

Counter-Insurgence Operations in the North East Nigeria: The Role of the Multinational Joint Task Force

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Abstract

The ability of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to achieve its mandate of eliminating the Boko Haram has remained sceptical. This is largely due to the various inhuman tactics and lack of rules of engagement on the part of the Boko Haram. Rather than defeated, Boko Haram has evolved into a new type of threat and is still managing to carry out attacks almost on daily basis. In view of the above therefore, the paper seek to interrogate the role of MNJTF operations in countering the activities of Boko Haram in the North East Nigeria. The paper adopts survey research design with data generated from primary source through the use of questionnaire, while secondary sources like books, library materials, journals were also utilized. The paper used Regional Security Complex Theory as its frame work of analysis. The paper observed that territorial control in the Northeast and threatening the security of nations of the Lake Chad Basin was a driving force that led to the creation of Multi-



National Joint Force to oversee the defeat of Boko Haram. MNJTF has achieved some successes in their various operations. However, they are inadequate and have not substantially assessed the implication of these achievements on the on-going war, hence, the impacts of the MNJTF counter insurgency offensives against the Boko Haram have not been properly situated and interrogated by existing literature. The paper therefore recommends among others that, there is need to strengthen state institution on how to make the policies work effectively. The paper also suggests that countries engaged in the fight against Boko Haram should stay mobilized given the persistence of the threat and the group's capacity to adapt, as well as its resilience. In addition, there is need for more international support from African Union, France, United States of America and United Nations among others to strengthen the capability of the MNJTF to curtail the expansion of the Boko Haram around the Lake Chad basin by deploying installation of high surveillance technologies in the Nation's borders.

Keywords: Insurgency, Counter Insurgency, Boko Haram Sect, and Terrorism
Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

The increasing wave of violent conflicts across Nigeria under the current democratic regime is no doubt partly a direct consequence of the activities of ethno communal groups seeking self-determination in their "homelands, and of their surrogate ethnic militias that have assumed prominence since the last quarter of 2000. Their grievances have typically found expression in bitter political complaints, sectarian crises stoked by political elites and incendiary media rhetoric, and violent insurgencies. The latest among these violent and decimating sectarian grievances is the Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani herdsmen, and kidnapping. Boko Haram, a violent but diffuse Islamist sect, has grown increasingly active and deadly in its attacks against state and civilian targets in recent years. It feeds on a narrative of historically deep-rooted resentment against, and vengeance for state abuses in order to recruit members and sympathizers (Dadur, 2016). With increasing regularity since 2009, the sect has attacked Nigeria's police and military, rival clerics, politicians, schools, religious buildings, public institutions, and civilians. The brutal insurgent activities of Boko Haram have included the bombing of the national police headquarters in June 2011; a suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja in August 2011; the destruction of the Air Force Base in Maiduguri in December 2013; the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok and innumerable other repeated attacks that have killed dozens of students, burnt and devastated villages, and destroyed infrastructure. It is obvious that the activities of Boko Haram have recently resolved in adduction of school children and women in north eastern part of Nigeria. As opined by Jacob and Akpan (2015) that the Boko Haram uprising began

on July, 2009 in Bauchi north-east Nigeria and spread to Kano, Yobe and Born states.

The immediate cause of the brutal uprising was the sacking of the sect's spiritual home (mosque) in Dutsen Tanshi, Bauchi state on 26th July, 2009 by a joint security team (combined team of Army and Police) during which nine of its members were arrested and several weapons confiscated. Onuoha (2012) opined that the existence of this sect became a subject of serious local and international concern in the aftermath of the July 2009 anti-government revolt led by Mohammed Yusuf. The revolt which lasted from 26th to 30th July 2009, across five northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Yobe, ended when Mohammed Yusuf was finally captured in his residence and later executed. Audu and Manag (2017) further observes that approximately 800 people died in that violence and the surviving top members of the sect, including Abukakar Shekau, who later assumed leadership fled to Niger and Chad for regrouping and mobilization. However, in mid-2010, the Boko-Haram re-surfaced with Abukakar Shekau as its leader. The group began to target churches, Mosque, government facilities, security posts and even motor parks and markets. Since then, Boko Haram has claimed of thousands of innocent lives across Nigeria and has displaced millions of people both internally and externally (Adetla, 2015). In fact, the group was ranked world's deadliest terror gang in 2015 by the Global terrorism index. According to the report, the Boko-Haram sect succeeded in killing 7,644 people between 2014 and 2020, surpassing ISIS 7,073 within the same period (Global terrorism index, 2020, cited in Muhammed, 2020). The activities of this group have also triggered one of the worst humanitarian crises in the 21st century. It has also led to a massive displacement of people; hunger, food insecurity, high level of child mortality rate, and death (United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, 2020). Unfortunately, the approach towards fighting the Boko Haram had always hung on the individual efforts of the affected states (Eji, 2020). But the ineffectiveness of such efforts due to the internationalization and transnationalization of the terrorist networks as well as the potential of such violent spilling over to neighbouring states have led to a collective approach that span national level in countering terrorism and violent extremism in the Lake Chad region. It was against this backdrop that the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was commissioned by the countries of the Lake Chad basin and Benin republic in 2012 to effectively combat the challenges posed by insurgency in the region. Historically, the Task Force was first established as solely a Nigerian force in 1994, during the regime of Gen. Sani Abacha, with the responsibility of curtailing banditry activities along the northern border of Nigeria.

However, In 1998 it was expanded to include units from neighbouring Chad and Niger with the purpose of dealing with common cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region, and its headquarter

was in the town of Baga, Borno State (Audu and Manag, 2017). On January 2015, the MNJTF headquarters in Baga, Nigeria, was heavily attacked by the Boko Haram militant group, killing scores of both police officers and local residents. This attack however, served as a wake-up call for both the Nigerian military and the contributing nations, which led to a political process of reviewing the MNJTF progress, including the expansion of troop numbers and mandate, and relocation of the headquarter to N'Djamena, Chad. It was then agreed that a Nigerian would head the joint task force for the duration of its mission, with a Cameroonian as Deputy Commander and Chadian Chief of Staff. Major General Tukur Yusuf Buratai was then appointed the first Commander of the MNJTF in May 2015, before the newly elected Nigerian president, Muhammed Buhari, appointed him Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff. He then handed over to Major General Iliya Abbah on 31 July, 2015. The MNJTF mandate is to restore peace and tranquillity in areas affected by insurgency in Nigeria and her neighbouring countries, through the elimination of the Boko-Haram threats, prevention of proliferation of small arms and light weapons and logistics, searching for the abducted Chibok girls kidnapped by the Boko-Haram on the 14 April, 2014 and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the displaced populations within the areas of operation. According to Assanvo (2016), "the operation of the MNJTF was divided into sectors: sector 1 command is located in Mora, Cameroon while sector 2 is in Baga-Sola, Chad. Sector 3 is located in Baga, Nigeria; and sector 4, based in Diffa, Niger; with the central command headquarter in N'Djamena, Chad". Structurally, the MNJTF is under the authority of the Lake Chad Basin Commission head of states and governments, whom it reports to, and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) serving as strategic and technical partner of the MNJTF. The AU strategic support cell coordinates and manages all donor assistance to the MNJTF, whereas the mission support team in N'Djamena which consist of personnel from various contributing countries, provides daily support, logistics, information technology as well as communication equipment to the Task Force (Assanvo, 2016). It's against this backdrop therefore, the paper attempt to ascertain whether the deployment of the Multi-national Joint Task Force has helped to mitigate the activities of the Boko Haram in Nigeria. The paper is divided into five sections, section one deals with introduction, section two deals with conceptual clarifications, while section three deals with theoretical analyses and literature review, while section four deals data presentations and sections five deals with discussions of findings, recommendations and conclusions

Conceptual Clarifications

Insurgency

Insurgency is the actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated group that seeks to effect or prevent political change of a governing authority within a region, and the actions focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and Subversion (North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO, 2011). In the same vein, the British Army Field Manual (AFM) defined insurgency as “the actions of a minority group within a state that tend toward forcing political change by a means of a mixture of Subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate people to accept such a change” (cited in Liolio, 2013). For Metz and Millen (2004), insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups, which cannot attain their political objectives through a quick seizure of power but often characterized by protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity as well as the use of complex terrain such as jungles, mountains, urban areas, psychological warfare, and political mobilization - all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favours. As observed by, Beck (2008) insurgency is a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities where the non-ruling group deliberately uses a combination of politics and violence to further its cause. However, when this happened, the state needs to take serious measures to suppress it.

Counter Insurgency

Counter insurgency is the opposite of insurgency frequently refers as an acronym COIN. By definition, COIN is a combination of measures undertaken by legitimate government of a state or country to curb or suppress an insurgency taken up against it. (Liolio, 2013). The United States COIN Guide (2009), defined COIN as a “comprehensive civilian military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.” For Davidson (2016), it is “those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency”. And it requires a comprehensive assessment of the root causes, strategy and technique of the insurgents. Similarly, NATO (2011) conceived it as set of political, economic, social, military, law enforcement, civil and psychological activities with the aim to defeat insurgency and address any core grievances. Both insurgents and counter insurgents employ varied tactics and methods. These include political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure activities (ways), in an attempt to reach a favourable outcome (ends) and within the resources available, including time (means). If this broad array is generally categorized as political and military in nature, political considerations are of much greater importance than military considerations in a struggle for the consent of the population. Anyway, this is contestable. In comparison, Liolio (2013) notes that, while

insurgents for instance try to overthrow the existing political authority in order to establish theirs, the counterinsurgent forces try to reinstate the existing political structures as well as reduce or annihilate the usurping authority of the insurgents.

Terrorism

Terrorism does not enjoy a unified definitive explanation. This is essentially why different definitions have been given by different people, scholars and even organizations based on the way they perceive or experience terrorism. Although the concept of terrorism is often viewed subjectively by both the practitioners and interrogators as it is largely value-laden, the common threat attributed to it is that it is an act that seeks to directly or otherwise instil fear in its targets so as to cow them into some form of subjection, worship or homage. In this light, it could be seen as a tool used to achieve a specific outcome by using force or violence on one segment of society with the primary goal of causing fear in the larger society to make change in that society.

Demsey (2006), cited in Isyaku (2013) argued along the thinking of the political inclination of terrorism when he noted that what constitutes terrorism is simply the failure of the political process. The extent of the failure begins and ends with high level of inequality, corruption and injustice. The multiplier effects of this kind of development could breed anger, fear and suspicion by certain sections of the society. Again, injustice at whatever level may result to confrontation and conspicuously graduate to violence and arms twisting between the state and the armed groups. The position held by Dempsey has proved relevant and valid when assessed in the context of the Boko Haram and/or Niger-Delta terrorism witnessed in Nigeria.

Boko Haram Sect

The term Boko Haram is a derivative of the Hausa word “Boko” meaning western education “Haram” is word with Arabic origin meaning sin but literally, forbidden. Boko Haram which figuratively means “Western or non-Islamic education is a Sin”, is a controversial Nigerian Islamic fundamentalist group that seeks the imposition of Shari laws in 19 Northern States of Nigeria. The group presently has an undefined structure and chain of command (Tsenzughul, 2011). According to Halima (2011); Boko means book, while Haram means bad so Boko Haram implies that learning at school is bad but they are really referring to western schools and not Arabic Schools. It is also an Arabic phrase meaning learning, studying, educating and been educated is bad. BBC News (2011) has it that Boko Haram literally means “western education is sin”. They were desirous of riddling the nation of the sins of westernization by a futile attempt, to install a parallel government based on the Islamic principles. The religious sect, Boko Haram, appears to have led a siege to the northern part of Nigeria, especially the North-East geo

political zone of the region. Aside mindless killings of innocent Nigerians, the sects' members also carry out wanton destruction of property in a bid to make people in the zone to embrace their views on Islamic religious code and western education. The fear of Boko Haram is, to state the fact, the beginning of wisdom in some states of Northern part of Nigeria. The group, which parades religious extremist pushing for the enthronement of Sharia and abandonment of western education in the region, has often sent jitters down the spines of old and young in the North-Eastern states of Borno, Bauchi and Yobe state.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The paper is anchored on Regional Security Complex Theory as propounded by Buzan and Weaver in their work "Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security" (2003). Security complex theory, an offshoot of securitization theory was first sketched out by Buzan in his book "People, States and Fear" (1983). Also, Pillar (2001) have applied versions of it to several regional cases, and Buzan et al. (1998), and Weaver et al. (1993) have used it to study the Post-Cold War transformation in Europe, Asia and Middle-east.

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) addresses the level of security interdependency located between individual units (states), region and the international system as a whole. RSCT was developed to advance the frontiers of knowledge on the interplay of middle level security relations between two extremes: national and global securities. First, the theory views national securities as interconnected, rather than isolated phenomena. They are inter-connected, yet emphasize the nation as the subject and object of security. This is captured in Buzan's pioneering definition of a security complex as 'a group of states whose security concerns link together sufficiently close that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another' (Buzan 1991). Albert, (2017) defines regional security complex as a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved independent of each other. According to Buzan (2003), 'RSCT focuses primarily on states as units and on the political and military sectors as the principal forum for security relations among states in a region'. The essential logic of this theory is rooted in the fact that all the states in the region are enmeshed in a global web of security interdependence. Security interdependence is markedly more intense between the states inside such region than with states outside it. Regional security is about the relative intensity of inter-state security relations that lead to distinctive regional partnership and collaboration on security matters.

The concept covers security is clustered in geographically shaped regions.

The theory has the following assumptions:

- i. The theory assumes that modern security approach to terrorism goes beyond direct military bombardment of the terrorists and their hideouts to include; addressing all the conditions that give rise to terrorism including poverty, poor governance, human rights violations, political exclusion, religious intolerance, among others.
- ii. Security concerns do not travel well over distances and threats are therefore most likely to occur in the region.
- iii. The security of each actor in a region interacts with the security of the other actors. There is often intense security interdependence within a region, but not between regions.
- iv. The theory assumes that Security are both the national, regional and global phenomenon and the best way of approaching security problems is through cooperation and integration of various security architectures within the region.

Relevance of the Theory

The theory is significant in the study of the Multi-National Joint Task Force and the War against Boko Haram insurgency for several reasons. One, it explained the interconnectedness, interactions, and interdependency between the security architecture of the Lake Chad Basin countries. It identified the transnational tendency of insecurity (in this case, insurgency), and validates the need for a harmonized and integrated regional effort in fighting them. Thirdly, the theory unveils security as a complex phenomenon which covers a large portion of both national and regional spectrum, at the same time unfolding the roles of other sectors and stakeholders beyond the traditional kinetic military approach in fighting insurgency. By implication, the theory argues that an effective counter-insurgency operations and strategies can only be enhanced through regional framework. This is followed by the United Nations Security Council's demand for robust transnational and regional counterterrorism measures. Therefore, states in the region have increasingly been impelled to act collectively. Against the backdrop of emerging security realities, states within the Lake Chad Basin decided to form a far-reaching generic transnational counter-terrorism measure with the name 'MNJTF'. The MNJTF reflects a regional military alliance created to coordinate efforts in combating common threats to national security posed by the Islamic fundamentalist group 'Boko Haram.

Factors that Contributed to the Formation of Multinational Joint Task Force

The countries of the Lake Chad Basin have a long history of cooperation, including initiatives aimed at reducing the effects of climate change, combating desertification and drought, tackling food insecurity, and addressing related problems of agricultural underproduction and resource scarcity. These previous efforts helped pave the way for a joint counter-Boko Haram initiative between Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and

Cameroon, which began in 2014 (Adetula, 2015). In order to understand the MNJTF's mission and operations, it is first necessary to provide a brief overview of the region and the various challenges that each country faces. Niger, Chad, and Cameroon all share a border with Borno State, Nigeria, the birthplace of Boko Haram. Each of these countries has a history of weak governance in their remote border regions, and limited governmental reach. Originally, as opined by Onyinyechi Uwakwe, an expert on Nigeria security studies, points out, Boko Haram was a mere local group with limited domestic objectives.

There are several reasons why Boko Haram has successfully spread throughout the Lake Chad Basin. For example, the literacy rate in Cameroon's far north region and in Niger's south-eastern province is well below average, suggesting a lack of government resource in these areas, such as education. Furthermore, more than 70% of the population is living below the poverty line. In fact, Omar Mahmood, expert on security studies across sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizes that several factors in the Lake Chad region make it susceptible to the presence of criminal organizations and insurgent groups, such as a lack of security forces and widespread smuggling and corruption. For example, in the early 2000s, banditry and cross-border smuggling between Chad and Nigeria became so bad that Nigeria had to patrol the northern highways along the shore of Lake Chad with MI-35 helicopters. Additionally, the rampant corruption and the poverty of the region create a permissive environment for civil conflict and provide the conditions for insurgent groups to grow and expand. Overall, therefore, Boko Haram's expansion and influence into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are indicative of the region's weak governance (Adetula, 2015). Alongside weak governance, these countries have a very low level of public trust in the local governments of the Borno State and the regions in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon that border it. Boko Haram has benefited from the powerlessness of local authorities to push its ideological agenda. For instance, Mohamed Yousuf, the founder of Boko Haram, recorded a series of extremist videocassettes, which preached hate and intolerance in addition to raising suspicions toward the local government.

These cassettes were in free circulation in Maiduguri and all over Borno State around 2009, further diminishing local trust in the government. Boko Haram has also taken full advantage of the feeling of marginalization and social exclusion of specific ethnic groups, most notably the Kanuri people, the Fulani pastoralist communities, the Mober communities in Niger, the Yedina people in Chad, and the Boudouma communities that occupy islands within Lake Chad. Boko Haram has played on these ethnic grievances to accelerate its expansion beyond Nigeria and into the other nations of the Chad Lake region. In interviews with traditional rulers in Cameroon, they pointed out that Boko Haram has given the Boudouma the opportunity to control income generated by pastoral and fishing resources of some islands in Lake Chad, to the

detriment of Hausa, the major group in the region, thus taking advantage of pre-existing ethnic divisions (Albert, 2017). This region has also suffered from loose border control, which has allowed for smuggling and trafficking of various illicit goods, most notably small arms, which Boko Haram has taken advantage of to grow and counter the region's security forces. As Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, senior researcher at the Institute de Recherché pour le Development (IRD) in Paris states, "the best-enduring terrorist or insurgent groups are those who criminalize themselves by moving away from their original ideology." The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda and Al Shabab in Somalia, are examples of this approach, as is Boko Haram. Specifically, Boko Haram has forged alliances with the region's minorities that engage in a range of cross-border criminal activity, such as extortion, organized crime, terror, destruction, propaganda (Aliyu, 2017).

Boko Haram has also changed significantly by forming alliances with transnational Islamist groups. Boko Haram split into two prominent groups in 2016, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa (IS-WA). Under the command of Shekau, Boko Haram remains the most violent faction and is responsible for large-scale suicide attack campaigns, and the massive use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which have caused heavy civilian casualties. According to the Fifth Global Terrorism Index report, in 2015 29% of attacks involved suicide bombers and accounted for 27% of total deaths. Additionally, from the same source, in 2016 the military response triggered a 35% rise in violent attacks in the region, accounting for 49% of deaths, particularly at the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos believes that "Abubakar Shekau's group would remain a toxic yet weakened organization that could continue attacks from remote rural areas of Borno State or neighbouring countries especially from the refuge areas of Gwoza hills and Ngoshe" (Assanvo, 2016). On the other hand, IS-WA, under the control of Abu Musa Al Barnawi, has devoted considerable effort and resources to hitting military targets, as opposed to civilians. ISWA's initial attacks were large armed assaults that used scores of fighters, machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades to attack government forces' positions. More recently, however, the latest Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) reports indicate that IS-WA has deployed male suicide bombers, primarily through vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), to target security forces. IS-WA has also used kidnappings and targeted assassinations. Additionally, ACLED reports reveal the majority of IS-WA's attacks occurred in the border areas between Nigeria and Niger, where control of smuggling routes represents a key source of funding for the insurgent group (Dadur, 2016). Thus, a series of factors have contributed to the growth and spread of Boko Haram into the Lake Chad Basin, including weak governance, lack of economic development, the marginalization of certain ethnic groups,

porous borders, historic smuggling routes, Boko Haram's partnership with criminal networks, and its alliance with ISIS and the split of the organization. These factors have compelled the countries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad to take actions aimed at pushing back and defeating this regional insurgent threat.

Counter-insurgency Operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Northeast

Before the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) created the Multinational Joint Security Force on March 21, 1994, and mandated it to combat cross-border crime in the region (Repertoire Des Decisions. 2018). In 1998, a Multinational Joint Security Force was put into operation; however, it remained limited to infrequent and insignificant patrols on the shores of Lake Chad. Overall, the joint security force was ineffective in achieving a genuine improvement in the overall security situation because Cameroon did not participate, given a border conflict with Nigeria since 1993 over the Bakassi peninsula. This dispute made Cameroon reluctant to cooperate with Nigerian forces and the patrols were halted in 2000. In reality, the security cooperation between the states affected by Boko Haram was very weak until the Paris summit of 2014, when key countries agreed to security issues of regional interest and the MNJTF appeared as the only instrument available to support these goals. The intractability of the Boko Haram insurgency compelled the LCBC member states and Benin to reactivate the Multinational Joint Security Force on October 7, 2014 to fill the gap left by the regional inertia of the past decade and was rebranded the "Multinational Joint Task Force" (MNJTF) (Tchioffo, 2018). Although the MNJTF was created under the leadership of the LCBC, only four of the six member states Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria—constituted the joint military force along with Benin, which is not a member of the LCBC (Tchioffo, 2018). The MNJTF then became a coalition of states united around a common goal: defeating Boko Haram.

MNJTF had a force strength of up to 7,500 military personnel, which it later increased to 10,000 (Tchioffo, 2018). The MNJTF differed from classic AU peace support missions in a few critical ways. Most notably, the troops of the MNJTF primarily operated in their own country with some arrangements for cross-border operations. Furthermore, the financial agreements between the regional states were unique and mandated that contributing countries cover a large share of their own operational expenses. The member countries established three components to the MNJTF—military, police and civilian. However, as of 2018, only the military component had been completely activated. The member countries have struggled to put the other components in place and to receive the funding they need to activate the police and civilian components (Tchioffo, 2018). The MNJTF also received financial and training support from the European Union (Mahmood and Ndubuisi,

2018). Additionally, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom had a role in providing technical assistance to the MNJTF and region states to effectively implement the counter-terrorism initiative in the Lake Chad region. The transformation of the LCBC from its initial mandate to a counter-Boko Haram mission received considerable scepticism because the organization had not handled a crisis of such magnitude, and the LCBC's initial mission was development and environmental policy in the Lake Chad Basin region. Assanvo points out that, although its mandate allows it to carry out and sustain security operations, the LCBC has very narrow and limited experience of military organization (Assanvo, 2016). Consequently, it was necessary to provide specialized and multidimensional support to the MNJTF to improve its effectiveness as a counter-Boko Haram force. In addition to the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the European Union, the African Union (AU) became an essential partner to provide this support by offering technical assistance and coordinating partner support. It hosted several international donor conferences, including one in Olso on February 24, 2017, which focused on tackling the unfolding human crisis in the Lake Chad Region. The MNJTF is organized as follows. The MNJTF operates under the control of LCB, initially an intergovernmental organization that oversees the management of Lake Chad's natural resources and acts as forum for the member nations to cooperate on security and economic issues affecting the Lake Chad Basin.

The LCBC Secretariat is supported by the International Support Group, the Strategic Logistics Cell, and the Joint Coordination Mechanism. Beginning in 2015, the Executive Secretary hosts a quarterly council of the Minister of Defence from the MNJTF member states to assess the progress toward the goal of eradicating Boko Haram and discuss the way forward (Oosterud, 2017). The MNJTF Force Commander, permanently assigned to a Nigerian officer, has day-to-day operational supervision of the MNJTF and coordinates actions in the four sectors of the MNJTF. His headquarters is organized as follows. The Deputy Commander of the MNJTF, which rotates between Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, the Office of Chief of Staff, the Civilian Advisor, the Police Advisor, the Regional Intelligence Fusion Unit cell, and functional staff sections. The MNJTF headquarters provides a crucial connection between the member states' security forces that operates under their nation's command structure and the international organization involved in the fight against Boko Haram.

The counter-Boko Haram mandate of the MNJTF embraces several objectives, including ensuring a safe and secure environment in the Lake Chad region, putting a stop to the violence against civilians, supporting the stabilization programs to reduce the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in the region, and providing sufficient assistance to the affected populations (MNJTF blog, 2018).

This mandate was designed as a goal-driven process, divided into two phases:

- i. **Offensive Operations:** Isolate and neutralize Boko Haram factions; disrupt command and control and communication systems; cut supply lines; shut down traffic circuits; and reduce the potential for military operations.
- ii. **Stabilization Operations:** Facilitate the return of displaced persons and refugees; support the restoration of administrations in areas where they are no longer present; support the restoration of public security missions by the security forces in areas of concern; and contribute to the initiation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process of illegally armed individuals. Evidence from the theatres of operations has shown that military operations are not the ultimate means in ending the threat posed by non-state actors. The emerging significance of Soft Power in state-based conflict initiation, prevention, management and resolution is a phenomenon that Nigeria is leveraging on in the on-going counterinsurgency operations. Nigeria military in collaboration with the MNJTF and international community have seek soft approach to counter the ideology of violence, build trust an community resilience at the grassroots. One of sure measure is launching of Operation Safe Corridor.

The operation is an initiative of the Federal Government of Nigeria and adopted by all parties fighting violent extremism in the north east Nigeria to encourage willing and repentant Boko Haram members to surrender and embrace peace. The primary objective of the operation is to facilitate easy access and passage for surrendering insurgents to security forces for subsequent de-radicalization, rehabilitation and possibly-integration process. The initiative is a joint and multi-agency humanitarian operation involving the military, security and law enforcement agencies, multi-national and nongovernmental organizations. It is being conducted under the ambit of International Humanitarian Laws with strict adherence to rule of law. Currently, over 1900 Boko Haram combatants including men and women have surrendered to the military and are set to undergo the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) (Oesterud, 2017).

Methodology

This paper adopt survey research design which according to Jongbo (2014) represents one of the most common types of qualitative social science research which is often used. Research design entails collection of relevant information from across section of the population on defined subject matter within a given period of time through the use of Questionnaire and interviews to access though, opinions and feeling about the subject of discussion (Jongbo, 2014). The design also describes the approach used in the selection of the sample and the choice through which

the survey administered. This is with a view to providing holistic perspectives in respect of the study variable.

Data Presentation

This section deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation of data gathered. The analysis of the data was based on the data collected from the respondents through the questionnaire, which helped to unravel the role of Multinational joint task force. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed to both Defence Ministry and Nigerian Multinational Joint Task Force in Borno, out of which three hundred and thirty three (333) were retrieved as shown in the table below. However, our analysis was based on the number of questionnaire returned. The findings are presented in the tables for easy comprehension and explanation.

Table 1.1 Rate of Returns of Responses of Questionnaire

Category of target population

Questionnaire	administered	No. of returned Questionnaire	Percentage
Ministry of Defence	50	39	11.7%
Nigeria multinational joint task force	350	294	88%
Total	400	333	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The essence of this section is to present the finding statistically and analyse for an effective illustration. It followed the pattern and structure by section based on the analyses.

Table 1.2.1: Respondents view on the level of awareness of the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
very high	251	75.4
High	77	23.1
Low	4	1.2
undecided	1	0.3
Total	333	100%

Source: Field Survey

Table 1.2.1 above seeks the level of awareness on the activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East. As revealed from the field, 251 (75.4%) have a very high level awareness of the activities of Boko Haram insurgency, 77 (23.1%) high, 4 (1.2%) with low level of awareness while 1 respondent representing 0.3% were undecided.

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Table 1.2.2: Respondents view on the factors contributed to the formation of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by the Lake Chad region

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Porous Borders	132	39.6%
Growing Wave of Radical Fundamentalist group around the world	88	24.4%
Exclusion of youths political and economic activities	50	15.5
Politically motivated	63	19%
Total	333	100%

Source: Field Survey

Information in table 1.2.2 indicates that, 132 respondents representing 39.6% attributes the formation of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) by the Lake Chad region to Porous borders with Nigeria, Cameroon, Benin Republic and other neighbouring states constitutes rising cases of Boko haram insurgency in the Lake Chad, 88 (24.4%) of the respondents asserted that the growing wave of radical fundamentalist groups around the world contributed to deployment of MNJTF in the Lake Chad, while 50 (15.5%) strongly agreed that exclusion of youths from social, economic, political life contributed to deployment of MNJTF in the region, while 63 (18.9%) of the respondents feels that Boko haram insurgency is politically motivated and there is dare need to deploy forces from neighbouring states to fight the menace.

Table 1.2.3: Respondents' views on counterinsurgency operations employed by MNJTF in managing Boko Haram insurgency in the North East

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Operation Lafiya Doyle	68	
Mounting of modern surveillance machines	57	17.1
Border security	132	39.6
Adoption of soft approach/none kinetic approach	76	
TOTAL	333	100%

Source: Field Survey.

Table 1.2.4: Respondents on how successful has multinational mechanism been in curbing Boko Haram insurgency in the north east.

Responses	Frequency	percentage
Level of success is high	144	43.2
Level of success is low	69	20.7
Most of the strategies are counter productive	78	23.4
Undecided	42	12.6
TOTAL	333	100%

Source: Field Survey.

The above table (1.2.4) has tested the degree of success or otherwise of the mechanisms that have been put in place MJNTF to curb Boko Haram in the north east. From the survey, 144 respondents (43.2%) claimed that the mission of multinational mechanisms to eliminate Boko Haram has been relatively high. 69 respondents (20.7%), have stated that the rate of success is rather very low. To 78 respondents (23.4%), multinational mechanisms have been counter-productive in curbing Boko Haram. 42 respondents were undecided.

Table 1.2.5: Challenges facing Multinational joint task force in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in the North east

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of cooperation among the Lake Chad Basins forces	122	33.6
Financial constraints	64	19.2
Corruption among the	85	25.5

officials		
Human right abuse	62	18.6
Total	333	100%

Source: Field Survey.

The above table seeks to ascertain the challenges faced by Multinational joint task force in the fight against Boko Haram in the North East, Nigeria. 122 respondents representing 33.6% said the MNJTF is faced with lack of cooperation particularly among the Lake Chad states, corruption and financial constraints followed next with 25.5% and 19.2% respectively. While human rights abuse constitute 18.6%.

Table 1.1.6: Respondent's view on how MNJTF can curb Boko Haram's insurgency in the North east region

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Better information sharing and planning	102	30.6
Human right compliance	95	28.5
Civil military coordination	95	28.5
Reaching consensus on the international support framework	41	12.3
Total	333	100%

Source: Field Survey.

From table 1.2.6 above, respondents have given many reasons as panacea through which challenges of combating Boko Haram by the MNJTF could be minimized. 102 respondents (30.6%) have subscribed to the fact that better information sharing and planning, 95 (28.5%) and other 95 (28.5%) aligns their views along the line of human right compliance and engaging civil-military coordination as option for Boko Haram problems. To 41 respondents (12.3%) from the survey, reaching consensus on the international support framework is essential in combating Boko Haram.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings, the paper revealed that;

1. It was revealed that the pre-disposing factors contributed to deployment of Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad territorial control in the Northeast and threatening the security of nations of the Lake Chad Basin, porosity of the borders with the internationalization of Boko Haram insurgency with ISIS, IS-WA among others. This
2. Finding supports the views of Assanvo (2016) that Boko Haram has changed significantly by forming alliances with transnational Islamist groups. Boko Haram split into two prominent groups in 2016, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa (IS-WA). Under the command of Shekau, Boko Haram remains the most violent faction and is responsible for large-scale suicide attack campaigns, and the massive use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), which have caused heavy civilian casualties.
3. As presented in the paper, the presence of the MNJTF has significantly diminished these threats by degrading the capabilities of the sect. Evidence shows that the task force has achieved a milestone in the fight against insurgency. Though not totally eradicated, the Boko Haram has been confined, curtailed, and degraded. The tendency of the group to launch large scale attacks as it were has since reduced. In fact, large swathe of territories that constituted Boko Haram's acclaimed caliphate have all been liberated with thousands of hostages freed, and life gradually returning in the most affected areas.
4. The finding from the paper reveals that, there was inadequate background information based on local realities. In spite the fact that, the Joint Task Force has successfully reduced the size and strength of the terrorist movement, but has not completely wiped out their influence in the affected countries. This is arguably because the affected governments of Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Benin; foreign conflict managers and conflict resolution experts either do not adequately engage in identifying and analysing the causes and the local understanding (knowledge, attitudes and practices) in matters related to the existing conflict. Most often the affected governments have been highly dependent on military force to resolve the Boko Haram extremism without considering other conflict management alternatives based on local realities. On the machineries put in place by MNJTF in combating Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast region, findings reveals that Lake Chad states seeks for international support for regional cooperation against Boko Haram. This finding corroborate with the view of Obamamoye (2017) that Cameroon's President Paul Biya

and other Lake Chad leaders made a rare public appeal for help from neighbours and international partners.

5. The findings also reviewed that there should be Increased bilateral support from the U.S., the UK. He further states that AU's initiative with the support of France, United States of America and United Nations has strengthened the capability of the MNJTF curtail the expansion of the Boko Haram around the Lake Chad basin.

Conclusion

The emergency of the Boko Haram sect has shifted the dynamic of security situation in the history of the Lake Chad region. The traditional security challenges of arm banditry, smuggling, illegal migration, and other common social vices that hitherto dominated the porous Nigerian borders with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin Republic have transformed into a major threat to not only the national sovereignty of the Lake Chad Basin countries but region stability of the entire sub-Sahara Africa.

In response to this threat, the MNJTF was deployed in 2015 with the sole mandate of uprooting Boko Haram. Ever since, the joint military coalition has conducted several offensives against Boko Haram positions especially in the Sambisa forest. These military campaigns have severely dislodged and degraded Boko Haram's capability and have flushed them out of several territories hitherto under their control. The operation of the MNJTF was divided into four fronts in the four countries of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger with the overall headquarter in N'Djamena, Chad republic with over 10,000 active military personnel. Since 2016 when the task force became fully operational, the activities of the Boko Haram have witnessed a drastic decline. However, over 90% of the Boko Haram presence and activities are within the northeast Nigeria, which made the "Operation Lafiya Dole" the umbrella that covers the MNJTF military offensives against the Boko Haram in the northeast more significant and point of focus throughout the paper. The operation has also yielded many other operations like the Operations: Crackdown, Rescue Finale, Gama Aiki, Deep Punch, Safe Corridor, and Last Hold among others. These military exercises have made significant impacts in mitigating the activities of the Boko Haram like: blocking Boko Haram's escape routes; cutting-off their supply lines; constraining the sect's movement; pushing them out of territories hitherto under their control, destroying Boko Haram's improvised explosives device (IED) bases and facilities; clearing off Boko Haram hideouts in the Lake Chad and blocking them access to the borders by establishing coordinated security posts and military patrol network across the borders. Interestingly, these actions of the joint task force have resulted to: decrease in Boko Haram attacks since 2016 to date; halt in Boko Haram expansion; retaking of almost all the territories previously held by the sect; freeing of people abductees; forcing the surrender of Boko Haram members; facilitating the return of internally

displaced persons (IDPs); reopening of trans-Sahara road in Maiduguri and many other achievements.

However, the study discovered that although the MNJTF has significantly degraded the Boko Haram by dislodging them, grave threats still abounds. The sect still carries out deadly attacks on vulnerable civilian targets, small military posts, and remote villages. In fact, instead of extinction, the sect has adopted various strategies and tactics to launch attacks. Such include but not limited to ambushing soldiers, forces little girl to carry out suicide missions, disguising as clergymen and even wearing military uniform to camouflage. More troublesome is as the military has successfully dislodged the sect from its stronghold, and dismantled their acclaimed Islamic Caliphate, the underlying conditions that encourage the spread of Boko Haram terrorism like poverty, unemployment, porosity of the borders, circulations of illegal arms and ammunition, religious extremism and so on are yet to be addressed by relevant authority.

Despite this success, however, the MNJTF has been operating with limited funds, which has persisted since its inception, hindering the efficiency of the joint operations and the ability to maximize their returns. In other words, the MNJTF reflects a lack of integration between the different national armies, which often require additional temporary authorities to conduct combined operations. Equally, the study discovered that the de-radicalization, counter-radicalization, rehabilitation, reintegration and effective communication program/strategy of the Nigerian government and ally forces are lagging in various fronts. First the intended sensitization campaign, counter radicalization, establishment of trust and friendship between the civilian population and troops fighting Boko Haram in their various areas of responsibilities have been hampered by gross human right abuses, killing of innocent citizens, and allegations of rape and torture, therefore leading to wide range of mistrust, suspicion and fear among the local people about the government and their real intent. This is even exacerbated by large scale ignorance, mass illiteracy and the Almajiri system in northern Nigeria. As such the counterinsurgency efforts of the MNJTF have been variously sabotage thereby gifting those recruiting for Boko Haram a large population of local sympathizer. As a result therefore, the paper concludes that even though significant successes have been made on the fight against Boko Haram insurgency, a total victory does not seem imminent largely because the underlying factors that breed violence and act of terror are still much present in the Boko Haram affected areas while relevant authorities have failure to adequately address them.

Recommendations

As a means of eliminating the long resurging threats of Boko Haram, the paper recommends the following:

1. It was revealed from the finding that territorial control in the Northeast and Threatening the security of nations of the Lake Chad Basin was a driving force for deployment of Multi-National Joint Force to oversee the defeat of Boko Haram. However, existing literature reveals that Boko Haram is being triggered by youth restiveness, poverty, unemployment among others, hence addressing the menace of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East region, Nigerian government should de-radicalize the youth by creating jobs for educated, strong, vibrant, patriotic and productive citizens who need to be nurtured, mentored and monitored so that they can progress along the path of profitability, success and sustainability. Although no government can employ all its youth; governments should promote effective human security and design sustainable development programmes based “primarily on protecting people while promoting peace and assuring sustainability.” For this to happen, there should be “concerted efforts” and people should agree to agree no matter the elements of disagreement, with the focus to achieve a common objective. The youth should be involved in decision-making that affects them because any decisions taken on behalf of the youth, without the youth, is against the youth! The youth on their part should build political maturity, tolerance, fair play and actively take part in competitive politics.
2. Even though there is relative stability and the attacks by the group reduced, there should not be a recess in counter insurgency, this regional response should be reinforced and strengthened to prevent a resurgence of Boko Haram or another group from taking its place. The nature of Boko Haram and the environment in which it operates pose operational challenges to the armies combating. These realities make it all the more necessary for the MNJTF to ensure that its actions comply with international humanitarian law and, more broadly, respect for human rights and rule of law. To this end, the MNJTF must streamline its processes and increase its operational pace to prevent Boko Haram from simply fleeing its current area of operations. Furthermore, increased, timely intelligence sharing among all Boko Haram affected countries and the international community would help multiply the MNJTF’s efforts and allow it to prioritize its operations properly.
3. Corruption has been a major problem of the Nigerian state and society: it impedes effective implementation of some aspects of these policies. Military operations and economic development will

not fully address the underlying political causes of the movement and the mistrust the region's population feels toward the Nigerian state. Nigeria has not seized multiple opportunities to de-escalate the violence between it and Boko Haram. Those that have been named in allegations of corruption should be prosecuted. Anti-corruption should not be based on party, religious or ethnic sentiments: those involved in corruption should be swiftly prosecuted and convicted. The public should be public enlightened on anti-corruption, on the need for Nigerians to abstain from corrupt practices and to report anyone suspected of being involved in corrupt matters with anonymity of the reporters' identities. The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Centre (NFIC) and Proceeds of Crime (POC) bills should be signed into law so that anti-corruption drive will be engendered.

4. There is need for more international support from African Union, France, United States of America and United Nations among others to strengthen the capability of the MNJTF curtail the expansion of the Boko Haram around the Lake Chad basin by deploying installation of high surveillance technologies in the Nation's border between Nigeria and Niger Republicorist groups around the Lake Chad.

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