

The Return of Hunger

A Case Study of Boko Haram and Its Impacts on
Food Insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria



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Abstract

Food insecurity is increasing globally again after declining for decades, and in Nigeria alone 13 million people are experiencing food insecurity. Particularly in North-East Nigeria food insecurity has reached emergency levels. Because of intrastate conflict between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram it has been difficult to mitigate food insecurity, even though Nigeria ranks in the top ten in world of countries receiving humanitarian aid. Through a qualitative case study processes impacting food insecurity will be discussed, for example decreases in agricultural production and aid efficiency because of non-state and state violence. The study suggests that dynamics between Boko Haram and the Nigerian state have elevated food insecurity, as the actors are waging, what some have termed, *food wars*. By intentionally withholding food and resources to weaken the opposing side or civilian communities there has been significant collateral damage. If hunger is to be eradicated mechanisms mentioned need to be addressed, and food needs to be defined as a human right.

Key words: food insecurity, Boko Haram, North-Eastern Nigeria, intrastate conflict, agriculture, humanitarian aid

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1 Introduction

Since 1996, the United Nations (UN) has actively worked to end world hunger and one aspect of this work includes Agenda 2030, which was adopted in 2015 and states that there should be “zero hunger” within the next decade. Also called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which encompasses seventeen goals that would continue the progress achieved during the previous decades. The second on the list of these goals is the one which states that the UN will work towards ending world hunger by the year 2030. Zero hunger is meant to be reached through promoting sustainable agriculture and achieving food security for all (United Nations, 2021). However, even though hunger has been cut in half in the last few decades, hunger is now once again increasing in the world (FAO, 2020). In response to this, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2417 in 2018. Resolution 2417 refers to “the level of global humanitarian needs and the threat of famine presently facing millions of people in armed conflicts...” as deeply concerning. It also expressed concern for humanitarian interventions and their inefficiency in areas ravaged by conflict, but once again committed to breaking the vicious cycle that often pairs food insecurity and armed conflict. They even go so far as to frame famine and starvation as a war crime (UN/S/RES/2417 2018). Food insecurity is a pressing issue, one of which is not only closely connected to conflict, but also peace. Dan Smith, the director of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), emphasized the two-way relationship between peace and food security in a panel discussion organized by the World Food Programme (WFP) this year. Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director at the UN WFP also stated that two thirds of the countries that the WFP has a presence in are experiencing conflict (WFPc, 2021).

Furthermore, the WFP 2020 report shows that the SDGs will not be met, consistent with reports from the last three years. The number of undernourished people in the world has increased with 60 million between 2014 and 2019, this trend is partly a consequence of the increased prevalence of conflict. The African continent has higher levels of food insecurity than the world average, with the prevalence of undernourishment reaching 19.1% in 2019, which translates into over 250 million people (FAO, 2020).

1.1 Purpose and research question

Conflict and food insecurity are very much connected to each other. Moreover, armed conflict today primarily consists of intrastate conflict. With new actors such

as terrorist organisations and rebel groups posing great challenges to peace and stability. The change can be attributed to globalisation and its impact on forms of organisation, creating horizontal instead of vertical networks with identity politics as its foundations. This can be seen to have undermined the states monopoly on violence opening for insurgencies but also for new transnational networks like non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Kaldor, 2012, p. 76).

This thesis frames food insecurity as defined by the Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations (FAO), namely, the lack of “regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active healthy life”. FAO further identifies different levels of food insecurity: mild, moderate, and severe. Mild insecurity means that there is an uncertainty regarding the ability to find food, moderate food insecurity applies to populations that do not have enough money or resources to acquire healthy foods, lack certainty in obtaining food and regularly skip meals and are at risk of running out of food. Lastly, the category of severe food insecurity is defined as going without food for a day or more at certain times of the year or running out of food (FAO, 2021).

A country that long has experienced food insecurity as well as intrastate conflict is Nigeria. Particularly North-Eastern Nigeria has long been flagged as severely food insecure, on the verge of reaching famine levels. As of May 2021, large parts of North-Eastern Nigeria are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity, and parts of Borno State have even reached emergency levels. Borno State is one of three states most affected; the others are Yobe and Adamawa States and together they make up what is called the BAY-states. In the BAY-states alone there are 4.4 million food insecure people, and it is estimated that 881 000 of these reside in areas that cannot be reached by humanitarian organizations. In total almost 13 million people are food insecure (WFPa, 2021; WFPb, 2021).

Nigeria is an interesting case as it, prior to the last decade, was able to lower levels of food insecurity in the country by half. However, now there is not enough food being produced for the growing population, but why has this trend changed now? Intrastate conflict between insurgency groups and the state military have created instability, and this impacts food insecurity. But what are the exact mechanisms? The conflict actors are Boko Haram, an insurgency group with its base in Borno State in North-Eastern Nigeria and the Nigerian government who since 2015 have used harsh military action to combat the Boko Haram insurgency. Still, there has been no end to the conflict and Nigeria today ranks third on the global terrorism index 2020 (Statista Research Department, 2021).

This paper, therefore, aims to contribute to the field of food insecurity and peace research by investigating the case of North-Eastern Nigeria’s food insecurity in relation to the armed conflict between the Nigerian state and the terrorist group Boko Haram which has been active for over ten years (since 2009) in the country. Consequently, the research question posed is:

What direct and indirect impacts has the presence of the terrorist group Boko Haram had on food insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria?

The following section includes backgrounds to the Nigerian context as well as the case of Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria and the conflict. In section three the theoretical framework is presented, consisting of previous research together with two themes of mechanisms regarding the impacts of insurgency groups on agricultural production and on humanitarian aid efficiency. In section four the methodology is outlined, discussing the research design, material, case selection and limitations to the paper. Following this, in section five, is the analysis. Tying the material to the theory, by identifying mechanisms of food insecurity in the case of North-Eastern Nigeria. The paper's final section is the conclusion where the findings are summarized and discussed.

2 Background

This section aims to give a brief background to the conflict and the rise of Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria as well as, the Nigerian governments response together with the international community. It focuses on the time period between the years 2002-2020, as this is when Boko Haram has existed as an insurgency group. This section further, aims to describe the situation in relation to food insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria.

2.1 Nigeria

Nigeria is a large country in West Africa that gained independence from Great Britain in 1960. The aftermath of independence has involved many periods of ethnic tensions, creating instability in the country (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 9). In 1999 Nigeria became a democracy (CSIS, 2019, p. 14).

Nigeria has many prerequisites for economic growth as it has diverse climates, ranging from arid to tropical. The south is mostly covered in forest, while the north is mostly made up of savanna and semi-desert. During the dry season temperatures are high. The Niger river serves as an efficient way to transport goods for trade across the country. Nigeria also has an abundance of natural resources, not least oil. The oil industry is the most important export commodity, but according to some, also the reason for the country's socioeconomic inequalities and instability (Falola & Heaton, 2008, pp. 1-3).

Before the oil industry agriculture was the most important part of the Nigerian economy. The variety in ecological conditions make the output from the agricultural sector very diverse and food crops include yams, cassava, and citrus fruits. In the north groundnut production has dominated. The produced food stuffs have been sold locally as well as being exported. In the north pastoralism has also had an important role in the economy. Agriculture is still very important for the Nigerian economy today, but its percentage of the GDP has decreased steadily since the oil boom in the 1970's (Falola & Heaton, 2008, pp. 4-5).

Nigeria has the biggest population on the continent with more than 190 million people (CSIS, 2019, p. 14) consisting of approximately 250 various ethnic groups. There are three groups that dominate: the Hausa (21 percent), who reside in the northern parts of Nigeria, the Yoruba (20 percent), in the Southwest, and the Igbo (17 percent) in the Southeast. Approximately half of the population identify as Sunni Muslim and 40 percent as Christians. Most Muslims reside in the northern parts of the country (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 7).

Due to the country's turbulent history, government mismanagement of resources and conflict, Nigeria today experiences slow economic growth and insecurity. Corruption is still highly present, especially in the oil industry, and inequality is high (Freedom House, 2021).

In 2017 Nigeria was one of the countries struck by the "Four Famines" along with South Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. This was due to environmental degradation in combination with vulnerability due to the conflict with Boko Haram and resulted in severe food insecurity (Man, 2020).

Today, Nigeria remains plagued by conflict, with weak institutions and high socioeconomic inequalities. There has not been sufficient investment in the agricultural sector resulting in slow growth in food production, even though demand increases (CSIS, 2019, p. 14).

2.2 Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a militant Islamist group active in Nigeria. Its official name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which translates to "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". *Boko Haram*, however, translates into "Western education is forbidden". The group opposes western culture and believes that Muslims should not take part in 'Western activities', for example voting in elections or going to secular schools (BBC News, 2016).

Boko Haram was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri in Borno State, North-Eastern Nigeria. In 2009 the conflict escalated as they initiated military and terrorist strategies. Including suicide bombings and abductions (World Bank, 2015, p. 15) (CSIS, 2019, p. 22). North-Eastern parts of Nigeria, including regions of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa were in 2014 under the control of Boko Haram, during this time and the following year there was an increase in violence. In 2015 the conflict received international attention as Boko Haram expanded beyond Nigeria into neighbouring countries and pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group. Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad then joined military forces regaining control of most areas in North-Eastern Nigeria except for parts of Borno State, but terrorist attacks continued (World Bank, 2015, p. 16).

After the joint military intervention violence decreased in 2016, however, after it was announced that elections were to take place in 2019 Boko Haram once again increased their terrorist activity in 2018 (CSIS, 2019, p. 38).

Between 2011 and 2018 there have been over 2000 attacks and 35 000 people killed, attributed to Boko Haram or its splinter factions (CSIS, 2019, p. 38). Two million people have also been displaced between 2009 and 2017, with most of the internally displaced population residing in urban areas. These areas lack the resources to provide for the refugees leading them to be very much dependent of humanitarian aid (UNDP, 2017, p. 9).

Boko Haram has had the most impact on the BAY-states. Particularly Borno and Yobe States have regularly been struck by severe food insecurity since 2014, as conflict and other mechanisms interact resulting in food insecurity. 2000 people have been reported to have died from famine in two cities in Borno State between January and September in 2016 (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 6). Borno State has also, by far, been the most affected by deadly attacks committed by Boko Haram in Nigeria between 2011 and 2021 (Varrella, 2021).

3 Theoretical framework

In this section, previous research and the theoretical framework will be outlined. There are several mechanisms describing the relationship between terrorist activity and food insecurity that can be applied to the case of North-East Nigeria.

3.1 Previous research

The field of food (in)security has become increasingly relevant in research today, with more studies being done, most using quantitative methods (Adebayo, et al., 2016). However, the field is still relatively unexplored (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020). Despite this, famine and hunger are not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, Alex de Waal shows in his book *Mass Starvation the History and Future of Famine* (2018) that food scarcity has been prevalent throughout history, either deliberately induced as a strategy of war, or because of reckless behaviour due to disregard for civilian lives. De Waal also urges mass starvation to be defined as a war crime as recent wars have shown a revival of these tactics -- not valuing people's lives but rather seeing them as means to an end (2018). Tying into Resolution 2417 and the SDGs, we can see why the concern with ending world hunger and food insecurity is crucial and should be recognised as a human right.

It is only recently that we have had the ability to decrease food insecurity globally through humanitarian intervention which has become customary within the international community (FAO, 2020). As famines have become less prevalent in modern history due to, among other things, green revolutions, and an increase in democracies in the world, the recent increase in food insecurity seems to be caused deliberately or by unfair structural conditions. This has in turn sparked new research (de Waal, 2018).

The concept of food security has been evolving, particularly since the end of World War II, when food production increased globally simultaneously as we saw an increase in population growth (Watts, 2013, p. 2). Malthusian ideas that population growth is exponential whilst food production increases in a linear fashion re-entered the discussions on the topic. This led many to believe that food security globally was not possible, and that population growth would have to be stopped. However, this line of thought has since then been disregarded by the majority of the research on food insecurity (Floyd & Matthew, 2015), instead researchers have pointed to structural conditions that exacerbate food insecurity (Watts, 2013, p. 2).

Food insecurity has recently been gaining more international attention, as cases of severe food insecurity are appearing after decades of progress on food security.

The increased food insecurity in conjunction with other changes such as globalisation and democratization, have resulted in organisations such as the WFP, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2020, to have a more prominent global role.

Some of the literature links increased food insecurity to changes in climate, leading to more severe or frequent droughts or other extreme weather conditions. Sustainability and food security are often researched in relation to each other -- for example by investigating how agriculture can be sustainable both socially and ecologically (Butler & McFarlane, 2018). Other researchers point to poverty and inequality because of weak institutions and corruption. Regardless, the connection between food insecurity and conflict has been supported by many. Some argue that conflict undermines the three pillars of food security: *food availability*, *food utilization* and *access to food*. However, there is no consensus whether limited access and availability to food causes conflict, or if conflict causes lack of access and availability to food, or perhaps it is both. There is, however, agreement that improving food security can mitigate unrest and conflict (Koren & Bagozzi, 2016). It can, therefore, be seen to be a multidisciplinary topic with research being done from different angles.

There is also evidence that armed conflict can lead to what some call *food wars*. In these types of conflicts, food is exploited -- withheld from enemies and distributed to allies. The manipulation of food access and production systems is then theorized to create more food insecurity. The insecurity resulting from this then fuels conflict further (Messer & Cohen, 2007).

Moreover, research on agricultural production and conflict have been explored, both on global and national levels (Arias, et al., 2019), finding links between globalisation, conflict, and food insecurity especially in the global south. Illuminating vulnerabilities to conflict and insecurity in countries highly dependent on agriculture (Messer & Cohen, 2007).

3.2 Mechanisms for decreased agricultural production

Intrastate conflicts can have large impacts on agricultural production. Especially, developing countries with large agricultural sectors are vulnerable to these types of conflicts, this is due to significant parts of the population being employed within agriculture (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020, p. 731). Previous research has identified several mechanisms explaining how insurgency groups impact agricultural production (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020) (Adelaja & George, 2019) (Münkler, 2005). Food security is simply defined as access and availability to food, making agricultural output a relevant area to look at. The following paragraphs outline mechanisms explaining intrastate conflict's impacts on agricultural production.

To start with, a common actor in intrastate conflict is territorial terrorist groups who often seek to establish control over areas and create a base for their operations. This base needs to have access to food for it to function properly. This means that

farmers within areas controlled by terrorist groups often are forced to supply food to the terrorist organisation (Adelaja & George, 2019, p. 3). This relates to *asset transfer*. A concept formulated by Mark Duffield (1993) that highlights mechanisms in contemporary wars such as looting, robbery, extortion, pillage, or hostage-taking, but also the control of markets. This might also include war-taxes or “protection money”. Insurgency groups establish checkpoints or blockades, essentially giving them control over the market and what happens to the agricultural output (Kaldor, 2012, pp. 107-108). Duffield argues that the process of transferring assets from the marginalized to the elite could be a cause for famine (Duffield, 1993).

Moreover, an indirect effect of paramilitary gaining control of production is that markets risk being cut off when state support is withdrawn as a strategy to bleed out insurgency groups. This could cause agricultural production to slow or stop, causing markets to not function properly or even disintegrate. This results in increased food prices and food scarcity (Münkler, 2005, p. 75).

Second, by securing a food source paramilitary groups can attract new members, especially if the conflict has left them unemployed. Another way to rally supporters for the insurgency and its cause, is for rebel groups to *manufacture* food scarcity. By destroying agricultural land, decreasing agriculture production and by committing attacks close to marketplaces, food insecurity increases. Food insecurity is then blamed on the government's failure to protect its people. This in turn creates a picture of the insurgency as a better alternative for security and stability. The terrorist group can then establish itself as a way of resolving the issue of food insecurity (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020, p. 731).

Third, the unsafe conditions that come with intrastate conflict and terrorist activities, which also might provoke state military action, causes both deaths and displacement of civilians. In other words, conflict results in a loss of manpower, which in turn decreases the productivity of the agricultural sector. This leads to food insecurity and hinders economic growth (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020, p. 731). The breakdown of the structures of local production lead to long term consequences, such as food insecurity and dependence on international aid. Creating neo-colonial structures that make it harder to become self-sufficient in order to build food security (Münkler, 2005, p. 89). To sum up the key mechanisms for decrease in agricultural production are:

1. Insurgency groups take control of agricultural output by looting, robbery, extortion, pillage, and/or hostage-taking, forcing farmers to give them access to food.
2. Insurgency groups establish control over markets.
3. Insurgencies gain new members by offering access to food and by framing grievances from the conflict as state-made.
4. Manufacturing food insecurity by destroying farms and creating unsafe conditions resulting in the closing of markets.
5. Insecurity caused by insurgency activity forcing people to become displaced and unable to work, resulting in a loss of manpower decreasing food production.

3.3 Mechanisms impacting humanitarian assistance

Humanitarian assistance plays an important role in combating food insecurity in many regions affected by conflict. However, the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance is often low due to security threats posed by the insurgency groups, which means food security is not reached (Messer & Cohen, 2007).

Success of humanitarian intervention, and therefore also management of food insecurity, is highly reliant on what Séverine Autesserre calls *local capacities for peace* and *legitimacy* (Autesserre, 2014). Spoilers, such as terrorist groups need to be either removed or sufficiently managed to have successful interventions. Further, the interventions need to be considered legitimate by local authorities and populations. Whether humanitarian intervention is considered legitimate also depends on how the spoilers are perceived, and determines what response is legitimate.

Additionally, regional capacities for delivering food aid need to be established. The efficiency of humanitarian assistance is also connected to local resistance. The more resistance the less efficient the humanitarian assistance and food security (Autesserre, 2014, p. 50). *Local resistance*, in this paper, refers to spoilers such as terrorist groups as well as national government and military as both of these play significant roles in the efficiency of international and local efforts to combat food insecurity.

Furthermore, humanitarian intervention and aid are not completely unproblematic in the sense that it has been criticized for prolonging conflict by fuelling the economics of war (Kaldor, 2012). Humanitarian aid has even been described as an industry dependent on famine in order to exist (Shearer, 2000, pp. 189-190). Resources meant to relieve civilians of food insecurity are instead confiscated and used by the insurgency to finance their operations. Further, relief aid creates situations vulnerable to violence and extortion (Shearer 2000:192). Food aid comprises the largest part of humanitarian assistance. In contrast to other resources, it is difficult to steal and sell. However, food aid does end up in places where it was not intended to. Factions of insurgencies hijack food transports, leaving civilians with less and making living conditions more insecure (Shearer, 2000, p. 196). Refugee camps also attract insurgency groups, as they are sources of food and other resources (Münkler, 2005, p. 87).

Finally, as already stated in the previous subsection, insecurity caused by conflict results in the displacement of large parts of the population. Many reside in camps for internally displaced persons, but many also find refuge in cities or villages in surrounding areas. This makes it difficult to keep track of where to deliver the aid (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020).

Humanitarian aid can, therefore, be utilized by insurgencies to impact food insecurity. It can also be (not) used by state actors to weaken insurgencies, but that also has the potential to increase food insecurity for large parts of the civilian populations. Summarizing these mechanisms concludes that mechanism impacting humanitarian assistance and decreasing the efficiency of combating food insecurity are:

1. If local capacities for peace are weak food aid distribution will be less efficient, and food insecurity will remain high.
2. If aid organisations are not considered legitimate or not given the possibility to intervene food insecurity will remain high.
3. If spoilers in terms of insurgency groups are not considered legitimate actors, humanitarian assistance will not be justified, and food insecurity will persist.
4. State-actors can act as spoilers, hindering the efficiency of food aid.
5. Insecurity causes displacement, making it difficult to deliver aid to those in need.

4 Methodology

In this section the methodology will be presented. The motivation for choosing North-Eastern Nigeria will be discussed as well as the limitations to the paper and its methodology.

4.1 Research design

This thesis paper uses the method of a qualitative case study to investigate the case of North-Eastern Nigeria and the effects of Boko Haram on food security. It is based on a qualitative approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms at work in this case (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 234).

The aim is to reveal something interesting about the case of North-Eastern Nigeria, contributing to the academic literature on food insecurity. By doing this the study will hold internal validity (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 234). Since the research question is of explanatory nature this paper, further, seeks to present the case of North-Eastern Nigeria and test existing theories on this case (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 235).

The paper is structured in relation to two overarching themes connected to the theories being tested, which will guide the analysis. These themes are firstly, intrastate conflict impacts of agricultural production: how it impacts access to resources and labour, and if there has been intentional destruction leading to food insecurity. Secondly, the other theme concerns humanitarian aid efficiency and whether the conflict has caused diversion of aid, exacerbating food insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria. This case study then categorises information from the material used into these two *themes*, to determine if these mechanisms are relevant for this case.

4.2 Material

The paper will attempt to answer the research question by analysing reports, articles and interviews by applying the theories in section three. The material used in this paper consists of reports from organisations such as, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WFP and Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), together with reports and interviews from organisations like Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group. These sources are then complemented with

academic journals. These sources have been chosen as they attempt to not be biased and have the aim of strictly reporting on conditions in the region.

The material then consists of mostly secondary sources. This is mainly due to the fact that primary and statistical data usually is measured on a national, rather than regional level. This means that data for states in Nigeria or for the North-Eastern region has been difficult to find. The secondary sources, however, are mainly published by organisations present in regions on the ground.

The material used is mostly from the years 2016-2020. This time period was chosen because the conflict dynamics changed after the joint state military intervention in 2015, causing paramilitary groups to retreat during 2016. Since then, however, Boko Haram and its splinter groups have increased their activity again and food insecurity is still prevalent. This makes this time period relevant for testing theories regarding conflict and food insecurity.

4.3 Motivation of case

The region of North-Eastern Nigeria was chosen for this paper because of the ongoing conflict between insurgency group Boko Haram and the government in combination with the severe levels of food insecurity. Furthermore, the North-Eastern parts of Nigeria, mainly the BAY-states have, been flagged by for example the International Crisis Group and the WFP as a region with alarming rates of food insecurity, that are continually rising. This means that North-Eastern Nigeria is an unusual case. A case that can, therefore, explain an extreme case of food insecurity and conflict (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 235).

Because there is an ongoing interstate conflict and food insecurity this case is suitable for testing theories. It is also a region that is highly dependent on agriculture which can expose vulnerabilities to conflict and food insecurity. Due to its agricultural sector, large parts of the population work within this sector. According to research this makes Nigeria vulnerable to intrastate conflict (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020). Further, it has one of the highest levels of food insecurity, but paradoxically, places in the top ten in the world for the amount of aid received. This means that there are many humanitarian organisations present on the ground trying to deliver aid. Lastly, it is the site of an ongoing intrastate conflict between non-state and state actors. The case is then theory-confirming, encouraging the theory to be tested further (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 236).

4.4 Limitations

Due to limited access to data and material the paper uses mainly secondary sources, such as reports from non-governmental organisations. Even though primary sources would have been ideal, the paper can still highlight important areas for future research. Further, as it is a single case study the findings in this paper cannot determine a causal relation between the presence of Boko Haram and food insecurity, as there are many other aspects that could affect food insecurity, such as for example, climate change and inequality. Additionally, by using secondary sources this paper relies on already produced and interpreted data.

Moreover, inferences that are discovered in this case study are not proven until tested on more cases. The study can nonetheless contribute to our understanding of conflict and food insecurity, which could help explain other cases of severe food insecurity. Due to this, the paper holds external validity (Halperin & Heath, 2020, pp. 234-235).

It is important to point out that areas experiencing ongoing conflict can be difficult to get data on. Specifically, areas controlled by non-state actors are hard to get access to.

Lastly, since there is no data produced by the author and the paper relies on reports from NGOs it is also worth mentioning that this paper has no intention of making any moral claims regarding the actions of the state and non-state actors. Some reports are produced by actors aiding civilians which perhaps makes them biased against state and non-state actors.

5 Analysis

In this section, the material will be analysed using the theoretical framework outlined in section three. The analysis will look at how Boko Haram has impacted food insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria and identify the various mechanisms at work.

5.1 Boko Haram: impacts on agriculture

5.1.1 Manufactured food insecurity

A report in the *West African Papers* (2017) shows that most Boko Haram attacks on agricultural farms generally take place in June, the month before the lean season, or during periods of intense harvesting in November or February. This suggests that Boko Haram plan their attacks to acquire resources and food to prepare for the lean season, as well as to create insecurity and instability impacting production negatively (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 10). This is further supported by data from the *Council of Foreign Affairs* on Boko Haram activity between February 2020 and April 2021. Most attacks on civilians occurred in June 2020 and then again in November 2020 (Statista Research Department, 2021).

The Risk and Resilience report states that Boko Haram has control over certain areas of North-Eastern Nigeria, acting as a de facto government and collecting taxes and providing services to communities in areas where they exert authority (CSIS, 2019, p. 38). This implies that asset transfer could be a strategy to create insecurity, hinder agricultural outputs from reaching markets and manufacturing food scarcity to cause unrest, while also securing Boko Haram access to food making them more attractive to potential new members (Kaldor, 2012) (Münkler, 2005).

Production of sorghum, rice and millet declined with 82, 67 and 55 percent respectively in Borno state between the years of 2010 and 2015 (UNDP, 2017, p. 10). The livestock sector has also lost many resources during the conflict. In 2016 it was reported that 200 000 cattle, sheep, and goats along with 395 609 sacks of food was diverted by Boko Haram (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3).

Most farmers reside in the north which also happens to be significantly more food insecure and has higher rates of rural poverty and stunting. 25 percent of smallholder farming households live on less than \$1,25 a day, making them extremely poor. One fifth of households said that they could not afford to buy food stuffs (CSIS, 2019, pp. 23-24). Socio-economic inequality has made communities

more vulnerable to insecurities caused by conflict (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 5). This makes these households more vulnerable to paramilitary attacks, and more likely to be forced to support Boko Haram.

5.1.2 Control over local markets

Road networks and infrastructure have been deliberately targeted and severely damaged by the conflict. Destruction of roads was valued at US\$ 526 million in 2017. These effects have had consequences to neighbouring regions as well, with increase in food prices and higher transport costs (UNDP, 2017, pp. 10-12). Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS NET) reports that prices are atypically high on food and that this trend is expected to continue (FEWS NET, 2021).

Additionally, patterns of Boko Haram attacks indicate that they intentionally target marketplaces (UNDP, 2019, p. 14). Maiduguri in Borno State has been especially prone to attack. FEWS NET monitored Boko Haram attacks on markets or within proximity of markets during the period of December 2014 to November 2016. Roughly every 18 days there was an attack, and in total 771 people were wounded (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 9). Markets were in 2015 being recommended to shut down because of the security risks. However, markets bounced back in 2016 as Boko Haram attacks became less frequent. Data shows that there exists a positive correlation between Boko Haram attacks and market slow down, however, Boko Haram activity often also resulted in a military response. Violent conflict between these two actors have led to casualties, the point being that, perhaps not only Boko Haram but also the military response impacts market activity (Van Den Hoek, 2017, pp. 12-13). Moreover, the Nigerian government has tried minimizing the attacks by imposing restrictions on market activities (UNDP, 2019, p. 14; WFP, 2019).

In a report from FEWS NET from 2021 reduced market activity is reported. In Borno State minimal or no activity is reported, and roads leading from Maiduguri are experiencing significant obstruction or limited activity (FEWS NET, 2021). Attacks on the major roads to and from Maiduguri have isolated Borno State (Campbell, 2020) making it difficult to establish food security in the region.

5.1.3 Displacement and loss of manpower

Nigeria's economy is very much dependent on the country's agricultural sector as around 80 percent of the population works in farming. Destruction and displacement due to conflict and lacking government support and investment has left farmers vulnerable to food insecurity (UNDP, 2017, p. 7). There has been a significant decline in agricultural production, because as many as 80 percent of the internally displaced persons work in agriculture (CSIS, 2019, p. 38). The agricultural production of the state had also gone down with 80 percent in 2017 compared to before the insurgency (International Crisis Group, 2017), this shows that the loss of manpower not only affects smallholder farmers, but indeed has impacts on national levels.

Boko Haram presence and looting has caused insecurity, mainly in the region around Maiduguri, therefore, working in agriculture and commuting to other farms for work has become dangerous in North-Eastern Nigeria (CSIS, 2019, p. 22). Inability to commute due to increased risk has had negative impacts on food security, as there are less people working in agriculture. Further, Boko Haram is also responsible for killing or forcing young men, who constitute a large part of the labour force, to flee insecure conditions (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Another reason for the high levels of displacement is Boko Haram's violent raids (disrupting agriculture and trade) which resulted in over 13 million people in North-Eastern Nigeria needing aid (CSIS, 2019, p. 38). According to UNDP's report the agricultural sector has suffered damages worth a total of almost four billion US dollars during the years 2011 and 2015. With Borno State being the worst affected with over two billion dollars' worth of damages (UNDP, 2017, p. 26). The Crisis Group conducted an interview with Chairman for the Fisherman's Association revealing the immense impacts locals are feeling:

“The majority of the farmers and fishermen are now in internally displaced [persons] camps. Men and women who once produced food, fed their families sometimes including numerous dependents, have now been reduced to beggars, depending on others to provide for them.”
(International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 3).

The fishing business around Lake Chad has taken a serious hit, already vulnerable from climate change, the violence inflicted by Boko Haram has damaged the industry, making its output low (CSIS, 2019, p. 38). Many internally displaced people are thus unable to work, decreasing agricultural production.

Displacement has also led to farmer-herder violence. In the first half of 2018 1300 people lost their lives because of conflicts between farmers and herders and 300 000 people have had to leave their homes (CSIS, 2019, p. 23) (UNDP, 2017, p. 10). Insufficient agricultural production is in major part a consequence of displacement from Boko Haram's activities creating insecurity.

An OECD report stated that 85 percent of 1500 internally displaced people were under the impression that food insecurity was caused or exacerbated by Boko Haram (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 6). This suggests that Boko Haram have not been able to frame food insecurity as state-made, encouraging farmers to join them.

Displacement consequently causes agricultural production to slow down, because there is a loss of manpower (Noubissi & Njangang, 2020) (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 6). The biggest impact of the violence, carried out by both insurgency groups and state military, is that farmers simply cannot have physical access to farms and therefore cannot carry out their work resulting in lowered production.

5.1.4 Provoking a response

Agricultural production has also been slowed down by for example the prohibition of fertilizers by the Nigerian government. This because it contains ammonium nitrate which could be used to build bombs and utilised in suicide bombings. Other

restrictions implemented because of Boko Haram violent tactics are the regulations on maximum height of crops. Farmers are not allowed to grow tall crops as it would make it easier for rebel groups to hide (CSIS, 2019, pp. 38-39). One of these types of crops is maize, which also happens to be an important plant for both subsistence and trade (UNDP, 2019, p. 13). This is an indirect consequence of Boko Haram violence which impacts agricultural production and shows how government responses also impact food security.

Furthermore, to limit Boko Haram's operations, electricity and mobile networks were deliberately turned off and use of motorbikes made illegal, this impacted markets as transportation and communication was not functioning. State militaries have also closed transportation routes limiting the in- and outputs of markets (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 6).

When violence peaked only one out of three markets could maintain function. This resulted in high food prices (CSIS, 2019, p. 39). The negative impacts on markets have resulted in Boko Haram having more far-reaching indirect effects on food security in a larger region (Van Den Hoek, 2017, p. 6).

Amnesty International reported on unlawful tactics used by the military in January 2020. This was in response to Boko Haram attacks on the main road between the states of Borno and Yobe. Interviews with civilians revealed that the state military had loaded people onto busses to then set their village on fire. A farmer commented that:

“Everything was burned, even our food – it could feed [my family] for two years... Our clothes, our food, our crops, our kettles. Even the trolley we used for getting water. Only the metal dishes are there, but everything else is burned.” (Amnesty International, 2020).

This emphasizes the impacts the conflict has on food security in the region, with state military breaking humanitarian law to limit Boko Haram's reach. It also makes it clear that this is not solely Boko Haram actions that lead to increased food insecurity.

5.2 Boko Haram: impacts on aid efficiency

5.2.1 Attacks on humanitarian agencies by Boko Haram

In 2016 an insurgency group attacked a UNICEF convoy in Borno State. This resulted in a temporary pause of aid deliveries from the UN as the security risks were deemed to high (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5). Further, Freedom House reports that insecurity was high in Borno State during 2020, and that a faction to Boko Haram abducted five aid workers, subsequently killing them. Additionally, 50 soldiers and 70 civilians were killed in Yobe and Borno states by this faction

during the same year. Four attempts were also made on the governor of Borno State's life, contributing to insecurity in the region. A splinter group to Boko Haram even announced publicly that they would target aid workers. During 2020 Boko Haram caused 2720 casualties in Borno State alone, an increase from 2019 when the number of deaths was 1136 (Freedom House, 2021). Human Rights Watch reported that aid workers are increasingly being targeted with twice as many being killed in 2019 than the year before. In January 2020 Boko Haram was suspected to be responsible for attacking UN buildings where aid agencies resided, killing 20 civilians in the attack (Ewang, 2020). Animosity towards humanitarian organizations likely stems from Boko Haram's anti-western ideology. Aid workers are accused of *Christianizing* Muslim Nigerians, making them targets for the insurgency (Campbell, 2021).

Boko Haram seriously damages the local capacity for peace, preventing food aid from being delivered safely and efficiently. From this it becomes clear that Boko Haram targets both aid workers and civilians delivering and receiving aid. This shows how aid creates insecure situations, making people more vulnerable (Shearer, 2000). In a report from the International Crisis Group in 2017 aid workers estimate that 80 percent of the BAY-states pose significant security risks for humanitarian operations (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5). According to UNDP's report, aid efficiency in North-Eastern Nigeria in 2017 (measured January-July) was relatively low with a response coverage of only 39 and respectively 27 percent on food assistance and livelihood support (UNDP, 2017, p. 20). The local capacities for peace are low in North-Eastern Nigeria, with Boko Haram taking the role of spoilers creating significant local resistance and therefore, food insecurity remains high in the region.

5.2.2 Displacement and aid efficiency

Due to insecurities many people now live as internally displaced people. In the Africa briefing number 126 from the *International Crisis Group* it is approximated that 25 percent live in official refugee camps, whilst the remaining 75 percent live in host communities, making it difficult to know where to deliver food aid (International Crisis Group, 2017, p. 5). It also makes internally displaced people living in official camps more vulnerable to attacks by Boko Haram, making them more prone to food insecurity.

The Nigerian government's military operations in response to Boko Haram in 2015 did result in recapturing territory, however, it has also had negative effects on civilians. Many have been displaced due to the conflict and need humanitarian assistance, unfortunately these military operations also hinder the aid from being delivered (UNDP, 2017, pp. 7-8). Especially rural areas remain insecure as the conflict goes on, making it difficult to combat food insecurity (UNDP, 2017, p. 14).

Displacement due to both terrorist and military actions then decreases the local capacities for peace, as it is difficult to reach all internally displaced persons.

5.2.3 Civilians as collateral damage

An indirect effect the Boko Haram and their activities have on food insecurity is that it hampers aid efficiency in that the military prevents supplies from reaching areas in need of for example food aid, to prevent the insurgency groups from getting a hold of these. Moreover, the conflict with Boko Haram has weakened institutions and obstructed anti-corruption initiatives resulting in poor management of funding and distribution of resources, leaving millions food insecure who could have been helped (CSIS, 2019, pp. 41-42). The Nigerian State Military can, therefore, also be framed as a spoiler, because of their refusal to cooperate with food aid organizations.

Humanitarian efforts have been inefficient because of insecurity and conflict, which has led to food aid not being delivered because organisations do not have access to areas that are not controlled by the government (UNDP, 2017, p. 20). This is in part because the Nigerian military has very much control over the humanitarian organisations operations in North-Eastern Nigeria. They only allow aid to be delivered to government-controlled areas, referring to the *Nigerian Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act* (2013), which makes it illegal to interact with groups defined as terrorists. In September 2019 aid offices in Borno and Yobe States were shut down by the military after accusations of aiding insurgencies. When humanitarian organisations try to act fast, they are hindered by red tape and military animosity to the situation, with the military openly stating that Boko Haram only counts as an insurgency group which does not constitute armed conflict meaning that humanitarian principles do not apply (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The Nigerian military thus argue that spoilers such as Boko Haram do not justify humanitarian assistance, delegitimizing food aid operations in areas controlled by Boko Haram. This results in many civilians being deprived of food aid and suffering severe food insecurity.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 19 aid workers about the military's limitations. One country director stated that they were not able to work "where or how they want to" as it could lead to the military taking action against them (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The final report from the WFP in 2019, also evaluated whether they had been able to deliver humanitarian assistance as planned during the period 2016-2018. They concluded that organisations on site, such as WFP, did indeed have difficulties. They state that there was no type of communication between state military and Boko Haram and subsequently no access to civilian populations controlled by insurgency groups, this means that as many as 800 000 people do not benefit from the aid (WFP, 2019, pp. 21-22). Additionally, the military has put other restrictions on humanitarian operations limiting the number of resources they can carry and making it difficult to receive permits for operations. This has made it even more difficult to deliver aid, increasing levels of food insecurity (Human Rights Watch, 2020). This implies that the military used tactics of withholding resources such as food to weaken Boko Haram and to regain control over insurgency-controlled areas.

Human Rights Watch also reported that humanitarian organisations are concerned about the military's demand that humanitarian aid be delivered using

military escort as it violated guidelines concerning humanitarian assistance. Military convoys should only be used as a last resort, as to not endanger non-governmental organisations neutrality. Adding to this, military escort requires much more time to plan and is less flexible to changing conditions in the field, impeding the efficiency of humanitarian intervention and food aid delivery (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

The biggest contribution to food insecurity when it comes to aid efficiency, therefore, seems to be the state military. Their actions, however, are in response to insurgency strategies of hijacking humanitarian aid. It can as a result be framed as an indirect effect by Boko Haram on food insecurity, especially in regions outside of state control where humanitarian organizations have very limited access. This suggests that both Boko Haram and state military can be defined as spoilers hindering food security. The situation is further complicated by Boko Haram's status as a terrorist organisation, delegitimising food aid operations that could potentially strengthen Boko Haram's position.

6 Conclusion

This paper's aim was to investigate what impacts Boko Haram has had on food insecurity in North-Eastern Nigeria, both directly and indirectly. To analyse this a theoretical framework made up of various mechanisms has been assembled. Some mechanisms are more frequent in the reports, suggesting they contribute more to food insecurity in the North-East Nigerian case.

Boko Haram has its base in Maiduguri, Borno State. This is also the region where the most people are food insecure. Moreover, there is no doubt that agricultural production has been hampered by Boko Haram tactics, and even though the group does not claim to target agricultural production or markets intentionally, the material indicates a pattern: that most attacks occur before the lean season and during harvest seasons and markets are attacked regularly throughout the year. If this is to manufacture food scarcity, creating food insecurity, or to build up own stocks of food is hard to know for sure, perhaps it is a combination of the two.

As mentioned, Boko Haram regularly commits acts of terrorism within close proximity to markets. In response the Nigerian government temporarily closed the markets affected due to security risks. Consequently, decreasing market activity. Decreased agricultural production and market insecurity has also been shown to increase food prices, further exacerbating food insecurity.

The looting and violence have impacts on labour availability and aid efficiency as well, due to insecurities many people must leave their homes becoming internally displaced. This impacts food insecurity in two ways; firstly, it means that less people can work in agriculture, decreasing production. Secondly, it means that the delivery of food aid becomes more complex as internally displaced people seek refuge in neighbouring towns. Humanitarian agencies are not able to keep track of the movements of internally displaced people making it impossible to know who needs what and where.

Humanitarian agencies are also having a hard time reaching communities under Boko Haram control, partly due to the violence against aid workers committed by Boko Haram, making it very insecure requiring military escort further escalating tensions. And partly due to state military obstructing humanitarian assistance through rules and regulations on how, where and when operations can be carried out. This suggests that Boko Haram presence creates conditions for severe food insecurity and increase in their activities increases food insecurity both directly and indirectly.

The findings support previous research in that food insecurity is closely related to conflict and insecurity, and has been shown to undermine food availability, access, and utilization in the case of North-Eastern Nigeria for example though

closing of markets, lack of physical access to agricultural land and dwindling labour supply due to displacement. It also confirms that food insecurity indeed can be used as a means of gaining strategic advantage over opponents, at the expense of civilians. Food insecurity is intentionally used by both state and non-state actors in the case of North-Eastern Nigeria. The mechanisms at work in Nigeria could potentially be transferred to other cases affected by intrastate conflict and insurgency groups, especially as Boko Haram draws many of its tactics from other extremist groups such as the Islamic Group. Dynamics between non-state and state actors and their *food wars* could explain why we are currently seeing an increase in hunger globally. This trend emphasizes the need to define intentional food insecurity as a war crime if the SDGs are to be reached and hunger eradicated.

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