

Famine and Boko Haram Terror: The Unexpected Spoils of Russia's War on Ukraine

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Abstract: The Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused supply-chain disruptions and driven inflation and that threaten to plunge vulnerable regions into famine. The resulting famine is projected to disproportionately impact Nigeria, increasing the threat posed by Boko Haram. Existing literature on Boko Haram terrorism has been reviewed in addition to reports from non-governmental organizations, such as the World Food Programme and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. The famine is projected to facilitate domestic recruitment, weaken public faith in the state, and enable transnationalization. Domestic and international policy should be aimed at ensuring vulnerable populations remained fed while preempting and containing security threats. Aid may involve food distributions, cash transfers, and the provision of food in school programs. Domestic peacekeeping measures may include securing roadways and strengthening law enforcement and intelligence-gathering institutions. International peacekeeping may involve monitoring terrorist activity in cyberspace, developing intelligence-sharing structures, and coordinate border control efforts.

Keywords: Boko Haram, War in Ukraine, Nigeria, famine, terrorism

Introduction

When the Russian army commenced its unsanctioned invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it was clear that the impacts would be time-transcendent and far-reaching. Aside from displacing over nine million Ukrainian civilians and violating the principle of national sovereignty that has governed European politics since World War II, the invasion has caused a food crisis that threatens to plunge millions worldwide into famine.¹⁰² Russia and Ukraine together account for roughly one-fourth of global wheat exports and 12 percent of the calories consumed worldwide.¹⁰³ However, the Russian blockade of key Ukrainian port cities in the Black and Azov Seas has stalled the delivery of 22 million tons of grain bound for the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel.¹⁰⁴ These constitute the largest wheat-importing regions worldwide. In addition to causing global market disruptions, the war has driven over 50 percent of the oil price increase and almost 40 percent of the wheat price increase.¹⁰⁵ These price hikes will drive inflation rates and make purchasing foodstuffs prohibitively expensive for the countries most reliant on food imports.

The impending famine is projected to disproportionately impact developing countries, many of whose economies are still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. As the fourth largest importer of grain, Nigeria is particularly vulnerable.¹⁰⁶ The World Food Programme reports that as of May 2022, over 77 percent of Nigerian households experienced crisis-level food deprivation.¹⁰⁷ Food scarcity is evaporating household savings

¹⁰² “Global cost-of-living crisis catalyzed by war in Ukraine sending millions into poverty, warns UN Development Programme.” United Nations Development Programme. July 12, 2022.

¹⁰³ “Global cost-of-living crisis catalyzed by war in Ukraine sending millions into poverty, warns UN Development Programme.” United Nations Development Programme. July 12, 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Addressing the Cost-of-Living Crisis in Developing Countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses.” United Nations Development Programme. July 2022.

¹⁰⁵ “The Russian War in Ukraine and Its Impact on Africa.” Eurasia Review.

¹⁰⁶ “Wheat in Nigeria.” The Organization for Economic Complexity. <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/wheat/reporter/nga>.

¹⁰⁷ “WFP Nigeria Situation Report #71.” World Food Programme. May 6, 2022.

and forcing individuals to borrow money.¹⁰⁸ Hunger is particularly acute in the northeast, which is located in the Sahel. Climate change has caused droughts that have destroyed crops and made over two-thirds of households “highly vulnerable” and over one-fourth “moderately vulnerable” to extreme hunger.¹⁰⁹ Market disruptions and price shocks threaten to exacerbate the food shortage and leave millions in need.

The high potential for extreme regional food deprivation is disconcerting because famine endangers not only the health of individuals, but the stability and security of their communities. In the northeastern Nigerian states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa – three of the states most susceptible to food insecurity – Boko Haram has been operating as a terrorist organization since 2002.¹¹⁰ The group became infamous in 2014 when its members kidnapped 276 mostly Christian girls from a state secondary school and published a video of the kidnapping online.¹¹¹ Members use radical Islamic ideology to fuel territorial aspirations, the objective being to implement Sharia law in captured areas. Violent crimes such as suicide bombings, drive-by shooting, and arson have evoked terror in civilian populations and highlighted the inefficacy of governmental response. In 2015, Boko Haram outpaced the Islamic State as the deadliest terrorist organization in the world.¹¹² The United Nations reports that by the end of 2020, Boko Haram, whose Hausa-language name translates to “Western education is sacrilege,” had killed over 350,000 people, and caused indirectly the death of 314,000 many of whom were children.¹¹³ Boko Haram insurgency has contributed

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Bohm, Vera. “Boko Haram.” Boko Haram in 2020. International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. August 1, 2020.

¹¹¹ Campbell, John. “Latest Boko Haram Kidnapping Recalls Chibok in 2014.” Council on Foreign Relations. February 22, 2018.

¹¹² Elkaim, Zachary. “Boko Haram: The Rise, Success, and Continued Efficacy of Insurgency in Nigeria.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. 2012.

¹¹³ Sanni, Kunle. “Boko Haram: 350,000 dead in Nigeria – UN.” June 28, 2021. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/470476-insurgency-has-killed-almost-350000-in-north-east-undp.html>.

immensely to the ranking of Nigeria as the sixth most heavily impacted by terrorism in the Global Terrorism Index.¹¹⁴

Although counterterrorism efforts have helped contain their operations, the looming famine is likely to trigger key socioeconomic risk factors for increased terror activity, such as mass migration, disrupted education, and unemployment. While the impacts of poverty and climate change on terrorist activity are well-researched, the relationship between famine and terrorist activity is less explored. Existing literature frames famine as an outgrowth of the above phenomena rather than a direct causal factor. The following analysis will explore how the famine caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine may increase the threat posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad region and examine which policies will be most effective in preventing and containing the security crisis. A description of the rise, self-perpetuation, and past governmental response to Boko Haram will be given. This will be followed by a forecast of how the famine will facilitate its domestic and international operations and recruitment strategies. Lastly, a cost-benefit analysis of national and international policy options will be conducted and recommendations made.

The Roots of Boko Haram

Boko Haram attacks became deadlier and more frequent following the extrajudicial killing of leader Mohammed Yusuf by state forces in 2009.¹¹⁵ The continued existence of Boko Haram speaks both to the ineffectiveness of government-led armed intervention and the failure to address the underlying socioeconomic factors driving recruitment. Motivations to join are diverse. However, personal testimonies show common themes: low education, limited economic opportunities, and group grievance¹¹⁶. These factors are side

¹¹⁴ "Global Terrorism Index 2022: Measuring The Impact of Terrorism." *Institute for Economics and Peace*. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-09062022.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ Elkaim, Zachary. "Boko Haram: The Rise, Success, and Continued Efficacy of the Insurgency in Nigeria." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. 2012.

¹¹⁶ Adelaja, Adesoji O., Lebo, Abdullahi, Penar, Eva. "Public Opinion on the Root Causes of Terrorism and the Objectives of Terrorists: A Boko Haram Case Study." *Perspectives on Terrorism*, vol. 12,

effects of the cultural, economic, and political divide between southern and northern Nigeria.

Several factors account for these regional disparities. Firstly, British colonial rule left a greater handprint upon the economic, cultural, and political institutions of the south, while northern Nigerians were allowed to remain more or less subject to emirs and their interpretation of Islamic law.¹¹⁷ As a result, standards of education and governance differ across regional boundaries. This has created a foundation for uneven development. For example, UNICEF reports a disparity between attendance rates between southern and northern Nigerian children.¹¹⁸ Only 53 percent of northern Nigerian children attend school.¹¹⁹ Another roughly 30 percent attend Quranic school, which does not include literacy or numeracy requirements.¹²⁰ Lack of education severely curtails economic opportunities, which in turn drives desperation, fuels group grievance, and deprives youth of the critical thinking skills that would otherwise protect them from radical ideology.

Furthermore, southern Nigeria benefits from oil reserves concentrated in the Niger Delta, while northern Nigeria remains even more dependent upon subsistence agriculture.¹²¹ This increases the demand for service-sector industries in the south which tend to be more lucrative than agriculture and animal husbandry. Social factors also drive poverty, and the north leads the south in household size while offering less social welfare protection to citizens.¹²² In addition, climate change drives desertification,

no.3, June 2019. https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26453134.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A5af85409a6ef7fa84df3608227bd813a&ab_segments=0%2F5YC-6451%2Fcontrol&origin=&acceptTC=1.

¹¹⁷ Elkaim, Zachary. "Boko Haram: The Rise, Success, and Continued Efficacy of Insurgency in Nigeria." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. 2012.

¹¹⁸ "Education: Nigeria." UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Fenske, James and Zurimendi, Igor. "Oil and Ethnic Inequality in Nigeria." <https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/imports/fileManager/Oil%20and%20Ethnic%20Inequality%20in%20Nigeria.pdf>.

¹²² Dupel, Zuhamman. "Poverty in Nigeria: Understanding and Bridging the Divide Between North and South." Center for Global Development. April 6, 2018. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/poverty-nigeria-understanding-and-bridging-divide-between-north-and-south>.

which disproportionately disadvantages northern Nigeria, a part of the Sahel. Disruptions in rainfall and diminishing water levels in Lake Chad have resulted in crop failure and reduced fish harvests, endangering the livelihoods of farmers and fishermen.¹²³

Poor border protection has enabled Boko Haram to transnationalize. The failure of government-driven border closures to stem smuggling in 2019 and 2020 belies the fact that the state has yet to implement effective border control measures. The effects of weak border security are spilling over into neighboring countries. Nigeria shares a 1,227-mile border with Cameroon and a 999-mile border with Niger, both of which are highly porous.¹²⁴ This has allowed militants to traffic arms and people. Illegal border crossings connected Nigeria to Libya through Niger, and in 2015, militants were discovered using this highway to join the Islamic State.¹²⁵ In addition, Boko Haram attacks have become more frequent in Cameroon. In 2020, Cameroon experienced a 90 percent increase in attacks, likely attributable to clashes along the border between Boko Haram insurgents and Nigerian security forces.¹²⁶ During this period, Niger experienced about 92 such attacks, and twelve occurred in Chad.¹²⁷

The organization used the internet to spread anti-government and anti-Western propaganda. Their videos focused more on inspiring global terror than on promoting recruitment. Interestingly, it should be noted that during this period of transnationalization, the language in which then-leader Abubakar Shekau addressed the public shifted from the local Kanuri and Hausa languages to Arabic, ostensibly to voice support for ISIS.¹²⁸ In turn,

¹²³ "Fighting Famine." World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/fight-famine>.

¹²⁴ Eveslage, Benjamin S. "Clarifying Boko Haram's Transnational Intentions, Using Content Analysis of Public Statements in 2012." *Perspectives on Terrorism*. October 2013.

¹²⁵ Ogbuogu, Jennifer. "Analysing the Threat of Boko Haram and the ISIS Alliance in Nigeria." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*. September 2015.

¹²⁶ "Boko Haram Violence Against Civilians Spiking in Northern Cameroon." *African Center for Strategic Studies*. November 13, 2020. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/boko-haram-violence-against-civilians-spiking-in-northern-cameroon/>.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Mahmoud, Omar. "Local, Global, or in Between? Boko Haram's Messaging, Strategy, Membership, and Support Networks." Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. 2018.

the Islamic State recognized Boko Haram as the West African arm of its terrorist apparatus in 2015.¹²⁹ However, the organization splintered into different factions after ISIL attempted to replace then-leader Abubakar Shekau with Abu Musar al-Barnawi. Boko Haram recruitment was not reported to expand broadly outside of Nigeria, but these events demonstrate that members are politically savvy and capable of utilizing on-the-ground resources to gain tactical advantage and the media to support its territorial aspirations. Although Boko Haram operations remain largely domestic, a global famine, whose effects will be enumerated below, is likely to engender sufficient instability to allow members to cross borders easily and reclaim its space in online media rhetoric.

Impact of Famine on Boko Haram Terror

It has been claimed both that food insecurity either does not factor into armed conflict or is but one link in a network of interlocking causal elements. However, as seen in the Arab Spring, price-hike induced food scarcity directly engenders an array of social and political challenges that prime countries for destabilization and conflict. These challenges exacerbate the threat posed by Boko Haram by facilitating the recruitment of new militants, decreasing faith in the state, and enabling transnational activities.

The famine will drive up recruitment by incentivizing new militants to join and provide current militants with opportunities to recruit. Hunger drives desperation, and vulnerable youth have historically joined Boko Haram as a bread-winning measure.¹³⁰ A student affiliated with the Nigerian branch of American University, when asked why he participated in the school program, responded, "It was this or Boko Haram."¹³¹ Youth facing adversity are often allured into joining by the promise of a better afterlife.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Onuoha, Freedom C. "Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?" US Institute of Peace. 2014.

¹³¹ Hansen, William W. "Poverty and "Economic Deprivation Theory": Street Children, Qur'anic Schools/almajirai and the Dispossessed as a Source of Recruitment for Boko Haram and other Religious, Political and Criminal Groups in Northern Nigeria." *Perspectives on Terrorism*. October 2016.

¹³² Ibid.

Furthermore, food insecurity and malnutrition disrupt education. The significant relationship between food insecurity and poor education outcomes is particularly visible in rural areas. The FAO reports that famine increases rates of student absenteeism and decreases overall school attendance.¹³³ Youth in subsistence economies view hunger as increasing the opportunity costs of staying in school when they could be otherwise supporting their families.¹³⁴ In addition, hunger causes malnutrition, which is found to adversely impact the ability of students to learn, leading to poorer overall performance.¹³⁵ Low education levels and illiteracy limit job opportunities for youth and hinder economic mobility.¹³⁶ Terrorist organizations take advantage of both unemployment and limited economic opportunities to persuade young people to join.¹³⁷ This forms a component of the aforementioned join-for-bread phenomenon.

Furthermore, uneducated and illiterate youth are deprived of the critical thinking capabilities that could otherwise protect them from indoctrination. Poorly educated and uneducated students are more likely to accept extremist religious ideology, especially since they lack the capabilities to read holy texts.¹³⁸ The nature of the famine as an outgrowth of transport disruptions and price hikes is likely to increase disaffection with the Western global market system, making the anti-Western rhetoric characteristic of Boko Haram more appealing.

Despite experiencing an increase in poverty levels in 2017, the Nigerian government has maintained control of the territory reclaimed from Boko Haram in 2015. Notwithstanding, the Fragile States Index ranked Nigeria

¹³³ Burchi, Francesco and De Muro, Pasquale. "Education for Rural People and Food Security: A Cross-Cultural Analysis." 2007.

¹³⁴ WFP USA, 2017. *Winning the Peace: Hunger and Instability*. World Food Program USA. Washington, D.C.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Onuoha, Freedom C. "Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?" US Institute of Peace. 2014.

¹³⁸ Hansen, William W. "Poverty and "Economic Deprivation Theory": Street Children, Qur'anic Schools/almajirai and the Dispossessed as a Source of Recruitment for Boko Haram and other Religious, Political and Criminal Groups in Northern Nigeria." *Perspectives on Terrorism*. October 2016.

the sixteenth most fragile state in 2022.¹³⁹ Among the most glaring weaknesses pertinent to the terror discussion were the ineffective security apparatus, declining and uneven economic development, and underdeveloped public services systems.¹⁴⁰ Famine demonstrates the inability of the state to provide the food aid or monetary assistance necessary to keep the poor fed or provide them with the wherewithal to buy food for themselves. These impacts are cyclical. By limiting the economic opportunities of those impacted, famine cuts tax revenue, strains state treasuries, and thus undermines the efforts of governments to respond to humanitarian crises.

The President Buhari administration has spear-headed numerous social security programs. However, citizens are skeptical. Individuals are less likely to focus on improvements to social security apparatuses if they remain incapable of alleviating present suffering. Furthermore, Buhari is due to conclude his eight-year presidency after the 2023 elections, and the social policy agenda of his successor cannot be known. The inability of the government to meet the needs of the citizens will engender a loss in public faith as well as dissatisfaction and possible resentment towards the state. This may undermine the legitimacy of the Nigerian state. Citizens may come to see the militant regime as a preferable alternative. Furthermore, militants may be emboldened to expand operations domestically, given that Nigerian security forces have been historically unsuccessful in rooting out Boko Haram.

State inefficacy will most probably heighten human suffering and cause destabilization across the Lake Chad region that could allow Boko Haram to increase the frequency of its militant activities abroad, expand its territory, and more frequently cross national borders. Sourcing over 40 percent of its wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine, Cameroon is likely to experience crippling inflation that will prevent well over half of the population that is already food insecure from buying staple foods.¹⁴¹ While Boko Haram

¹³⁹ "Global Data." Fragile States Index 2022. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/>.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ "Ukraine/Russia: As War Continues, Africa Food Crisis Looms." Human Rights Watch. April 28, 2022. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/28/ukraine/russia-war-continues-africa-food-crisis-looms>.

membership has remained largely Nigerian, it is possible that hunger will provide militants with an ample body of recruits in surrounding countries willing to join for food or financial provisions. Without robust border security, militants would have easy access to blighted communities abroad wherein rhetoric can be spread and training initiated.

Policy Recommendations

The complex nature of this security threat necessitates a multidimensional response. Fundamentally, eradicating Boko Haram and affiliated groups would require a large-scale overhaul of existing political, educational, and religious institutions along with economic diversification initiatives and a robust anti-corruption campaign. However, these are not realistic targets within the given timeframe, so the present objective is to prevent as much human suffering as possible and curtail the rise in terrorism that will attend the consequent instability. There are two axes within which policy options can fall. The first is between national and international policy. The second axis is between policies that mitigate hunger and policies that suppress conflict – in other words, those that target the cause, and those that target the effect.

Domestic fiscal policy should focus on mitigating hunger in low-income areas, as the very poor tend to suffer most acutely. The UN recommends implementing targeted cash transfers rather than blanket subsidies to prevent individuals from falling below the poverty line. The poorest 40 percent would reap 12 percent of the benefits of subsidies, but 60 percent of the benefits of cash transfers.¹⁴² Implemented multinationally, cash transfers would prevent 75 percent of the vulnerable population from falling below the poverty line.¹⁴³ Subsidies or tax cuts, however,

¹⁴² Malina, George Gray, Montoya-Aguirre, María, Ortiz-Juarez, Eduardo. “Addressing the Cost-Of-Living Crisis in Developing Countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses.” *United Nations Development Programme*. July 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/Addressing-the-cost-of-living-crisis-in-vulnerable-countries.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

would overheat a fiscal budget already drained from responding to shocks caused by the pandemic.¹⁴⁴

The UN points out that without the proper social registry systems and payment mechanisms in place, cash transfers are hard to realize. However, Nigeria has equipped itself to track and aid the most vulnerable with the National Social Register (NSR), an arm of the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO).¹⁴⁵ In December 2021, Nigeria initiated the National Social Safety Net Program Scale-Up (NASSP-SU), funded by a World Bank-approved \$800 million credit from the International Development Association.¹⁴⁶ These cash transfers aimed at stabilizing the economy after an increase in prices and decline of incomes related to the pandemic. To complement the National Social Register, the Rapid Response Register (RRR) was created.¹⁴⁷ In the battle against imminent famine, the tracking processes developed for the Rapid Response Register could be used to identify vulnerable households, although data would have to be re-collected. Providing the large-scale assistance needed to the most vulnerable would likely require cooperation with the World Bank. The UN reports that the World Bank is considering a debt moratorium for countries most in need.¹⁴⁸

The World Food Programme proposes establishing school feeding programs in order to increase attendance. In 2016, the Buhari administration launched the National Home Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), which invested 70 naira (currency in Nigeria, 1 USD is approx. 420 naira

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Learn more about the NSR." National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office. <http://nassp.gov.ng/learn-more-about-the-nsr/>.

¹⁴⁶ "Nigeria to Scale-up Delivery of Social Assistance to 10.2 Million Households." The World Bank. December 16, 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/12/16/nigeria-to-scale-up-delivery-of-social-assistance-to-10-2-million-households>.

¹⁴⁷ "Nigeria steps forward its Rapid Response Register." National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office. <http://nassp.gov.ng/nigeria-steps-forward-its-rapid-response-register/>.

¹⁴⁸ Malina, George Gray, Montoya-Aguirre, María, Ortiz-Juarez, Eduardo. "Addressing the Cost-Of-Living Crisis in Developing Countries: Poverty and vulnerability projections and policy responses." *United Nations Development Programme*. July 2022. <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/Addressing-the-cost-of-living-crisis-in-vulnerable-countries.pdf>

as of August, 2022) per child per day into the provision of one stable, nutritious meal to students in need.¹⁴⁹ In an interview with the Nigeria Health Watch, a primary school teacher found that absenteeism plummeted when the school feeding program was initiated because the knowledge that they would receive a meal incentivized students to come to class.¹⁵⁰ Proper nutrition also improved academic performance. In addition, the NHGSFP provided jobs to cooks, drivers, and other members of the supply-chain while supporting local farmers and vendors.¹⁵¹ This cuts unemployment rates and provides support to the agricultural sector that is particularly necessary as imported foodstuffs become scarce. Therefore, the NHGSFP has the capacity to level a multifaceted assault upon key socioeconomic risk factors for terrorism recruitment.

However, the NHGSFP has been confronted with cost-related difficulties since its inception. Cooks are few and underpaid.¹⁵² Insufficient funding has complicated efforts to keep pace with rising prices, and cooks admit to using their own money to buy food needed to feed the students.¹⁵³ In 2022, the federal government increased the allowance to 100 naira per child per day.¹⁵⁴ However, critics fear that this raise may yet be insufficient to meet the needs of rising prices, particularly in a post-invasion economy. Many school feeding programs are funded by national governments, but projected increases in expenditures may overburden state budgets.

¹⁴⁹ Lawal, Iyabo, Salau, Gbenga, , Njoku, Lawrence, Godwin, Ann, Adewale, Murtala, Akingboye, Oluwaseun Agbor, Timothy, Agosi Todo, Tina, Agboluaje, Rotimi. "States lament as FG's school feeding programme flops." *The Guardian*. May 13, 2022. <https://guardian.ng/features/states-lament-as-fgs-school-feeding-programme-flops/>.

¹⁵⁰ "Feeding the Future – The Nigerian School Feeding Story." *Nigeria Health Watch*. May 9, 2022. https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8wmtr_BljDQ.

¹⁵¹ "Feeding the Future – The Nigerian School Feeding Story." *Nigeria Health Watch*. May 9, 2022. https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8wmtr_BljDQ.

¹⁵² Lawal, Iyabo, Salau, Gbenga, , Njoku, Lawrence, Godwin, Ann, Adewale, Murtala, Akingboye, Oluwaseun Agbor, Timothy, Agosi Todo, Tina, Agboluaje, Rotimi. "States lament as FG's school feeding programme flops." *The Guardian*. May 13, 2022. <https://guardian.ng/features/states-lament-as-fgs-school-feeding-programme-flops/>.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "FG Increases School Feeding Consumption to N100 Per Child." *TVC News Nigeria*. February 23, 2022. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=RUMM-ka44gE>.

Nigerian officials report that donations from non-governmental organizations have been especially helpful sources of funding.¹⁵⁵ Of particular interest is the possibility of borrowing from the World Bank, which has previously helped fund social welfare initiatives in Nigeria.

Peacekeeping in the northeast requires a robust coalition of law enforcement and intelligence-gathering institutions. Nigerian security forces lost credibility after perpetrating a myriad of human rights abuses in an attempt to root out Boko Haram militants. Because local police forces lacked the wherewithal to store traditional evidence, such as fingerprints, officers relied on confessions, which are often forced. Suspected terrorists were often executed without a trial.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Nigerian intelligence-gathering systems are underdeveloped, disjointed, and are even prone to infighting. The entire Nigerian police force has less than 70 intelligence analysts, and the military has less than 100.¹⁵⁷ Compounding the inefficacy, rampant corruption, and a history of past repressions, infiltration by Boko Haram militants has further weakened operating capabilities and public faith in law enforcement and intelligence-gathering structures.

Critics suggest increasing funding for, as well as cooperation between, the Nigerian Police Force, the State Security Service, and the National Intelligence Agency.¹⁵⁸ Funds should be invested into recruiting and training officers, who at the moment are often “barely literate” and poorly trained.¹⁵⁹ Nigeria should invest in evidence-collection technology and the establishment of a criminal database.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, both civilians and law enforcement officers may be recruited and trained to fill the role of intelligence

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Elkaïm, Zachary. “Boko Haram: The Rise, Success, and Continued Efficacy of the Insurgency in Nigeria.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Omoniyi, Tosin. “Analysis: Intelligence failure compounding insecurity in Nigeria.” April 19, 2021. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/456057-analysis-intelligence-failure-compounding-insecurity-in-nigeria.html>

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

analysts.¹⁶¹ Their training would require an understanding of computer and internet software.¹⁶²

Non-governmental organizations may provide both in-kind food aid and cash-based food assistance. The World Food Programme has shifted from providing food aid as a top-down support to providing a combination of food aid and food assistance in the form of electronic funds, bank notes, or vouchers.¹⁶³ These cash transfers comprise one-third of all WFP assistance.¹⁶⁴ Food aid continues to offer benefits to hungry communities, and cash transfers grants individuals the agency to purchase goods according to their tastes and seasonality.¹⁶⁵

Food distribution relies on reliable transport channels. In 2020, Boko Haram and the affiliated Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA) launched 67 attacks upon highways within Borno State alone, killing 259 Nigerians and accounting for 90% of kidnappings perpetrated by the group that year.¹⁶⁶ Both civilian and military vehicles were targeted. Boko Haram has been attacking northeastern highways more frequently, and operations have expanded on a smaller-scale into Cameroon.¹⁶⁷ Highway attacks complicate efforts to safely and punctually deliver food aid. Therefore, the federal government must secure interstate thoroughfares. Attacks persist despite military presence along targeted roads. The military may benefit from increasing intelligence operations, though the local contacts may be reticent to come forward with information about an impending attack, fearing reprisal. The WFP has previously flown food aid into regions in Nigeria deemed too

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ "Food assistance: cash and in-kind." World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/food-assistance>.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ "Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Target Nigeria's Highways." *African Center for Strategic Studies*. December 15, 2020. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/boko-haram-iswa-target-nigeria-highways/>.

¹⁶⁷ "Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa Target Nigeria's Highways." *African Center for Strategic Studies*. December 15, 2020. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/boko-haram-iswa-target-nigeria-highways/>.

dangerous to enter by car.¹⁶⁸ While this option should definitely be considered regarding the delivery of outside food aid, reconnecting the states of Yobe and Borno remains essential to effectively responding to public need.

International support of the Nigerian military has been successful against Boko Haram insurgency. In 2015, an agreement was made to deploy 7,500 African Union troops from Niger, Cameroon, Chad, and Benin to combat insurgency. Consequently, the Nigerian military began reclaiming key cities, and Boko Haram operations shifted from urban centers to the Sambisa Forest. Several strategies are available to neutralize violent extremism before international military support becomes necessary. First, media platforms should remain unified in their condemnation of terrorist attacks. Social media sites should strictly monitor the publication of extremist media. Rhetoric encouraging violence should be flagged and removed, and the associated accounts should be deleted. As stated above, Boko Haram used the media less as a recruitment tactic than as a tool to inspire fear and leach public faith from the government.¹⁶⁹

An agreement between states across the Lake Chad region to share intelligence would provide needed support to the Nigerian state. In addition to the domestic intelligence reforms suggested above, Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger should agree to share intelligence on Boko Haram operations in their spheres of influence. This would allow border security forces to coordinate timely interceptions and domestic law enforcement bodies to preempt attacks. This should coincide with multilateral border security agreements, which may be mediated by the African Union. States should commit to fortifying checkpoints along cross-national roadways and increasing intelligence operations along their borders, especially at their most porous points.

¹⁶⁸ "Fighting famine." World Food Programme. <https://www.wfp.org/fight-famine>.

¹⁶⁹ Mahmoud, Omar. "Local, Global, or in Between? Boko Haram's Messaging, Strategy, Membership, and Support Networks." Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. 2018.

Conclusion

Boko Haram is able to self-perpetuate due to the socioeconomic problems related to uneven regional development, such as poverty, poor education, and unemployment. The famine caused by the Russo-Ukrainian War will increase the threat posed by Boko Haram by enabling members to recruit new militants, highlighting the weakness of the state, and facilitating transnationalization. Effective policy will combat food insecurity, the immediate cause of the increased security threat, and strengthen traditional and non-traditional security structures as a means of containing the threat. Domestic aid may include targeted cash transfers and school feeding programs, while domestic peacekeeping will require coordinating law enforcement institutions, countering insurgent infiltration, and securing roadways. On the international scale, in-kind aid should be offered to northeastern Nigerians, and a debt moratorium may help eliminate the stress on the government. International peacekeeping should entail insurgent activity online, creating a framework for intelligence-sharing, and securing the borders between Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

This paper focused primarily on the impacts of the famine, an isolated event, on the threat posed by an existing terrorist organization. However, further research is still needed to understand how famine may facilitate the formation of new militant groups in Nigeria, the broader Lake Chad region, or the Sahel as a whole. Similarly, resource scarcity has historically driven conflict between Fulani herdsman and sedentary Nigerian farmers, and it may be profitable to analyze how this dynamic will be impacted by constraints on food supply. Lastly, it would be useful to analyze how Russian disinformation campaigns in Africa may be used by militant groups to support anti-Western rhetoric in an emerging multi-polar world order.