The Nexus between Bad Governance, Ungoverned Spaces and Terrorism: Analysing the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin through the lenses of the Social Contract Theory

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Abstract

The Lake Chad Basin is one of the most fragile and politically unstable regions in Africa. This is largely due to the insurgency of Boko Haram which broke out in Nigeria’s north-eastern region and later spilled over to northern Cameroon, western Chad and south-eastern Niger. By 2020, approximately 37000 people had died and 2.6 million displaced as a consequence of the crisis. The conflict has undermined security in vast human habitats, destroyed billions of dollars’ worth of critical public goods, damaged livelihoods and left millions of affected populations without access to basic services. The challenge in academic and peacebuilding spaces has been to dissect and tackle the principal causes of the conflict. Whereas there is substantial literature on the religious, political, social, economic and environmental drivers of the insurgency in Nigeria, much is not known about the governance environment that facilitated its outbreak and spread. To understand this, this article adopts the social contract theory to critically examine the correlation between bad governance, ungoverned spaces and the insurgency in the affected countries. The paper uses secondary sources to supplement primary data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions in Nigeria’s Borno State, Chad’s Lake Province, Cameroon’s Far North Region, and Niger’s Diffa Region.

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