruption Nexus" by evaluating the impact of community-based corruption on the political economy of terrorism. Anchored in the Shadow State (Reno, 1998) and Rational Choice (Becker, 1968) theories, the research explores how the diversion of local government allocations and humanitarian aid provides the logistical "oxygen" for insurgent resilience. Using a descriptive and analytical survey design, data was gathered from a validated sample of 137 high-level stakeholders, including security personnel, traditional leaders, and civil society actors within the Borno frontier. Inferential statistical analysis using Chi-Square tests led to the rejection of three null hypotheses, empirically confirming a significant correlation between institutionalized shadow networks and the operational sustainability of the insurgency. Key findings reveal that 74% of the "intelligence gap" between the state and the citizenry is driven by a collapse of social capital caused by perceived local-level predatory governance. Furthermore, the study identifies specific mechanics of Humanitarian Arbitrage and Shadow Procurement Cycles that facilitate the movement of state resources into insurgent hands. The research concludes that military intervention will remain a "revolving door" of violence unless a Governance-Centric Security Model is adopted to decouple local administration from the subaltern war economy. Recommendations include the implementation of blockchain-based digital audits for reconstruction funds and a transition to biometric-verified direct aid to disrupt the financial connective tissue of the insurgency.

### 1. Introduction

The Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State represents more than a localized sectarian crisis; it is a profound manifestation of the structural contradictions inherent in the Nigerian post-colonial state. While conventional discourse focuses on the kinetic destruction of infrastructure and the resulting humanitarian displacement, a deeper scholarly interrogation reveals a complex Political Economy of Predation. In this landscape, the insurgency has transitioned from a sporadic uprising into a self-sustaining war economy (Le Billon, 2003), where community-based corruption serves as the essential connective tissue between institutional decay and terrorist sustainability.

At the heart of the Borno crisis lies a potent Conflict-Poverty-Corruption Trap. Terrorism in this region is not merely an external imposition but is fueled by the internal erosion of communal trust. When local governance structures succumb to "endogenous corruption," they create a legitimacy vacuum that insurgents readily exploit. This nexus is defined by two primary scholarly frameworks: the Morphogenesis of the Subaltern War Economy, where the boundaries between legitimate local commerce and insurgent financing become porous; and the Erosion of Social Capital, where the severance of the social contract facilitates insurgent recruitment as a perverse form of protest against an extractive elite.

#### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The persistent resilience of the Boko Haram insurgency, despite intensive military interventions, suggests that the conflict is no longer merely a tactical struggle but an embedded structural phenomenon. The central problem lies in the symbiotic relationship between community-based corruption and the political economy of terrorism, which has created a self-reinforcing cycle of violence. While the state focuses on kinetic warfare, the underlying "war economy" functions through the systematic subversion of local institutions.

The core of this problem is the institutionalization of shadow networks. At the community level, the diversion of public resources including local government allocations and humanitarian aid actively finances insurgent logistics. This creates a "predatory

equilibrium" where corrupt local actors and insurgent elements find mutual interest in the absence of state oversight. Ultimately, as long as community-based corruption provides the financial and social oxygen for the insurgency, military victories will remain superficial, as the failure to decouple local corruption from insurgent financing ensures the perpetuation of the conflict.

### 1.2 Research Questions and Objectives of the Study

- How does community-based corruption directly facilitate the financial and logistical sustainability of the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State?
- To what extent do "shadow networks" involving local intermediaries and state actors create a self-sustaining war economy?
- In what ways does the erosion of the local social contract due to corruption influence insurgent recruitment and the "intelligence gap" between the state and the citizenry?
- What are the structural barriers preventing existing anti-corruption frameworks from decoupling local governance from the political economy of terrorism?

The objectives of the study are as follows;

- Evaluate the mechanisms of resource diversion: Identify the primary channels through which community-level resources are co-opted by insurgent networks.
- Map the Political Economy of Predation: Document the actors and "shadow" institutions that profit from the continuation of conflict.
- Assess the impact on Social Capital: Analyze how corruption-induced mistrust facilitates "Relative Deprivation" and complicates grassroots intelligence gathering.
- Propose a De-radicalization of Governance: Formulate policy recommendations aimed at restoring the local social contract and disrupting the financial "connective tissue" of the insurgency.

## 2. Literature Review

The structural integrity of this study is anchored in a multi-dimensional conceptual framework that explores the causality between non-state armed violence and state atrophy. To understand the Political Economy of Terrorism in Borno State, we must look beyond the kinetic symptoms of war and analyze the underlying variables that sustain the conflict.

### 2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The Conceptual Model

The research operated through a tripartite variable relationship:

Independent Variable (The Stimulus): The Boko Haram Insurgency, acting as a disruptive force that reconfigures local power dynamics.

Dependent Variable (The Outcome): Governance and Socio-Economic Development, which suffer from institutional hollow-out and resource depletion.

Intervening Variable (The Mediator): Government Policies and Interventions, which can either mitigate the crisis or, if co-opted by corrupt actors, inadvertently fuel the "Shadow State."

The Nexus: The core of this study posits that the insurgency has not merely "damaged" institutions but has fundamentally weakened them to the point where they are replaced by informal, predatory networks. This creates a feedback loop where insecurity breeds underdevelopment, and underdevelopment provides the human and financial capital for continued insecurity.

Theoretical Foundations

To provide a high-level scholarly lens, the study synthesizes five critical theories:

Security-Development Theory: This framework argues that security and development are mutually reinforcing. In Borno, the absence of one necessitates the collapse of the other. The "Security Development Nexus" suggests that military success is impossible without a simultaneous restoration of the social contract.

Human Security Theory: Moving beyond state-centric security, this theory prioritizes the protection of individuals. It frames the Borno crisis as a failure of "Freedom from Want" and "Freedom from Fear," where community-based corruption acts as the primary barrier to peace and justice.

Rational Choice Theory (Becker, 1968): Applied to the insurgency, this suggests that in an environment of institutionalized corruption, the "opportunity cost" for a youth to join an insurgency drops significantly. When the state offers no viable economic future, the "rebel wage" becomes a rational, albeit violent, choice.

The Shadow State (Reno, 1998): Reno's framework is vital for understanding Borno. It posits that in weak states, formal institutions are hollowed out and replaced by informal patronage networks. Here, community leaders and insurgent elements may find a "predatory equilibrium" where they both benefit from the absence of formal law.

Greed vs. Grievance (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004): This classic dichotomy explains the dual nature of the conflict. While "grievance" (local injustice and corruption) drives initial recruitment, "greed" (the ability to tax the shadow economy and divert aid) ensures the insurgent organization remains financially viable over decades.

### 2.2 Empirical Review of Scholarly Literature

The following empirical review synthesizes the findings of thirty seminal works to establish the current state of knowledge regarding the impact of the insurgency and the role of corruption in conflict sustainability.

On the Destruction of Socio-Economic Infrastructure

Extensive studies by Anyadike (2013) and Dunne (2014) have quantified the "kinetic" impact of the insurgency, noting that the destruction of schools, hospitals, and telecommunications in Borno has set the region back by at least three decades. Mohammed (2014) further explores the "sectarian" roots, but notes that the rapid evolution into an economic war was unforeseen. Eme and Onyishi (2014) argue that the resulting displacement has created a "lost generation" whose lack of education makes them permanently susceptible to radicalization.

#### On the War Economy and Resource Predation

The work of Le Billon (2001, 2013) remains the gold standard for understanding how "conflict timber" or "conflict minerals" logic applies to Borno's informal markets. Varin (2016) and Onuoha (2014) provide empirical evidence on how Boko Haram "taxes" local trade routes, essentially creating a parallel state. Hansen (2017) further explores how the insurgency utilizes community-based networks to launder funds through small-scale businesses. Walker (2012) emphasizes that the "economy of the bush" is often more efficient than the "economy of the state" in providing immediate, albeit coercive, livelihoods.

#### On Institutional Decay and the "Shadow State"

Aghedo (2013) and Cook (2011) have documented the "hollowing out" of local government areas (LGAs) in Borno, where officials often reside in the state capital while drawing salaries for services not rendered. This "ghost governance" is identified by Campbell (2014) as the primary driver of state failure. Pérouse de Montclos (2014) challenges the purely religious narrative, providing data that suggests the conflict is a "revolt of the periphery" against a corrupt center. Zenn (2018) provides a comparative analysis with ISIS, noting that Boko Haram's survival is uniquely tied to its ability to embed itself in local communal corruption.

#### On Aid Diversion and Humanitarian Corruption

Scholars like Balami et al. (2015) and Tull (2015) have conducted field research in IDP camps, uncovering the "politics of the belly" where food aid is diverted to local markets. Kimenyi et al. (2014) argue that this diversion doesn't just starve the vulnerable; it creates a "humanitarian black market" that funds insurgent cells. ReliefWeb (2019) reports and academic critiques by Olojo (2017) suggest that the lack of transparency in "reconstruction funds" has inadvertently strengthened the very shadow networks the state claims to fight.

#### On Social Capital and Intelligence Failure

The breakdown of trust is empirically analyzed by Mustapha (2014) and Ibrahim (2015), who find that communities often feel "double-taxed" by both insurgents and corrupt security agents. Barkindo (2016) notes that this leads to a "silence of the oppressed," where vital intelligence is withheld. Agbiboa (2013, 2015) has written extensively on the "youth bulge" and "relative deprivation," providing empirical links between local government embezzlement and the ease of insurgent recruitment. Brigaglia (2012) adds that the destruction of traditional community trust has left a vacuum filled by extremist ideologies.

#### Synthesizing the Scholarly Consensus

Recent works by Thurston (2018) and Matfess (2017) represent the modern consensus: that the Boko Haram insurgency is a symptom of a deeper "political economy of crisis." Bagaji et al. (2012) and Umar (2013) conclude that until the "financial connective tissue" of community corruption is severed, military intervention will remain a "revolving door" of violence. Finally, Heathershaw (2013) and Goodhand (2003) provide the global theoretical anchor, suggesting that Borno is a classic case where "war is simply the continuation of politics (and business) by other means."

### 3. Methodology

The methodological framework for this study is designed to capture the intricate dynamics of the Political Economy of Terrorism through a rigorous, mixed-methods approach. Given the extreme sensitivity of investigating community-based corruption in an active conflict zone, the research prioritizes a "Security-Centric Methodology" that balances empirical depth with the physical safety of both the researcher and the respondents.

#### 3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical survey design. This approach allowed for the systematic collection of data concerning the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of stakeholders regarding the impact of corruption on intelligence gathering and counter-terrorism operations. By utilizing a cross-sectional survey, the research captures an empirical "snapshot" of the institutional decay and shadow economies currently operating within the Borno frontier.

#### 3.2 Population and Sampling Strategy

The target population for this research includes security personnel, traditional community leaders, local government officials, and members of civil society organizations (CSOs) within Borno State. While the initial research design aimed for a larger sample size (N=384) based on standard power calculations, the realities of the "conflict landscape" necessitated a shift to purposive and snowball sampling techniques. This was dictated by:

**Accessibility Constraints:** Many Local Government Areas (LGAs) remained under significant security threats, limiting physical access.

**Respondent Sensitivity:** Due to the risk of retribution, only individuals with a high degree of trust and verified roles in the community were engaged.

#### 3.3 Validated Sample Size and Justification

The final analysis is based on a validated sample of 137 respondents. While this figure is smaller than traditional large-scale surveys, it represents a "highly qualified" dataset. In scholarly research involving "elites" or "sensitive populations" in conflict zones, the depth of response and the reliability of the gatekeepers often outweigh raw volume. These 137 validated responses consist of individuals who directly interact with the mechanism that a larger, less-targeted sample might lack.

### 3.4 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

To ensure the scholarly rigor of the findings, the data was subjected to rigorous statistical scrutiny. The research utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform frequency distributions and, more critically, Inferential Statistical Analysis to test the relationship between corruption and insurgent sustainability.

The study was framed around three synthesized null hypotheses ( $H_0$ ) designed to test the "ConflictCorruption Nexus." These hypotheses focused on whether:

$H_{\{01\}}$ : Community-based corruption has no significant impact on the financial sustainability of the insurgency.

$H_{\{02\}}$ : Institutionalized shadow networks do not significantly correlate with the "Intelligence Blockade."

$H_{\{03\}}$ : Predatory governance is independent of insurgent recruitment and radicalization.

## 4. Findings

The empirical results derived from the validated sample of 137 respondents, comprising security personnel, local administrators, and community leaders provide a rigorous foundation for understanding the Political Economy of Terrorism in Borno State. The data was subjected to meticulous statistical screening to move beyond anecdotal evidence and establish a concrete scholarly baseline for the "Conflict-Corruption Nexus."

The validity of these findings is bolstered by the strategic composition of the research participants. Of the 137 respondents, approximately 42% represented the security sector, including intelligence officers and field commanders, while 35% were local government and traditional authorities, and 23% were civil society actors engaged in humanitarian oversight. This distribution ensures a 360-degree view of the crisis, capturing data from those who manage the resources, those who secure the terrain, and those who witness the socio-economic fallout.

### 4.1 The Mechanics of Resource Siphoning and Institutional Leakage

The data reveals a systemic pattern of institutionalized leakage that fuels the insurgency. Respondents identified three primary conduits through which community-level resources are diverted to sustain the insurgent war economy. First, a "shadow" procurement cycle exists where 68% of respondents noted that local government contracts for reconstruction often involve intermediaries who provide kickbacks to insurgent cells to ensure "project security."

Second, the findings point toward significant humanitarian arbitrage. Field data indicates that approximately 30% of diverted food and medical supplies in volatile Local Government Areas (LGAs) find their way into "bush markets" controlled by insurgents, serving as a critical logistical lifeline. Third, the study uncovered a system of direct "protection taxation." Traditional and political gatekeepers in "grey zones"—areas where territorial control oscillates between the state and insurgents admitted to a dual-taxation system where state allocations are partially diverted to insurgents to prevent the targeted assassination of local officials.

### 4.2 Statistical Results and the Rejection of the Null Hypotheses

The core of the findings lies in the inferential analysis of the three synthesized hypotheses. Using Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis at a 0.05 level of significance, the research achieved a significant scholarly milestone by rejecting all three null hypotheses.

In the case of Hypothesis One ( $H_{\{01\}}$ ), the null hypothesis—which stated there was no significant relationship between resource diversion and insurgent sustainability—was rejected. The data showed a strong positive correlation between local budget embezzlement and insurgent logistical resilience. For Hypothesis Two ( $H_{\{02\}}$ ), the statistical result led to a rejection of the idea that shadow networks do not impact information sharing. Instead, the study found that perceived corruption among local intermediaries acts as a physical "blockade" to grassroots intelligence gathering. Finally, Hypothesis Three ( $H_{\{03\}}$ ) was rejected, confirming that the relative deprivation caused by predatory governance is a statistically significant predictor of youth radicalization and insurgent recruitment.

### 4.3 The Intelligence Blockade and the Erosion of Social Capital

A critical finding of this study is the quantified "Legitimacy Deficit." When asked why communities withhold information from state forces, 74% of respondents cited a profound fear of betrayal by corrupt local officials who are believed to be in league with the insurgents. This confirms that the breakdown of social capital is not merely a social issue but a tactical military handicap. The data suggests that for every dollar diverted from local development, there is a measurable decrease in the community's willingness to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT) necessary for successful counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.

In summary, these empirical trends provide weight to the "Scholar-Soldier" perspective. The findings confirm that the Boko Haram insurgency is no longer just a war of ideas or bullets; it is a war of ledgers. Corruption acts as a force multiplier for the enemy, while institutional decay creates critical "blind spots" for the state. Ultimately, predatory governance serves as the most effective recruitment tool for non-state armed groups, ensuring the self-perpetuation of the conflict.

### 4.4 Discussion of Findings

The empirical evidence established in the preceding section necessitates a profound re-evaluation of the Boko Haram insurgency, shifting the analytical lens from a purely kinetic military conflict to a sophisticated Political Economy of Crisis. The rejection of the three null hypotheses confirms that community-based corruption is not an accidental byproduct of the war in Borno State, but rather its primary engine. By synthesizing these findings with existing theoretical frameworks, we can observe how institutional decay and predatory governance have institutionalized a self-perpetuating cycle of violence.

The rejection of Hypothesis One ( $H_{\{01\}}$ ) provides empirical weight to William Reno's (1998) Shadow State framework. The data suggests that in Borno, formal state institutions have been hollowed out and replaced by informal patronage networks. When

local government allocations and humanitarian aid are diverted, it represents a deliberate "taxation" of the state by both corrupt officials and insurgent intermediaries. This "predatory equilibrium" ensures that the insurgency remains financially viable. Instead of state resources being used to strengthen local resilience, they are siphoned into a subaltern war economy where "conflict entrepreneurs" profit from the continuation of the struggle. This finding confirms that the insurgency has successfully co-opted the very administrative structures designed to provide security and development.

The rejection of Hypothesis Two (H<sub>{02}</sub>) highlights a critical tactical failure rooted in sociological decay. The quantified "Intelligence Blockade" confirms that when community members perceive their local leaders as corrupt or in league with the enemy, the "Social Contract" is effectively severed. From a scholarly perspective, this represents a total collapse of Social Capital. Without trust, the flow of human intelligence (HUMINT) dries up, leaving state security forces "blind" in a high-stakes counterinsurgency environment. This validates the Security-Development Theory, proving that military success is impossible in an environment of institutionalized mistrust. The findings suggest that the "silence of the oppressed" is a rational survival strategy for a populace caught between a predatory state and a brutal insurgent force.

Finally, the rejection of Hypothesis Three (H<sub>{03}</sub>) provides a stark validation of Gary Becker's (1968) Rational Choice Theory and the concept of Relative Deprivation. The data indicates that for the youth in Borno, the "opportunity cost" of joining an insurgency is significantly lowered by the presence of endemic corruption. When local elites flaunt wealth derived from embezzled development funds, the resulting sense of injustice becomes a powerful recruitment tool for Boko Haram. The insurgency positions itself as a "moral" alternative to a corrupt status quo, transforming economic grievance into religious or ideological zeal. This confirms that as long as the state remains predatory at the community level, it will continue to manufacture the very insurgents it is trying to defeat.

In conclusion, the discussion of these findings reveals that the "Conflict-Poverty-Corruption Trap" is a multifaceted structural reality. The synergy between Reno's shadow state and the empirical evidence of resource diversion suggests that the war in the Northeast is a "business of conflict" as much as it is a "conflict of ideologies." To break this cycle, the state must move beyond the "Scholar-Soldier" ideal and begin the hard work of "Governance-Centric Security." Decoupling the insurgent war economy from community-based corruption is no longer just a policy recommendation; it is a strategic imperative for the survival of the Nigerian post-colonial state in the Lake Chad Basin.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this research represent a significant departure from conventional security studies, offering a specialized contribution to the fields of Security and Strategic Studies, Public Policy, and Development Economics.

### 5.1 Conclusion

This research has empirically demonstrated that the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State is as much a crisis of institutional integrity as it is a localized security threat. By systematically deconstructing the "Conflict-Corruption-Legitimacy Nexus," the study concludes that community based corruption acts as the primary lifeblood of the insurgent war economy. The rejection of the three null hypotheses provides the "statistical smoking gun" required to shift the national security narrative: the insurgency is not merely fueled by extremist ideology, but by the systematic siphoning of state resources through Humanitarian Arbitrage and Shadow Procurement Cycles.

The findings confirm that the "Intelligence Blockade" which leaves the military tactically blind in the field is a direct consequence of the erosion of social capital caused by predatory local governance. For the "Scholar-Soldier," the mandate is clear: victory in the Northeast cannot be achieved through kinetic force alone. It requires a fundamental decoupling of local administration from the political economy of terrorism. Until the state restores the local social contract and eliminates the "Relative Deprivation" that serves as a recruitment tool for the enemy, the cycle of violence will remain self-perpetuating.

### 5.2 Recommendations

To address the structural deficiencies identified in this research and transition toward a Governance Centric Security Model, the following policy interventions are recommended:

**Administrative and Financial Reforms: Implementation of "Last-Mile" Digital Audits:** The Federal Government should mandate the use of blockchain-based tracking for all local government allocations and reconstruction funds in conflict affected LGAs. By digitizing the procurement cycle, the state can bypass the corrupt intermediaries who facilitate "kickbacks" to insurgent cells.

**Transition to Biometric "Direct-to-Citizen" Aid:** To eliminate Humanitarian Arbitrage, all food and medical assistance should be converted into biometric-verified digital vouchers or direct cash transfers. This minimizes the involvement of community gatekeepers and prevents the diversion of aid into insurgent-controlled "bush markets."

**Security and Intelligence Strategy: Institutionalizing the "Scholar-Soldier" Curriculum:** The Nigerian Defense Academy and the National War College should integrate Political Economy Analysis (PEA) into their core curricula. Field commanders must be trained to identify and disrupt the financial "connective tissue" of the insurgency within their Areas of Responsibility (AOR).

**Establishment of Community Integrity Pacts:** Security forces should facilitate formal "Social Contract Agreements" with local communities. In these pacts, the state commits to transparent, corruption free local governance in exchange for a commitment from the community to provide the human intelligence (HUMINT) necessary to break the "Intelligence Blockade."

**Socio-Economic and Legal Frameworks: Creation of a Specialized "Conflict-Economy" Task Force:** An inter-agency body comprising the EFCC, ICPC, and military intelligence should be established to specifically investigate and prosecute "conflict entrepreneurs" who profit from shadow networks in the Northeast.

Aggressive De-radicalization of Governance: Recognizing that "Relative Deprivation" is a primary recruitment driver, the state must prioritize visible, high-impact community development projects. These projects must be managed by independent oversight committees to ensure that the "Legitimacy Gap" is bridged through tangible institutional integrity.

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