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EMERGING ISSUES IN MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE COUNTER INSURGENCY OPEARTION AGAINST BOKO HARAM IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

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Abstract
Since 2009, Boko Haram has perpetrated its terrorist activities within Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin with disastrous consequences. The Boko Haram sect is a security threat to the countries of the Lake Chad Region made up of Chad, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and the Central African Republic. The ideology of the sect is that "Western education is forbidden"; hence they are commonly referred to in Hausa as Yan Boko Haram. The activities of the sect have become a collective security threat to the Lake Chad Basin countries necessitating the need for the countries within the region to constitute a collaborative security strategy of MNJTF to counter the operations of the group. The study adopted the collective security theory as the theoretical framework of analysis because it best explains the activities of the insurgents and the MNJTF operations in the Lake Chad Basin. Adopting the historical method of diverse secondary sources and multidisciplinary approach, the work presents a balance account of the missing link in the already existing literature on the activities of the Boko Haram sect and the counter insurgency strategy of the multinational joint task force. This research identified poor funding, logistics and mutual suspicion among member states as some of the impediments militating against the success of the joint actions against the insurgent. This research recommends that a collaborative strategy and intelligence sharing will aid the effective counter insurgency operation against Boko Haram sect in the Lake Chad Basin

Keywords: insurgency, Boko Haram, collaboration, Chad Basin, Collective security

Introduction
Boko Haram insurgency which started as a local security challenge in Nigeria quickly spread to the Lake Chad basin and beyond. *Boko Haram* was not the name chosen to be known with by the group, but was given to it based on the views of its basic believes. Officially, the group is known as *Jama'atul Ahalul Sunna Waljama'a Lidda a' wati Wal Jihadi* (the group of the people of the Sunnah for preaching and Jihad). Its core and popular ideology is that Western education is a forbidden; hence they are commonly referred to in Hausa as *yan Boko Haram*. "Boko" in Hausa language simply means western education and "Haram" in Arabic means forbidden.

The Lake was the sixth largest Lake in the world with a hydrographic basin area of 2,381,631 square kilometers and an active basin of 966,955 square kilometers. It provides fresh water and agricultural resources such as fisheries and pasture to a huge population in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Central African Republic, Libya, Sudan and even Algeria. It is today under serious threat of desiccation occasioned by climate change. Its water body reduced from 25,000 square kilometres in 1963 to 2,000 square kilometres in 2010 creating problems of unemployment, water scarcity, environmental pollution, and threats to biodiversity survival, amongst several other livelihood issues (Olawale, 2017). This has compounded the national security problems in the affected states and accentuated regional security of West and Central Africa Ifabiyi (2013). The ungoverned remote areas of West Africa especially the border areas and vast empty lands of the Sahel region provides a safe haven for terrorist organizations and efforts

to establish links with local terrorist organizations especially *Boko Haram* with other terrorist groups is already yielding result with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb, Alshabab in Somalia, and Islamic State (I S). The danger of *Boko Haram* in the sub-region is further seen in the possibilities of a breakout of similar terrorist groups in the West African countries that mostly share similar social conditions like what is obtainable in Nigeria with high number of unemployed youths, Muslim-Christian rivalries and poverty as a result of government neglect, Illicit arm trafficking and also the infiltration of international terrorist groups in the region (Aduloju et al, 2014).

Threats of *Boko Haram* in the region cannot be under estimated and it should be a serious concern to LCBC because the growing destabilization of peace and security in Nigeria is invariably destroying the peace and security of the entire West Africa. If this is true, then the war against *Boko Haram* is not a task reserved for the Nigerian State alone, but the entire international community but particularly, Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS).

At the beginning of boko hram insurgency, the primary target was Nigeria but soon spread to other countries since the group used such territories within the frontiers of Nigeria as safe havens, training camps, transit point for transfer of small arms and light weapons, recruitment of terrorist sympathizers and planning and coordination of attacks in Nigeria. Initially, since the Chad basin countries -Chad, Cameroon, Niger viewed Boko Haram as basically a Nigerian problem the presence of the group in these countries were not resisted since the group also tactically avoided attacking these countries. The perception of the countries was further aided by the long-standing border and diplomatic disputes among these countries especially between Nigeria and the other countries. The long and overriding implications is that it enables Boko Haram members especially its commanders to cross national borders without any hinderance,

There was clear indication that the Boko Haram terrorist insurgency will split over to other countries of the Lake Chad basin if a well-coordinated response is not implemented. Between 2009-2013 other Lake Chad basin countries did not experience any formidable attacks but there was an increasing migration of persons from Nigeria evading Boko Haram devastating attacks especially from Borno state. The tempo of migration of the displaced persons indicates that many people prefer to seek refuge in neighboring Lake Chad basin countries because of the ethno-religious and linguistic affiliations of the Kanuri, Hausa and Shuwa ethnic groups across the countries of the region rather than moving to the peaceful southern states of Nigeria.

In the contemporary world, insurgency is not restricted to a country. Apart from the spillover effects it could have on other countries, it could also influence the behaviour of a state towards another state which may cause diplomatic row between them. For example, Kenyan government blamed Eritrea for supplying arms to Al-Shabaab, a Somali insurgent group that had claimed responsibility for several deadly attacks in the Kenyan territory over the Country's deployment of troops to fight the insurgents in Southern Somalia. That intensified diplomatic row between the two countries (Lee and Perl, 2002). Similarly, cross borders attacks by insurgent groups between Indian and Pakistan have also intensified diplomatic row between the two countries. India blamed Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)- a group it claimed has closed ties to Pakistani intelligence of carrying out several attacks in Uri in India-administered Kashmir. Pakistan in turn accused India of colluding with insurgents and separatists to cause mayhem in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan (Kaplan, 2014).

The Boko Haram crisis is a collective security threat to Nigeria and surrounding nations such as Chad, Cameroon, Niger and even Benin Republic. This led to the coming together of Nations who have common border with Nigeria most especially the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The countries of Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region necessitating the need for the countries in the region, including Benin Republic Chad, Niger and Cameroon, committed themselves into a security community known as the Multinational Joint Task

Force (MNJTF) to manage the situation. The countries in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) led by Nigeria established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as an external force to combat the Boko Haram insurgency in April 2012 and upgraded it in 2015 for managing the ongoing Boko Haram crisis that started in Nigeria in 2002. The decision followed the realization that the problem is not necessarily Nigerian, as initially perceived, but a regional question that needed cooperation among states to defeat the terrorist (Albert, 2017).

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the strategies adopted by the multinational joint task force in counter insurgency operations against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad
2. To examine the challenges and successes recorded by the multinational joint task force in its counter insurgency operations

Research methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research approach based exclusively on secondary sources. Data were obtained from relevant academic text, peer reviewed journal articles, official reports and credible online publications. Sample survey technique was adopted to ensure that only current and thematic relevant materials were used for the study considering the important nature of the subject matter under review to uncover patterns and contradictions related to counter insurgency operations in the Lake chad basin.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on collective security theory in examining regional security in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) as in the case of MNJTF and regional security in Africa, it will be most suitable to use the Theory of Collective Security. The theory of collective security sprouted out of Liberal institutionalism that views the international system as one based on community of states with the ability of cooperating to overcome mutual problems (Goldstein and Pevernhouse, 2011 & Galadima, 2006). Collective security theory is a liberal theory of international relations in that it emphasizes the values of cooperation and mutual obligation. States enter multilateral agreements to refrain from attacking one another and also for economic relations, but within an overarching organization to which they owe allegiance. According to the theory, pledging allegiance to an international organization will create a more stable commitment to a course. Galadima (2006) in his study disclosed three models of collective security; The first is the intervention usually undertaken by a coalition of states, against international aggression or internal conflict or disorder with the explicit or implicit approval of the United Nations. The second model is the collective security that concerns an intervention by a single state or a coalition of states against international aggression or internal conflict or disorder without the approval of the United Nations Security council. The third is the Kantian or Wistonian collective security model that is seen as an arrangement among states for effective actions against any aggressor from within that community of states

Kupchan and Kupchan (1995) gave the advantages of collective security to fall under two categories. It provides for more effective balancing against aggressions, and it also promotes trust and cooperation. Collective security provides for more effective balancing against aggressors because it confronts aggressors with preponderant force as opposed to merely equal force. The preponderance is as a result of the coalition entered by states who have made either explicit or implicit commitments to oppose any threat to the community, do so because, they have interests in protecting an international order that they see as beneficial to their individual security. Collective security is advantageous not only because it provides better balancing against aggressors, but also because it fosters an environment in which aggression is less likely to take place or to succeed against the collective will of the majority (deterrence).

Collective security ameliorates the security dilemma, thereby enhancing stability and reducing the likelihood of unintended spirals of hostility, this is done by building confidence among member states about each other's' intentions, collective security thus mitigates the constraints imposed on cooperation by relative-gains consideration. *Boko Haram* as a terrorist organization emanated in Nigeria but it activities spreads to Niger, Cameroon and Chard (LCB Region), thereby posing a great security threat to the entire region. To effectively curb the menace of the sect, a collective action is needed. Therefore, this research on Multinational Joint Task force and the Struggle against *Boko Haram* can be best analyzed using the collective security Theory.

Conceptual clarifications

Boko Haram

United states institute of peace (2012) defined Boko Haram as a Islamic sect who believes politics in northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims and it is committed to waging a war against them, and the federal republic of Nigeria generally to establish a pure Islamic state ruled and dominated by sharia law. The name "boko" haram was coined by the public and the media. Boko in Hausa means western education and "haram" stands in Islamic theology as something not acceptable, forbidden and prohibited. Boko Haram therefore is interpreted to mean western education is forbidden. (Addo,2016).

Historical sources indicate that the original name of the group is " jamutul Aihul Sunnat lidalal Jihad in Arabic translated to English to mean people committed to the propagation of the prophets teachings and jihad.

Terrorism

Society's strategies are constantly changing, constantly being revised and rewritten not only by the formal processes of lawmaking but by the actions of acceptance, compliance, or resistance from the various social forces and coalitions thereof shared meaning comes to the fore, and here is the pivot of society. Wayne (2008, p.14) "views terrorism as a violent pushback against the state, society's primary institution, by ascendant and competing social forces". Similarly, terrorism which has become a global phenomenon is a deliberate and systematic use of violence to destroy, kill, maim and intimidate the innocent in order to achieve a goal or draw national/international attention or demands which ordinarily may be impossible or difficult to achieve under normal political negotiation or on the battle field against a government army

Terrorism today is seen as a strategy of resistance to the modem state therefore for the purpose of this research, terrorism can be understood to mean all forms of violent actions by clandestine and semi clandestine actors aimed at achieving criminal, military, religious, political or other objectives with such actions often directed at government and non–combatant population with the deliberate objective of spreading fear, anxiety and terror. Terrorism as a word in its usual usage has a connotation of evil, indiscriminate violence or brutality. Thus, to label a group or action as terrorist is to seek to imply that the actors or the violence is immoral, wrong, or contrary to obvious basic ethical principles that any reasonable human being might hold (James & Brenda, 2008, p.7).

Multi National Joint Force

The MNJTF fighting *Boko Haram* in the borders of Chad Republic, Niger Republic, Nigeria and Cameroon was formed in April 2012. However, this was not the first MNJTF formed between the countries of the Lake Chard. The first MNJTF was formed in 1994 by the administration of Gen. Sani Abacha to secure the north-east region against armed bandits from the Chadian war. The initial

responsibility of the Force was to clear the border regions of the activities of the bandits and promote free movement of persons and goods across the borders. In 1998, the Force became truly multinational by incorporating military units from Chad, Niger and Nigeria and the mandate was to deal with common cross-border security problems in the Lake Chad region (Isaac, 2017) defense and military chiefs from the six-member Lake Chad Basin Commission (Chad, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and CAR) met in Cameroon to agree on the need for a joint task force to combat arms trafficking, terrorism and cross-border attacks as tensions escalate in the region.

Counter-Insurgency

Counter insurgency is any deliberate action taken by a state against the activities of an insurgent group with the aim of defeating or undermining it progress. According to Osakwe and Ubong (cited in Mohammed, 2020, p.192), "Counter insurgency is a coordinated action of the state towards addressing gaps in the forms of societal problems on which insurgents capitalize". It also stands for a war waged within a state by government using the instrument of state power in a combination of military, political, economic civil, legal and psychological means against the idea and activities of an insurgent (Mohammed, 2020, p. 192).Insurgent groups are usually opportunistic, they often exploit and take advantage of some existing society problems like poverty, ignorance and inadequacies in government to draw support and win membership and they also lure youths and other vulnerable groups with inducement as a means of recruitment of members. The ongoing military operation in the northeast Nigeria as well as the involvement of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad area is a good example.

Historical development of Lake Chad Basin Commission and the formation of MNJTF.

LCBC was established in 1966 and its formation was facilitated by Abubarka Tafawa Belewa of Nigeria, N'garia Tombal Baye of Chad, Hamani Diori of Niger, Abadou Abidjo of Cameroon. These countries (Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon) are the four countries that border the Lake Chad. However, in 1996, Central African Republic was admitted while Libya was admitted in 2008. Similarly, some countries were granted observer status – Sudan, Egypt, Republic of Congo.

The commission basic mandates during commissioning were to sustainably manage the lake Chad and other shared water resources in the lake Chad basin, to preserve the ecosystem of the of the lake Chad conventional basin, and to promote regional integration, peace and security across the basin.

In march, 1994, the lake Chad basin commission set up a multinational joint task force to combat security in the region. The regional force symbolizes LCBC member state's ability to overcome the mistrust and friction that had characterized their bilateral relations especially around border and boundary issues. The establishment of the force was also aimed at checkmating the prevalence of armed robbery, human trafficking and various other organized cross-border crimes which occasioned palpable and profound insecurity along Nigeria's border with other Lake Chad basin countries. The MNJTF was established in 1998 after diplomatic agreements was reached among member states of the basin and its headquarters was situated in Baga in Kukawa local government area of Borno State. The force worked on the mandate of conducting joint military operations, check banditry and facilitate free movement of people, goods and services across member states of the commission.

After a lackluster and challenging ten years of the establishment of the force, the force was reactivated in 2014 in response to the rise and spread of the devastating Boko Haram attacks. Backed by the African union (AU), In March 2014, defense and military chiefs from the six-member states of Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) comprising of Chad, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and Central African Republic (CAR) met in Cameroon to agree on setting up a joint taskforce to combat arms trafficking, terrorism and cross border attacks as tensions escalate in the region. Cameroon was interested in this particular meeting

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as the conflict in CAR and the insurgency in northern Nigeria were beginning to have adverse spillover effect on it, pushing refugees, weapons and violence into the country from its neigbours. The meeting agreed that a Multi- National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) which was already formed in Nigeria and headquartered in Baga, Borno State, would simply be expanding its scope. It was agreed that the initial mandate of the new task force would be to conduct both kinetic and non-kinetic operation with the following mandated task

1. To create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in order to significantly stop violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence in full compliance with international law including international humanitarian law and the UN human rights due diligence policy
2. To facilitate the implementation of overall stabilization programme by the LCBC member states and Benin in the affected areas, including the complete restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees.
3. To facilitate within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected population.

The execution of the MNJTF mandate involves two phase processes. The first involves military action to eliminate the terrorist group. The mandate extends to conducting military operations to prevent the spread of Boko Haram activities, including clearance operations, fighting patrols, raids, ambushes, prevent all transfer of weapons or logistics to the group, actively searching for and freeing abductees, and conducting psychological activities to encourage surrender from among Boko Haram ranks. However, the drivers of insecurity in the LCB region are not restricted to the terrorist activities of Boko Haram alone. Therefore, the MNJTF is also expected to support the alleviation of root causes of conflict in the region.

The second face of the mandate coordinating stabilization operations in line with the provision of the RS-SRR, which offers an overriding regional approach that aims to address the root causes of conflict and under-development in the LCB. The RS-SRR is structured around nine pillars of intervention: a) political co-operation) security and human rights,) disarmament, rehabilitation, reintegration or reinsertion of persons associated and linked to Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, d) humanitarian assistance, governance and the social contract, f) socioeconomic recovery and environmental sustainability, g) education, h) prevention of violent extremism and building peace) empowerment and inclusion of women and youths. (Kindzeka, 2014).

Furthermore, the MNJTF reflects a holistic peacebuilding strategy by LCBC to work in collaboration as a regional block against a transnational threat represented by the Boko Haram terrorist sect. the MNJTF areas of operation is divided into four sectors led by Brigadier status officers. They are

- Sector one comprises troops of Cameroon covering northern Cameroon with headquarter at Mara
- Sector two comprise Chadian troops operating in western Chad with headquarter in Bagasola and sub-section at Kaiga Ngouboua, Litri, Bargaram,and Koulfoua
- Sector three comprises Nigerian troops covering the northern corner of Nigeria with headquarter in Mungono, its area of responsibility stretches from Baga, Kukawa, and Mallam Fatori up to Damasak.
- Sector four is the Nigerian troops deployment coverig from east to west of niger along river Kamadougou -Yobe. The sector heagquater is at Diffa with deployments at Bosso,Barroua, Toumour,and Gueskerou

As established in the MNJTF rules of engagement, each country positions its continents troops within its own territorial space without spreading its operations into neighbouring country's unless it is deemed imperative. In situations when it is deemed necessary, they cannot exceed 25km perimeter. In

terms of its command and control, the MNJTF operates under the direct political authority of the LCBC and direct military command of the force commander who is responsible for coordinating commands across the four countries based on operational convenience. The appointment of the force commander falls with Nigeria for the entire mission duration. This decision was approved by all force members given that the fight against Boko Haram mainly takes place in Nigerian territory, and they are the major contributor to the force.

Appraisal of MNJTF Performance in Context of Approved Mandate

Despite long standing constraints, such as inadequate funding, gaps in operational command and control, inadequate equipment and an intelligence sharing cell, the MNJTF has recorded appreciable success. Its efforts have counteracted Boko Haram and the Islamic state west African province (Iswap) terrorist, resulting in a significant decline in attack incidents in the Chad basin area of operation. This shows that the force has significant progress in delivering on its first core mandate. This included ensuring that areas were safe for civilians to return in their numbers to their homes. Returnees were often able to rebuild and restart life without fear. This includes rebuilding schools, hospitals, community centres, markets and Mosques. In addition, they have created a conducive environment for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their communities and the resumption of trade between the people of the north east and the neighbourng markets in Cameroon and Chad.

Sinc its establishment, the MNJTF has successful conducted several significant operations aimed eradicating all traces of Boko Haram presence in the LCB area. Though most of the operations have been short lived and not always sustained or long enough to root out the terrorists completely. Some of the operations include, Operation Gama conducted in 2016 and stretched from Damasak and Mallam Fatori to the lake Chad Islands. This operation cleared most terrorist out of the areas. The force carried out operation Rawan, operation Amni Fakat, operation, Yancin Tafki, operation Hadin Kai, operation Lake Sanity. All these operations were aimed at denying BH/ISWAP terrorist freedom of action around the Lake Chad basin area as well as creating a favorable condition for the safe returns of IDPs and refugees.

Apart from creating a conducive environment for refugees and IDPs to return to their communities, it also facilitated the resumption of trade between northeast Nigeria and neighnboring markets in Cameroon and Chad. According to data released by the international organization for migration (IOM) regional tracking matrix dashboard on the lake Chad basin crisis (2021) 3, 014,634 persons continued to be displaced internally by the conflict while 2,140,140 persons had returned to their areas of origin, including 1,914,497 returnees following internal displacements. the MNJTF operations have facilitated return of 200,000 refugees and IDPs to their ancestral homes across the four lake Chad basin countries. between 2021-2022. Though ISWAP and other terrorist groups engages in attacks against troops and criminal activities such as cattle rustling, smuggling and abductions. The group is believed to maintain logistics bases and sleeper cells in Nigeria and Chad which suggest that while MNJTF has been good at clearing the area and restoring some form of stability, it has largely struggled to sustain this stability because ones it scales down its effort and return to its base the terrorist regroup and return to the area. This is mainly due to the presence small armed police forces who can take over the security of the liberated areas and provide law enforcement. In some cases, the achievement of liberation of terrorist occupies areas are sustained by non-state actor, particularly community based armed groups such as the civilian Joint task force (CJTF) or Yaro Gora (Hausa dialect which means youth with sticks) who has been credited with successes in helping to turn the tide against Boko Haram

These operations of the MNJTF have led to the killings of several high-ranking terrorist commanders and their followers, the arrest of several suspects and destruction of several terrorist camps, seizure of gun

trucks, motorcycles and several logistic bunkers. Several towns were cleared of Boko Harams presence and control.

The force has successfully halted Boko Haram territorial expansions. At its height, Boko Haram controlled large areas in north east Nigeria and directly threatened cities like Chad cities like Chad capital N'jamene, Cameroons far north, and south east Niger Diffa. The insurgents have been pushed to lake Chad islands, Mandara mountains and Sambisa Forest bringing some succor to the countries of the basin. Several successful operations have been carried out by the force against the Boko Haram sect leading to dismantling of its bases, arms cache, weapons and armor manufacturing workshops, fighters including commanders have been neutralized, liberating communities once occupied by sect members enabling the seizure of military and logistic equipment's. other achievements range from restoration of cross-border economic activities in towns like Nigeria's Bagakawa, Mungono,Mallam Fatori and Banki that are beginning to regain their earlier dynamism as business and economic hubs.

However, the successes recorded by MHJTF also comes with some losses as the sect has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the after mouth of military operations. The killing of its notorious leader Abubarka Shakau and other high-ranking members of the sect have no doubt weakened the sect but the sect members have coordinated deadly attacks in several lake Chad basin countries, records released by the institute of security studies data indicates that in 2024 alone in the four lake Chad countries. In Nigeria, about 81 people died, several injured as the sect in Sept 1, in Mafa. In Niger, a transport vehicle ran over an improvised explosive killing over 30 people. In Chad, the sect attacked its army base in Barkaram killing over 40 soldiers. Attacks continue in several cross-border areas irrespective of the commitment of the LCBC countries to defeat the sect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The point made in this research is to examine the counter insurgency operations of multinational joint taskforce in the lake chad basin and the challenges encountered by the operation. The emergence of the fundamentalist insurgent group Boko Haram sects is an indication of escalating security threats in the lake chad basin. Book haram is responsible for the serial threat killings which have engulfed several countries of the lake chad basin. The war against terrorism being waged by the government of the Lake chad basin countries must be sustained to defeat insurgency and all forms of violent extremism perpetrated by terrorist groups. The following recommendation have been made,

1. Beyond the MNJTF, countries of the lake Chad Basin should invest more in the LCBCs core mission and mandate- to manage the waters sustainably and equitably, conserve the basins ecosystem, promote regional integration and promote regional integration, preserve peace and security.
2. More technical and financial and financial support is needed from the international community to enhance the MNJTF operational and strategic capabilities. A weakened force would allow a resurgence of violent extremism in the region and beyond.

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