

RECLAIMING UNGOVERNED SPACES: STATE CAPACITY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN NIGERIA'S NORTHEAST

OMADACHI OKLOBIA Ph.D

Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Department of Public Administration
omadachi@nsuk.edu.ng

Abstract

The northeastern region of Nigeria has been plagued by insurgency, terrorism, and widespread insecurity, leading to the emergence of ungoverned spaces where state authority is either weak or non-existent. This article examines the challenges of reclaiming these ungoverned spaces through enhanced state capacity and institutional reform. Drawing on empirical data, case studies, and theoretical frameworks, the study identifies the root causes of state fragility in the region, including historical neglect, poor governance, and socio-economic disparities. The article argues that sustainable peace and security in Nigeria's Northeast can only be achieved through comprehensive institutional reforms that address the underlying causes of state weakness. Policy recommendations are provided, focusing on strengthening governance, improving service delivery, and fostering community engagement.

Keywords: Ungoverned Spaces; State Capacity; Institutional Reform; Boko Haram; Nigeria's Northeast

Introduction

The concept of ungoverned spaces refers to areas where the state's authority is either absent or significantly weakened, creating a vacuum that non-state actors, including insurgents and terrorist groups, often exploit (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). In Nigeria's Northeast, the Boko Haram insurgency has highlighted the dangers of ungoverned spaces, where the state's inability to provide security, basic services, and governance has allowed extremist groups to flourish (Onuoha, 2012). This article explores the dynamics of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast and proposes strategies for reclaiming these areas through enhanced state capacity and institutional reform.

The persistence of ungoverned spaces in the Northeast stems from decades of systemic neglect, weak governance, and institutional failure. Successive governments have failed to address the region's chronic underdevelopment, characterised by poor infrastructure, limited access to education and healthcare, and high levels of poverty and unemployment. These conditions have created a fertile ground for Boko Haram and other extremist groups to exploit local grievances, recruit members, and establish parallel governance structures. To reclaim these spaces, the Nigerian government must prioritise comprehensive institutional reforms that strengthen state capacity, improve service delivery, and restore public trust. This includes tackling corruption, enhancing transparency, and ensuring equitable resource distribution to address the root causes of marginalization and underdevelopment.

Moreover, reclaiming ungoverned spaces requires a multifaceted approach that combines security measures with long-term developmental strategies. While military operations are necessary to dismantle insurgent networks, they must be complemented by efforts to rebuild infrastructure, create economic opportunities, and promote social cohesion. Engaging local communities in the design and implementation of these strategies is crucial to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. By addressing both the symptoms and root causes of

ungoverned spaces, Nigeria can restore state authority, foster stability, and prevent the resurgence of non-state actors in the Northeast.

Additionally, regional and international cooperation will play a vital role in addressing the challenges posed by ungoverned spaces in the Northeast. The transnational nature of extremist groups like Boko Haram, which often operate across borders in the Lake Chad Basin region, necessitates collaboration with neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Joint military operations, intelligence sharing, and coordinated border security measures can help disrupt the activities of these groups and prevent them from exploiting ungoverned spaces in neighboring territories. Furthermore, international partners and organisations can provide technical assistance, funding, and expertise to support Nigeria's efforts in rebuilding the Northeast and strengthening state institutions. Programs focused on education, vocational training, and community development can help address the socio-economic grievances that fuel extremism, while initiatives to promote good governance and accountability can restore public confidence in the state.

Finally, addressing the issue of ungoverned spaces requires a long-term commitment to inclusive and participatory governance. The Nigerian government must ensure that marginalised communities in the Northeast have a voice in decision-making processes and that their needs and concerns are prioritised in national development plans. Empowering local leaders, civil society organisations, and traditional institutions can help bridge the gap between the state and the population, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for peace and development. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates security, development, and governance, Nigeria can effectively reclaim ungoverned spaces, address the root causes of instability, and build a more resilient and inclusive society in the Northeast. This will not only enhance national security but also contribute to the broader goal of sustainable development and regional stability.

The article is structured as follows: the first section provides a theoretical framework for understanding ungoverned spaces and state capacity. The second section examines the historical and socio-political context of Nigeria's Northeast, highlighting the factors that have contributed to the emergence of ungoverned spaces. The third section analyses the challenges of reclaiming these spaces, focusing on the limitations of current state interventions. The fourth section proposes a framework for institutional reform, drawing on best practices from other post-conflict societies. The final section concludes with policy recommendations for sustainable peace and security in the region.

Theoretical Framework: Ungoverned Spaces and State Capacity

The theoretical framework of ungoverned spaces and state capacity explores the interplay between state weakness and the rise of areas where non-state actors, such as insurgents and extremists, establish control. Rooted in governance, institutionalism, and conflict theories, it analyses how weak state capacity—evident in inadequate service delivery, systemic corruption, and institutional failure—creates governance vacuums that non-state actors exploit. This framework underscores the importance of institutional reform, state-building, and addressing socio-economic grievances as essential strategies for reclaiming ungoverned spaces and restoring state authority. By strengthening state institutions, improving governance, and tackling underlying inequalities, governments can reduce vulnerabilities, counter extremism, and foster stability in historically neglected regions. This approach is particularly relevant in contexts like Nigeria's Northeast, where ungoverned spaces have enabled groups like Boko Haram to thrive.

Defining Ungoverned Spaces

Ungoverned spaces are regions where the state's authority is either entirely absent or significantly weakened, creating a vacuum that non-state actors can exploit to establish their own control and influence (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). These areas are typically characterised by a lack of effective governance, weak or dysfunctional institutions, and minimal state presence, which collectively render them vulnerable to infiltration and domination by insurgents, terrorists, criminal networks, and other non-state actors (Rabasa *et al.*, 2007). The absence of state-provided security, justice, and basic services in such spaces often forces local populations to rely on these non-state entities for survival, further entrenching their authority. The concept of ungoverned spaces is especially pertinent in the context of fragile or failed states, where the government's capacity to enforce laws, maintain order, and deliver essential services is severely compromised (Rotberg, 2004). In Nigeria, for instance, the Northeast region exemplifies this phenomenon, as decades of neglect, underdevelopment, and institutional failure have allowed groups like Boko Haram to exploit governance gaps and establish parallel systems of control. Addressing the challenges posed by ungoverned spaces requires not only strengthening state capacity and legitimacy but also addressing the underlying socio-economic and political grievances that fuel instability. Without such comprehensive approaches, these spaces will continue to serve as breeding grounds for conflict and insecurity, undermining both national and regional stability.

State Capacity and Institutional Reform

State capacity refers to the ability of a state to effectively implement policies, maintain law and order, and provide essential public goods and services such as security, education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Fukuyama, 2004). In the context of ungoverned spaces, where state authority is either absent or severely weakened, enhancing state capacity is critical for reclaiming these areas and preventing the resurgence of non-state actors such as insurgents, terrorists, and criminal networks. Institutional reform, which entails the restructuring, strengthening, and modernisation of state institutions, is a fundamental component of building state capacity (North, 1990). This process involves creating transparent, accountable, and efficient institutions capable of responding to the needs of the population and enforcing the rule of law. However, effective institutional reform requires addressing the root causes of state weakness, including systemic corruption, poor governance, lack of accountability, and deep-seated socio-economic disparities that fuel grievances and undermine trust in the state (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). In Nigeria, for example, the persistent weakness of state institutions in the Northeast has allowed groups like Boko Haram to thrive. To reclaim ungoverned spaces, the Nigerian government must prioritise comprehensive reforms that not only strengthen institutional frameworks but also address the historical marginalisation, poverty, and inequality that have made these regions vulnerable to exploitation. Without such efforts, attempts to enhance state capacity will remain superficial, and the cycle of instability in ungoverned spaces will persist.

Historical and Socio-Political Context of Nigeria's Northeast

Historical Neglect and Marginalisation

The northeastern region of Nigeria has long suffered from systemic neglect and marginalisation by successive federal and state governments, resulting in entrenched poverty, chronic underdevelopment, and stark socio-economic disparities (Mustapha, 2006). Comprising the states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe, the region consistently ranks among the poorest and least developed areas in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2019), the Northeast exhibits some of the country's lowest human development indicators, including alarming rates of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. Infrastructure

such as roads, schools, and healthcare facilities are either inadequate or non-existent, further exacerbating the region's isolation and deprivation. This historical neglect has fostered a deep sense of alienation and resentment among the local population, who feel abandoned by the state and excluded from the benefits of national development. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram have capitalised on these grievances, using them to recruit disillusioned youth and justify their violent campaigns against the state (Onuoha, 2012). By presenting themselves as alternatives to a failing government, these groups have gained traction in areas where the state's presence is weak or absent. Addressing the challenges in the Northeast requires not only immediate security measures but also long-term efforts to redress historical injustices, promote inclusive development, and rebuild trust in state institutions. Without addressing the root causes of marginalisation, the region will remain vulnerable to exploitation by extremist groups and other non-state actors, perpetuating cycles of conflict and instability.

The Rise of Boko Haram

The Boko Haram insurgency, which emerged in 2009, is deeply rooted in the socio-economic and political marginalisation of Nigeria's Northeast, a region historically neglected by successive governments (Pérouse de Montclos, 2014). The group, whose name translates to "Western education is forbidden," seeks to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria and has exploited the region's pervasive poverty, lack of education, and weak state presence to garner support and recruit members. By capitalising on the grievances of a population that feels abandoned by the state, Boko Haram has positioned itself as a challenger to the existing political order. The group has effectively utilised ungoverned spaces—areas where state authority is absent or minimal—to launch attacks, train fighters, and establish parallel governance structures that provide rudimentary services and a sense of order in the absence of the state (Thurston, 2018). This strategy has allowed the group to entrench itself in the region, particularly in remote and border areas. The insurgency has unleashed widespread violence, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands, the displacement of millions, and a severe humanitarian crisis marked by food insecurity, destroyed infrastructure, and limited access to basic services (International Crisis Group, 2014). The conflict has further eroded the state's authority in the Northeast, creating a vicious cycle of instability and underdevelopment. Addressing the Boko Haram insurgency requires not only military solutions but also addressing the underlying socio-economic and political factors that have made the region a breeding ground for extremism. Without comprehensive efforts to tackle marginalisation, poverty, and weak governance, the Northeast will remain vulnerable to the resurgence of insurgent groups and continued instability.

Weak Governance and Institutional Failure

The emergence of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast is also a result of weak governance and institutional failure. The region's political leaders have been accused of corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement, which have undermined public trust in state institutions (Mustapha, 2006). The lack of effective governance has created a vacuum that non-state actors, including Boko Haram, have exploited to establish their own authority (Onuoha, 2012). Additionally, the region's security forces have been criticised for their inability to effectively combat the insurgency, further eroding the state's authority (International Crisis Group, 2014).

Challenges of Reclaiming Ungoverned Spaces

Limited State Presence and Capacity

One of the primary challenges of reclaiming ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast is the limited presence and capacity of the state. The region's vast and remote terrain, coupled with the state's limited resources, has made it difficult for the government to establish a strong

presence in many areas (Onuoha, 2012). This has allowed non-state actors, including Boko Haram, to operate with relative impunity, further undermining the state's authority (Thurston, 2018).

Socio-Economic Disparities and Grievances

The socio-economic disparities and grievances in the Northeast have also posed significant challenges to reclaiming ungoverned spaces. The region's high levels of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy have created a fertile ground for recruitment by extremist groups (Pérouse de Montclos, 2014). Addressing these socio-economic disparities is crucial for preventing the resurgence of non-state actors and ensuring sustainable peace and security in the region (Mustapha, 2006).

Weak Institutional Framework

The weak institutional framework in the Northeast has further complicated efforts to reclaim ungoverned spaces. The region's institutions, including the police, judiciary, and local government, have been weakened by corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement, making it difficult to effectively implement policies and maintain order (Onuoha, 2012). Strengthening these institutions is essential for enhancing state capacity and reclaiming ungoverned spaces (Fukuyama, 2004).

A Framework for Institutional Reform

Strengthening Governance and Accountability

Strengthening governance and accountability is a key component of institutional reform in Nigeria's Northeast. This involves addressing corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement, which have undermined public trust in state institutions (Mustapha, 2006). One way to achieve this is through the establishment of independent anti-corruption agencies and the implementation of transparent and accountable governance practices (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Additionally, promoting citizen participation in governance can help to build trust and legitimacy in state institutions (Fukuyama, 2004).

Improving Service Delivery

Improving service delivery is another crucial aspect of institutional reform in the Northeast. The region's lack of basic services, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure, has contributed to the emergence of ungoverned spaces (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Addressing these service delivery gaps is essential for winning the hearts and minds of the local population and preventing the resurgence of non-state actors (Rotberg, 2004). This can be achieved through increased investment in public services and the implementation of community-based development programmes (Fukuyama, 2004).

Fostering Community Engagement

Fostering community engagement is also critical for reclaiming ungoverned spaces in the Northeast. The local population's alienation and resentment towards the state have been exploited by extremist groups, making it essential to build trust and cooperation between the state and local communities (Onuoha, 2012). This can be achieved through the establishment of community policing initiatives, the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation, and the involvement of local leaders in decision-making processes (Thurston, 2018).

Enhancing Security Sector Reform

Enhancing security sector reform is another important component of institutional reform in the Northeast. The region's security forces have been criticised for their inability to effectively

combat the insurgency, further eroding the state's authority (International Crisis Group, 2014). Strengthening the capacity of the security forces through training, equipment, and intelligence-sharing is essential for reclaiming ungoverned spaces and maintaining order (Rabasa *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, promoting accountability and transparency within the security sector can help to build public trust and legitimacy (Fukuyama, 2004).

Policy Recommendations

Strengthening Governance and Accountability

1. *Establish Independent Anti-Corruption Agencies:* The government should establish independent anti-corruption agencies to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement in the Northeast. These agencies should be given the necessary resources and authority to carry out their mandate effectively.
2. *Promote Transparent and Accountable Governance Practices:* The government should promote transparent and accountable governance practices, including the publication of budgets, expenditures, and procurement processes. This will help to build public trust and legitimacy in state institutions.
3. *Encourage Citizen Participation in Governance:* The government should encourage citizen participation in governance through the establishment of community development committees and the promotion of participatory budgeting processes. This will help to ensure that the needs and priorities of the local population are considered in decision-making processes.

Improving Service Delivery

1. *Increase Investment in Public Services:* The government should increase investment in public services, including healthcare, education, and infrastructure, in the Northeast. This will help to address the region's service delivery gaps and improve the quality of life for the local population.
2. *Implement Community-Based Development Programmes:* The government should implement community-based development programmes that are designed and implemented in collaboration with local communities. This will help to ensure that development initiatives are tailored to the specific needs and priorities of the local population.
3. *Promote Public-Private Partnerships:* The government should promote public-private partnerships to leverage private sector resources and expertise in the delivery of public services. This will help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in the Northeast.

Fostering Community Engagement

1. *Establish Community Policing Initiatives:* The government should establish community policing initiatives that involve local communities in the maintenance of security and order. This will help to build trust and cooperation between the state and local communities.
2. *Promote Dialogue and Reconciliation:* The government should promote dialogue and reconciliation initiatives that bring together different stakeholders, including local leaders, community members, and security forces, to address grievances and build social cohesion.
3. *Involve Local Leaders in Decision-Making Processes:* The government should involve local leaders in decision-making processes, particularly in the design and implementation of development and security initiatives. This will help to ensure

that these initiatives are culturally appropriate and responsive to the needs of the local population.

Enhancing Security Sector Reform

1. *Strengthen the Capacity of the Security Forces:* The government should strengthen the capacity of the security forces through training, equipment, and intelligence-sharing. This will help to improve their ability to effectively combat the insurgency and maintain order in the Northeast.
2. *Promote Accountability and Transparency within the Security Sector:* The government should promote accountability and transparency within the security sector by establishing mechanisms for the oversight and monitoring of security forces. This will help to build public trust and legitimacy in the security sector.
3. *Enhance Coordination and Cooperation among Security Agencies:* The government should enhance coordination and cooperation among different security agencies, including the military, police, and intelligence services, to improve the effectiveness of security operations in the Northeast.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research design to explore challenges and opportunities in reclaiming ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast. It focuses on lived experiences, perceptions, and institutional dynamics shaping governance and security. Primary and secondary data sources, including interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis, provide a nuanced and contextual analysis.

Research Design

The research follows three phases:

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework Development

A review of literature on ungoverned spaces, state capacity, institutional reform, and conflict studies establishes the study's theoretical foundation. Frameworks from political science, sociology, and development studies guide research questions and analysis.

Data Collection

The study gathers primary data through semi-structured interviews and FGDs and sources secondary data from government reports, academic publications, and international organisation reports. Multiple data sources enhance credibility and depth.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis identifies patterns in qualitative data, and case studies provide in-depth insights into governance and security challenges in ungoverned spaces.

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data Collection

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with government officials, security personnel, community leaders, and NGO representatives capture diverse perspectives on governance, security, and institutional reform.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): FGDs in selected local government areas (LGAs) explore community experiences with state presence, service delivery, and security.

Secondary Data Collection

Document Analysis: Reports from agencies like the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Ministry of Interior contextualise socio-economic conditions, security incidents, and

government interventions. Peer-reviewed academic publications and reports from organisations like the UN, International Crisis Group (ICG), and World Bank provide empirical and theoretical insights.

Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic Analysis

NVivo software facilitates thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes in interviews and FGDs.

Case Study Analysis

Case studies of selected LGAs provide localised insights into governance dynamics, highlighting challenges and interventions.

Ethical Considerations

The study follows ethical research principles, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and participant protection. Participants receive detailed study information before consenting. Data confidentiality is maintained through anonymisation and secure storage.

Limitations of the Study

Security Constraints

The volatile security situation may restrict access to certain areas and participants, affecting data comprehensiveness.

Data Availability

Limited access to reliable, up-to-date governance and security information may constrain analysis.

Potential Bias

Self-reported data from interviews and FGDs may introduce bias. Data triangulation mitigates this by comparing multiple sources.

This qualitative study provides an in-depth understanding of governance and security challenges in Nigeria's Northeast. Its rigorous methodology generates insights relevant to policymakers, development practitioners, and local communities engaged in governance reform and conflict resolution.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, and institutional factors that have contributed to the emergence and persistence of ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast. The discussion is structured around the key themes identified in the analysis: historical neglect and marginalisation, weak governance and institutional failure, socio-economic disparities, and the challenges of reclaiming ungoverned spaces. The discussion also highlights the implications of these findings for policy and practice.

Historical Neglect and Marginalisation

The historical neglect and marginalisation of Nigeria's Northeast have created a fertile ground for the emergence of ungoverned spaces, exacerbating the region's vulnerability to conflict and insurgency. Decades of underdevelopment, characterised by dilapidated infrastructure, limited access to education, healthcare, and other basic services, and pervasive poverty, have entrenched a deep sense of alienation and resentment among the local population (Mustapha,

2006). This systemic marginalisation, rooted in both colonial and post-colonial governance failures, has left the region economically and politically isolated, fostering an environment where grievances thrive. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram have adeptly exploited these historical and socio-economic grievances, leveraging the population's disillusionment with the state to recruit members and establish alternative governance structures that provide rudimentary services and a sense of belonging (Onuoha, 2012). The findings of this study align with broader scholarly perspectives, particularly those of Clunan and Trinkunas (2010), who emphasise that historical neglect and state absence are critical factors in the creation and perpetuation of ungoverned spaces. Addressing these issues requires not only immediate security interventions but also long-term developmental strategies aimed at redressing historical injustices, rebuilding trust in state institutions, and fostering inclusive governance. Without such comprehensive measures, the cycle of neglect and exploitation in the Northeast is likely to persist, undermining efforts to achieve sustainable peace and stability.

Weak Governance and Institutional Failure

Weak governance and institutional failure have significantly exacerbated the challenges of reclaiming ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast, a region plagued by prolonged insurgency and underdevelopment. Political leaders in the area have been widely accused of corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement, eroding public trust in state institutions and hindering effective service delivery (Mustapha, 2006). This governance deficit has created a power vacuum, which non-state actors, particularly Boko Haram, have exploited to establish parallel systems of authority and control, further destabilising the region (Onuoha, 2012). The persistence of these issues underscores the urgent need for comprehensive institutional reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of state weakness, such as lack of accountability, poor resource allocation, and weak rule of law. Strengthening state capacity, as argued by Fukuyama (2004), is critical to restoring legitimacy, fostering development, and countering the influence of insurgent groups. Without such reforms, efforts to reclaim ungoverned spaces and achieve lasting peace in the Northeast will remain elusive.

Socio-Economic Disparities

The socio-economic disparities in the Northeast have also posed significant challenges to reclaiming ungoverned spaces. The region's high levels of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy have created a fertile ground for recruitment by extremist groups (Pérouse de Montclos, 2014). Addressing these socio-economic disparities is crucial for preventing the resurgence of non-state actors and ensuring sustainable peace and security in the region (Mustapha, 2006). The findings of this study underscore the importance of targeted development interventions that address the specific needs and priorities of the local population (Rotberg, 2004).

Challenges of Reclaiming Ungoverned Spaces

The challenges of reclaiming ungoverned spaces in the Northeast are multifaceted and require a comprehensive and coordinated approach. The limited presence and capacity of the state, coupled with the region's vast and remote terrain, have made it difficult for the government to establish a strong presence in many areas (Onuoha, 2012). This has allowed non-state actors, including Boko Haram, to operate with relative impunity, further undermining the state's authority (Thurston, 2018). The findings of this study highlight the need for enhanced state capacity, including the strengthening of security forces and the improvement of service delivery, to reclaim ungoverned spaces and maintain order (Rabasa et al., 2007).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have several implications for policy and practice. First, there is a need for comprehensive institutional reform to address the root causes of state weakness and enhance state capacity in the Northeast. This includes strengthening governance and accountability, improving service delivery, and fostering community engagement (Fukuyama, 2004). Second, targeted development interventions are needed to address the socio-economic disparities that have contributed to the emergence of ungoverned spaces. This includes increasing investment in public services, implementing community-based development programmes, and promoting public-private partnerships (Rotberg, 2004). Third, there is a need for enhanced security sector reform to strengthen the capacity of the security forces and improve coordination and cooperation among different security agencies (Rabasa *et al.*, 2007).

The discussion highlights the complex and multifaceted challenges of reclaiming ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast. The findings of this study underscore the importance of addressing the historical, socio-economic, and institutional factors that have contributed to the emergence and persistence of ungoverned spaces. The study provides a framework for institutional reform and targeted development interventions that can enhance state capacity, address socio-economic disparities, and foster community engagement. The implications of these findings for policy and practice are significant, and the study calls for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reclaiming ungoverned spaces and ensuring sustainable peace and security in the Northeast.

Conclusion

Reclaiming ungoverned spaces in Nigeria's Northeast is a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive institutional reform and enhanced state capacity. The region's historical neglect, socio-economic disparities, and weak governance have created a fertile ground for the emergence of non-state actors, including Boko Haram. Addressing these underlying causes of state fragility is essential for achieving sustainable peace and security in the region.

The framework for institutional reform proposed in this article focuses on strengthening governance and accountability, improving service delivery, fostering community engagement, and enhancing security sector reform. These measures, if effectively implemented, can help to reclaim ungoverned spaces, prevent the resurgence of non-state actors, and build a more resilient and inclusive state in Nigeria's Northeast.

References

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. Crown Business.
- Clunan, A. L., & Trinkunas, H. A. (2010). *Ungoverned spaces: Alternatives to state authority in an era of softened sovereignty*. Stanford University Press.
- Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-building: Governance and world order in the 21st century*. Cornell University Press.
- International Crisis Group. (2014). *Curbing violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram insurgency*. Africa Report No. 216.
- Mustapha, A. R. (2006). *Ethnic structure, inequality and governance of the public sector in Nigeria*. UN Research Institute for Social Development.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *Nigeria poverty and inequality report*. National Bureau of Statistics.

- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Onuoha, F. C. (2012). *Boko Haram: Nigeria's extremist Islamic sect*. Al Jazeera Centre for Studies.
- Pérouse de Montclos, M. A. (2014). *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria*. African Studies Centre.
- Rabasa, A., Boraz, S., Chalk, P., Cragin, K., Karasik, T. W., Moroney, J. D. P., O'Brien, K. A., & Peters, J. E. (2007). *Ungoverned territories: Understanding and reducing terrorism risks*. RAND Corporation.
- Rotberg, R. I. (2004). *When states fail: Causes and consequences*. Princeton University Press.
- Thurston, A. (2018). *Boko Haram: The history of an African Jihadist movement*. Princeton University Press.