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Reconstructing the Great Caliphate [Kanem-Bornu Empire]: Religious War or Mere Scramble for Resources? The Appropriate Response of Religious Institutions, Civil Societies, and States

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Abstract

The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in the early 2000s with the openly declared intention of rebuilding the historically renowned Muslim Kanem-Bornu kingdom, which covered northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, parts of Niger, Chad, and Libya for centuries, has caused widespread death and suffering. This paper questions the authenticity and feasibility of such a project in the context of the region's current religious landscape and discusses how religious institutions, civil societies, and states should respond.

Keywords: Boko Haram; Kanem–Bornu Empire; Religious violence; just war theory; transitional justice; peacebuilding

1. Introduction

For those living in the Lake Chad basin, the Boko Haram insurgency and its ambition to rebuild the Kanem-Bornu Empire are matters of profound geopolitical and humanitarian concern. Expressed since the early 2000s, this ambition has unleashed a wave of violence and suffering across northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, parts of Niger and Chad, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of millions. This ‘forgotten’ crisis has caused great distress to millions of people, resulting in internal displacement within the affected countries or cross-border displacement towards neighbouring countries. It has also regularly taken the lives of many civilians and military personnel.

The Boko Haram insurgency is presented by its leaders and defenders as a religious upheaval aimed at establishing the correct form of Islam in the territories of the former Kanem-Bornu Empire. This contribution seeks to deconstruct this narrative by exploring the complexities of the crisis and assessing the political, religious, and socio-economic factors driving the insurgency (Thurston 2018, p. 243). It will critically examine the authenticity, nature, and feasibility of Boko Haram's proclaimed agenda, particularly in light of the region's diverse religious landscape. Furthermore, it will examine the multifaceted responses required from religious institutions, civil society, and states in order to address the insurgency and its underlying causes.

2. Preliminary Considerations

2.1. The Name: Boko Haram

The name Boko Haram is usually translated as ‘Western education is forbidden’ (Owono 2017, p. 42). ‘Haram’ is an Arabic word meaning ‘forbidden’, while ‘boko’ is



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a Hausa word meaning ‘fake’ and is used to refer to Western, secular education¹. However, in a statement in 2009, the group denounced this translation as the work of the ‘infidel media’, claiming that the true translation is ‘Western civilisation is forbidden’. The group claims that it is not opposed to Western formal education per se, but that its members believe in the supremacy of Islamic culture. Other English translations include ‘Western influence is a sin’ and ‘Westernisation is sacrilege’². Besides this common appellation, the group is officially known as Jamā’at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da’wah wa’l-Jihād, which translates as ‘Group of the People of Sunnah for Dawah and Jihad’³.

Its main goal is therefore to ‘purify’, meaning to spread Sunni Islam and destroy Shia Islam, in the Lake Chad basin. This intention explains the movement’s early popularity in the region, particularly among young people. In this way, “people were scandalized when Yusuf was killed in 2009. Some youth had ‘ideological sympathy’ for Boko Haram, particularly during the early phase of its terrorist violence in 2010–2011. At that time, the group was targeting security forces, bars, and churches, rather than killing Muslim civilians en masse. Muslim civilians did not yet perceive that they themselves might one day become the sect’s targets” (Thurston 2018, p. 247).

2.2. The Kanem-Bornu Empire

The Kanem-Bornu Empire was founded in the 9th century, and its first capital, Njimi, was located northeast of Lake Chad. The empire reached its zenith in the 12th and 13th centuries, but its power declined towards the end of the 14th century, significantly reducing its size. Ultimately, only Bornu remained. The empire flourished once more under the reign of Mai Idris Alawma (Abd Allāh), who ruled from 1571 to 1603. At its peak, the empire covered an area of around one million square kilometres. Its borders fluctuated over time, but generally encompassed parts of Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, southern Libya, and Sudan (Ismail and al-Anbaki 2021).

The Kanem-Bornu empire was originally animist, but became Islamic following the conversion of Mai Umme towards the end of the 11th century. It then grew to become a stronghold of Islam in the Sahara region. Thanks to its location on important trans-Saharan trade routes, the empire prospered by trading products such as salt, ivory, ostrich feathers, and slaves, and by facilitating the movement of goods between North Africa and southern territories.

However, the empire began to decline in the 19th century due to wars, invasions, and internal revolts. The arrival of European colonisers at the end of the century brought the empire’s struggle for survival to an end, and it was finally partitioned among the British, French, and Germans in 1902.

3. Deconstructing the Narrative

Boko Haram’s assertion of its intention to re-establish the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which was a Muslim kingdom for the last eight centuries of its existence, immediately raises some critical questions:

- Firstly, is it a religious war? In other words, is it a genuine pursuit of religious or historical restoration, or does it mask a more pragmatic scramble for resources and power in a region plagued by socioeconomic issues?
- Is it a political insurrection against a backdrop of social unrest? How does it express social revolt (Adesoji 2010, pp. 95–108; Onuoha 2010, pp. 54–67; Adesoji 2011, pp. 99–119)?
- If it is a struggle based on religious motives, does it meet the criteria for a just war?
- What were the real reasons for the downfall of the Kanem-Bornu Empire?

3.1. The Just War Theory

Before examining the nature of the Boko Haram conflict, it is helpful to gain an understanding of the theory of just war. This theory is often understood in terms of *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello*. The former outlines the ethical criteria for determining when it is morally permissible to go to war, while the latter focuses on how the war should be conducted. The latter deals with moral conduct during war. It emphasises the need for ethical restraint and the protection of civilians.

Concerning the *ius ad bellum*, Augustine's principles state that wars can only be initiated justly if they are based on: (1) a just cause. These could include defending the state from external invasion or threats to its safety or honour, avenging injuries, or punishing a nation for failing to address wrongs committed by its citizens. (2) Just means; (3) a just intention; and (4) a just authority. In any case, the just cause must be more just than that of one's enemies. A rightly intended must have the restoration of peace as its primary objective. It takes no delight in the wickedness of potential adversaries; views waging war as a stern necessity; tolerates no action calculated to provoke a war; and does not seek to conquer others merely for conquest's sake or territorial expansion. A declaration of war must be made by a competent authority in a public manner, and only as a last resort, except in the most unusual of circumstances. (cf. (Augustin n.d.), *De Civitate Dei*, XIX–XX)⁴.

Concerning the *ius in bello*, Augustine holds that once a war has begun, it must be fought in a manner that: (1) represents a proportional response to the wrong to be avenged, with violence constrained within the limits of military necessity; (2) it should discriminate between legitimate targets (i.e., combatants) and non-combatants, such as women, children, the elderly, and the clergy; and (3) it should act in good faith towards the enemy by strictly observing treaties and not treacherously conducting the war (cf. (Aquinas n.d.), *Summa Theologiae*, II–II, q. 40, a. 1)⁵.

In essence, just war theory offers a framework for evaluating the morality of war. The theory aims to limit the use of war, ensuring that if it is used, it is to achieve a just and lasting peace. Justification can be either theoretical or historical. The theoretical aspect deals with the ethical justification of war or violence, and the forms that warfare may or may not take Cf. (Moseley n.d.), <https://iep.utm.edu/justwar/> (accessed on 18 December 2025).

Could any of the above-mentioned categories in any way find application in the Boko Haram insurgency? That is the question.

3.2. How Can We Understand Boko Haram's Armed Conquest?

The Kanem-Bornu Empire played a key role in trade and was a major stronghold of Islam in the Sahara region. Its legacy can still be seen in the cultural and religious landscape of the Lake Chad Basin today. However, accepting Boko Haram's narrative at face value overlooks several critical factors.

- The contemporary religious landscape

Today, the regions that were once part of the Kanem-Bornu Empire are characterised by a complex interplay of religious and ethnic identities. Although Islam has been present for a long time, these areas are also home to sizeable Christian and traditional African religious communities (Nke Ongono 2022, p. 181)⁶. The idea of imposing a single religious caliphate on today's diverse society is not only outdated but also divisive and likely to lead to perpetual conflict. In effect, "in terms of the structure of the religious field, Niger is more than 90 percent Muslim, Cameroon is over 20 percent Muslim (although northern Cameroon has a Muslim plurality of around 40 percent of the population), and Chad is over 50 percent Muslim. Many Muslims in the Lake Chad basin are Sufis... The rise of Salafism has contributed to religious fragmentation [among Muslims]" (Thurston 2018, p. 267). But then, "it is misleading to see the region's religious field in theological terms, as an uninter-

rupted process of ‘Salafization’ that will inevitably displace Sufism. Sufism remains a key form of Muslim affiliation in the region, and Sufism is expanding in some communities. But dynamic, activist, and youth-based Salafi movements are reshaping religious life in Africa, including in the Lake Chad basin” (ibid., p. 268).

- The *modus operandi* of Boko Haram

The indiscriminate targeting of civilians of all faiths (including Muslims who do not subscribe to their extremist ideology), kidnappings, and destruction of religious and secular infrastructure cast serious doubt on the idea that their motivation is purely religious. Such tactics are more indicative of groups seeking control and resources and intent on generating fear than of those genuinely seeking to restore a historical religious entity based on principles of justice and governance. In effect, “after the collapse of its ‘state’ in early 2015, Boko Haram continued down the path of making ordinary Muslims a central target. It also sought to discredit Muslim heads of state in the region. The sect’s doctrine, in other words, became even more sweeping in its application” (Thurston 2018, p. 244).

- Socio-economic desperation and governance deficits

The rise of Boko Haram is inextricably linked to the pervasive poverty, lack of economic opportunities, environmental degradation, notably the shrinking of Lake Chad, and governance deficits that plague the region. These underlying conditions create fertile ground for extremist narratives to take root, offering a simplistic, albeit violent, response to complex socio-economic issues. Control of trade routes, access to scarce resources, and exploitation of illicit economies often become the primary, although undeclared, objectives of such groups.

Therefore, while religious rhetoric is an important part of Boko Haram’s identity and recruitment strategy, it is also crucial to analyse the conflict through a lens that recognises the powerful undercurrents of competition for resources, political opportunism, and exploitation of existing vulnerabilities. The reconstruction of the Caliphate may be more of a potent ideological tool than a historically or religiously authentic end goal, at least when one critically considers the *modus operandi* of Boko Haram. In this way, it sounds true that such a “conflict is often the result of scarcity of environmental resources exacerbated by other factors like inequality, migration, and the functioning of social institutions that act collectively to produce violence” (Monguno and Umara 2020, p. 77). Such factors can be thoroughly or largely verified in the context of the Boko Haram uprising. This analysis of the Boko-Haram upheaval, which goes beyond mere historical and religious narratives, in its attempt to provide efficient solutions, *de facto* calls for a multifaceted response to the crisis with the participation of all social actors.

4. The Imperative of a Multifaceted Response

A coordinated and nuanced response that goes beyond purely military solutions, pious preaching, and sterile political promises is required to address a challenge as complex as the Boko Haram insurgency and its stated aims. Religious institutions, civil society organisations, and states all have distinct yet complementary roles to play. The key question is how to promote real and lasting peace in the face of the security threat posed by Boko Haram. Without a proper, thoughtful answer to this question, further uprisings by similar movements, favoured by the socio-political context, seem likely. Indeed, hardline religious rhetoric often intersects with political and socioeconomic grievances (Thurston 2018, p. 270). In response to Boko Haram, transitional justice could, or rather should, be invoked. It is “a conception of justice associated with periods of political change, characterized by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes... [It includes] political and socio-cultural change taking place in a society following a dramatic

upheaval. Generally, transitional justice no longer refers only to periods of political change; rather, it is now understood to include changes from periods of war to peace as well as additional forms of post-conflict transitions... Effective transitional justice measures should ideally take into account the rights of the victims, the rights of the perpetrators, and the larger society" (Ojo-Adewuyi 2024, p. 186). In effect, in the face of the Boko Haram uprising, relying solely on prosecution may prove unfruitful in view of the nature of the crisis and the local support it often enjoys. New approaches to achieving long-lasting peace should be defined.

4.1. *The Role of the States*

The role of the states in the Lake Chad region can be summarised in five points, each of which serves a specific purpose.

- Security and rule of law

The primary responsibility of the affected states is undoubtedly to protect their citizens and restore security and the rule of law to afflicted regions. This requires effective, accountable security operations conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law to counter extremist violence.

- Addressing root causes

In addition to security measures, states must implement long-term strategies to address the socio-economic and political grievances that fuel extremism. In effect, in the Boko Haram crisis, it can be observed that though the range of deadly attacks covers a large area, the deadliest attacks have been around the Lake Chad basin, where conflict over water and fishing resources is acute. This fact brings out the complex ethno-religious and economic dimensions of the insurgency (Monguno and Umara 2020, p. 89). Addressing the root causes will require investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, as well as the promotion of good governance, the tackling of corruption, the equitable distribution of resources, and the creation of viable economic opportunities, particularly for young people. In effect, growing popular anger could inadvertently provide an opportunity for more radical voices to intensify anti-government rhetoric while seeking to grasp the available resources (Thurston 2018, p. 271).

- Regional cooperation

Given the transnational nature of the crisis, enhanced regional cooperation in terms of intelligence sharing, border security, and joint counter-terrorism efforts is vital. Joint actions among the states concerned already exist with the existence of a multinational joint force, but its effectiveness depends on ongoing support and enhancement. In fact, a coordinated force was set up shortly after the escalation of violence by the Boko Haram group. However, due to poor management or a mere lack of good internal communication, it is not unheard of for a country to temporarily withdraw its military forces due to misunderstandings. It can be argued that Boko Haram's resistance to national armies is not linked to its own resources and tactics, but rather to the weakness and lack of effective coordination of the national armies of the states with which it is in conflict.

- De-radicalisation and reintegration

States must develop and implement comprehensive de-radicalisation, disarmament, and reintegration programmes (DDR) for former combatants and individuals who have been radicalised by the Boko Haram ideology. These programmes must be trauma-sensitive and aim to facilitate genuine social and economic reintegration. It should be noted that the common factor in Boko Haram recruitment is not ethnicity, but disaffection among those who struggle for basic services, jobs, and resources for a decent livelihood.

This includes migrants living in squalid conditions with strong anti-Western traditional worldviews and disaffected youth in the Gwoza Hills and around Lake Chad who find solace in Mohammed Yusuf's extremist ideology, which promotes religious purity over corruption and calls for violence against Westernised states that fail to meet the needs of their people (Monguno and Umara 2020, p. 89).

- Social justice

A renewed commitment to social justice is required. Political violence against a backdrop of ethnic, economic, and religious tensions has affected not only Nigeria but also neighbouring countries affected by the crisis's expansion. This has brought situations of social injustice to the forefront, which may have contributed to the outbreak of the Boko Haram crisis. Boko Haram is not a spontaneous phenomenon in a country with the largest Muslim population on the African continent. By rejecting the federal system as a remnant of colonial administration, Boko Haram is effectively calling for the establishment of an Islamic state modelled on the Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903), which covered northern Nigeria, as well as parts of Niger, Cameroon, and Chad (Pitroipa 2015). But this is fuelled by the economic and political situation of all the countries of the Lake Chad basin.

From 1960 to the present day, countries in the region have experienced political violence and economic crises. These chronic political instabilities, coupled with climate crises, have undermined all initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of local populations. The situation was exacerbated by opaque resource management and the implementation of structural adjustment plans in most countries during the 1980s and 1990s. Ultimately, this has resulted in mass unemployment and discredited public action. It was against this backdrop that Mohamed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram, emerged in Yobe State in northern Nigeria in the early 2000s⁷. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the outbreak of the Boko Haram crisis was an uprising against autocracy. Indeed, «lack of perspective and despair seem to be the continued fate of the population. Poor governance and fragile or failing states can open the door to low-intensity warfare (Justenhoven 2023, p. 78). To put an end to the Boko Haram crisis, states must engage in inclusive dialogue, rehabilitate victims, and reconstruct infrastructure to revitalise entire regions that risk slipping permanently out of their control (Saha Tchinda n.d.).

4.2. The Role of Religious Institutions

Thanks to the great importance that the inhabitants of the Lake Chad region attribute to them, and in view of the cultural respect that Africans in general have for religion and those who represent it, religious institutions stand a good chance of contributing effectively to resolving or at least diminishing the impact of the Boko Haram crisis.

For example, although the Catholic Church does not represent the majority in the Lake Chad region, its leadership could contribute to resolving the conflict effectively. In effect, the Catholic Church's leadership role is understood in two ways: *ad intra*, within the Church itself, and *ad extra*, in its leading role in relation to states, institutions, believers, and non-believers. The Church's leadership role in addressing the present conflict, *ad extra*, could be instrumental in bringing it to an end. This could be achieved in several ways.

- Promoting peace and reconciliation

As a significant moral voice and grassroots organisation, the Church plays a vital role in promoting peace, dialogue, and reconciliation. This involves engaging in interreligious dialogue with Muslim leaders and other religious groups to counter extremist narratives and foster understanding and respect. Given the region's diverse religious landscape, encouraging and consolidating peaceful coexistence is essential. While the Catholic Church does not represent an absolute majority of the population, Catholics and believers from

other communities and religions, as well as non-believers, still lend considerable weight to the voices of Catholic Church officials, to whom cultural respect is owed. In this context, a lack of concrete action from the Episcopal Conferences would not be tolerated. At best, it would be seen as cowardice; at worst, it would be seen as complicity. The Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, established by Pope Paul VI (cf. [Paulus VI 1967](#), pp. 25–28), could play an important role here. Diocesan, inter-diocesan, regional, and national Commissions for Justice and Peace can play a significant part in teaching and transmitting the interconnectedness of peace and justice ([Justenhoven 2023](#), p. 78).

- Advocacy and prophetic witness

In keeping with its prophetic mission, the Church must continually advocate justice, good governance, and the rights of marginalised groups. It must speak out against violence and human rights abuses, holding governments accountable for their responsibilities to all citizens. As previously mentioned, the Boko Haram crisis has flourished in the Lake Chad region due to poor institutional governance, marginalising much of the population, particularly in rural areas. In this context, the role of churches in being the voice of the voiceless and fearlessly denouncing all forms of social injustice, as the scriptural prophets did, is more important than ever.

- Education for peace

Catholic educational institutions can play a crucial role in fostering a culture of peace, tolerance, and critical thinking. This will protect young people from extremist ideologies. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2302–2330: ‘Safeguarding Peace’) provides an excellent overview of the topic.

- Providing humanitarian assistance

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of providing humanitarian aid. In this crisis, it must continue and expand these efforts to support victims of violence and those displaced by conflict, including refugees, regardless of their religious beliefs. This includes providing shelter, food, medical care, and counselling for trauma.

The possible actions of the Catholic Church proposed here could be true of any other community of believers.

5. The Role of Civil Society

- Early warning, conflict prevention, and human rights monitoring

Local civil society organisations are often best placed to identify the early warning signs of radicalisation and conflict. They can play a crucial role in preventing and mediating conflict within communities, as well as participating in peacebuilding initiatives.

They could also play a vital role in monitoring and reporting human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict. They promote accountability and advocate for victims.

- Community resilience and amplification of local voices

Civil society can empower local communities to resist extremism and build resilience by strengthening social cohesion, promoting alternative livelihoods, and supporting community-based trauma healing initiatives. They could equally help to amplify the voices of affected communities on national and international platforms. This ensures that their needs and perspectives inform policy responses.

- Reconciliation between post-conflict societies

Education on the concept of collective identity is needed, as is an understanding of the responsibilities associated with atrocities committed. These responsibilities must be recog-

nised and acknowledged within the community's collective identity. To preserve the community and avoid such crises, the injustices and crimes of the past must never be forgotten. This is important because members of the Boko Haram group are locals; they do not come from other countries. They could be identified, but community members sometimes find it difficult to report them. This enables them to commit further atrocities. In effect, "the crisis has been multifaceted and has directly affected hundreds of thousands of civilians and indirectly affected millions more. Additionally, a large percentage of the ripple effect of the crisis may not be effectively resolved by prosecutions... assessing non-prosecutorial measures to achieve peace and potential reconciliation, therefore, seems pertinent. Alongside the prosecution of perpetrators of these heinous crimes, at the eventual end of the crisis, a full range of mechanisms may prove necessary, populations who have been displaced would need support to return... and the entire society would require healing from the crisis" (Ojo-Adewuyi 2024, p. 184). One error may be paying more attention to former perpetrators, who are treated as needing rehabilitation, while ignoring the victims.

6. Conclusions

Boko Haram's ambition to rebuild the Great Caliphate poses a dangerous and destabilising threat to a region that is already facing significant challenges. While the historical and religious dimensions of this narrative cannot be entirely dismissed, a deeper analysis suggests that it merely serves as a veneer for a complex conflict driven by competition for resources, governance failures, and socio-economic desperation. The historical fact that a particular ethnic or religious group once occupied land that was lost for various reasons in the course of history cannot be invoked centuries later to justify the use of violence or terror by self-proclaimed heirs, whether biological, ideological, or religious, to reconquer it.

Concerted efforts from states, religious institutions, and civil societies are indispensable. Therefore, a sustainable resolution to the Boko Haram crisis requires more than just a military victory. It requires a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of the crisis, promotes justice and reconciliation, and ensures the dignity and security of all individuals and communities. The path ahead is arduous, but with collective determination and a multifaceted strategy, a just and lasting peace can be achieved.

Beyond "just war theories", the ultimate truth about war and violence is that they always bring about suffering and desperation for all the parties engaged in the conflict. In effect, war cannot be justified as the rightful means to a greater good; it can never be the ultimate solution. While this may be difficult to achieve in practice, it should be the ultimate goal. In effect, "today, Christian conscience must address the issue of war fundamentally differently than that of the past. War cannot be waged according to the criteria required for it to be considered just. These criteria are unattainable because modern warfare is, by its very nature, brutal. It always causes damage that far exceeds any potential benefits in terms of justice and law, and tends to inflict far more serious damage on the enemy than the good that would make the war just (Editorial 1991).

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Notes

- ¹ To understand the rise of the Boko Haram crisis, it is important to consider that the educational system introduced during colonisation has relegated to the backwaters the traditional *tsangaya* system of education in Borno [The Nigerian State of Borno represents the stronghold of Boko Haram]. The secular education system was thought to undermine traditional values as it is perceived to glorify Western values, including Christianity. Even though schools were opened in Maiduguri as early as 1917, attendance was minimal due to stiff opposition by the *ulama*. Even though the longstanding resistance to Western education was not through violence as is the case today, it influences a large population whose voice is strong in the current insurgency», Abubakar K. Monguno—Ibrahim Umara, “Why in Borno? The history, geography & Sociology of Islamic radicalisation”, in *Overcoming Boko Haram: Faith, Society & Islamic Radicalisation in Northern Nigeria*, eds. Abdul Raufu Mustapha—Kate Meagher (Monguno and Umara 2020, pp. 75–76).
- ² Until the death of its founder, Mohammed Yusuf, the group was reportedly also known as the *Yusufiyya*. Northern Nigerians commonly dismiss Western education as ‘ilimin boko’ (fake education) and secular schools as ‘makaranta boko’ (fake schools). Cf. https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram#:~:text=Boko%20Haram%20est%20un%20groupe,le%20plus%20f%C3%A9roce%20du%20monde%20C2%BB (accessed on 18 December 2025).
- ³ The Sunnah is the body of traditions and practices of the Islamic prophet Muhammad that Muslims are encouraged to emulate. All the Muslims of Muhammad’s time supposedly saw, followed and passed on the Sunnah to the next generations. Da‘wah, meaning ‘invitation’, is the act of inviting people to Islam. Jihad is any effort to align personal and social life with God’s guidance, including an internal struggle against personal evil, efforts to establish a righteous Muslim community (ummah), and the defence of Islam. Although the term literally means ‘struggle’, it is most frequently associated with warfare. Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram (accessed on 18 December 2025).
- ⁴ Cf. Augustin, Lettre 138.2; Aquinas, Summa Theologiae II—II 40.1. Summa Theologiae II—II, q. 108: Even if the cause is just, the means of achieving the goal must be proportionate, as it cannot be just for both sides to wage war (although it can be unjust for both sides).
- ⁵ See note 4 above.
- ⁶ It is clear that the Kanem-Bornu Empire was a Muslim stronghold. For example, in the late 1880s, the German colonial Reich prohibited missionaries from settling in regions occupied by other religions in order to avoid religious wars in territories under its control, as was the case in Cameroon. Therefore, as the northern part of Cameroon was already Muslim, Catholic and Protestant missionaries were not permitted to settle there. Catholic missionaries were allocated the eastern and central regions, while Protestant missionaries were permitted to settle in the southern and coastal regions. This religious landscape remained unchanged until the early 1960s. However, over the past 50 years, this landscape has changed significantly, although certain religions still predominate in their traditional areas. Cf. Jean Olivier Nke Ongono, *Le droit oublié de la subsistance des prêtres* (Nke Ongono 2022, p. 181).
- ⁷ In fact, as early as 1963, Chad descended into political turmoil that culminated in the civil war of 1979 and armed conflict with Libya in the mid-1980s. However, the country has enjoyed relative peace since 1990. In Nigeria, Biafra’s attempt to gain independence led to a deadly civil war between 1967 and 1970. The country has experienced a resurgence of coups d’état. Meanwhile, Niger faced Tuareg and Toubou revolts in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Niger faced Tuareg and Toubou revolts in the 1990s, as well as a violent takeover. In the 2000s, CAR and Libya, once prosperous and relatively stable, were torn apart by persistent civil war. The far north of Cameroon has been plagued by ‘road blockers’ since the 1980s and 1990s, is currently experiencing a secessionist conflict in its north-western and south-western regions. Cf. Abdoulaye Abakar Kassambara—Zakaria Beine, “Les échanges commerciaux dans le bassin du Lac Tchad entre décadence et défi sécuritaire de Boko Haram: le cas de Kousséri (Cameroun) et N’djamena (Tchad)”, *Akofena* Spécial, 1, n°8 (Kassambara and Beine 2022, pp. 29–30).

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