

RESPONDING TO TERRORISM: ECOWAS MECHANISM IN COMBATING INSECURITY IN LAKE CHAD REGION

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, African states have been hampered by terrorism, secessionism, insecurity, bloodshed, and religious conflict. Republics were on the point of collapsing, violence enveloped populations, and instability has been a recurring phenomenon since the end of colonial control and the subsequent independence of African states. Some of these conflicts have to an extent, been managed through various collaborative regional interventions by ECOWAS and African Union in recent times. Counterterrorism has been the regional body's agenda for decades. However, the region is still stifled by emerging security threats encapsulated by terrorism in Nigeria, Niger, and other West African states which continued to challenge their territorial integrity. The counterterrorism measures by Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) have decimated the group's activities through collaborative efforts to maintain peace and security of lives. Good intelligence gathering and sharing measures will facilitate coordination for more effective counter-insurgency measures. The study is necessitated by the need to situate insecurity in the Sahel region from a historical perspective, as earlier writers seem to focus on the issue within timeless ethnographic presence. In line with this, what appears to be a Multinational force response to counterterrorism is isolated and not adequately discussed. This study attempts to discern the palpable roles of a joint task force in the anal of counterterrorism in the Lake Chad region and West Africa in general. This work is a medium analysis of Multi-National Joint Task Force machinery in tackling the insurgency menace in Lake Chad. To give direction to and add confidence to the authenticity of this study, both primary and secondary sources of data collecting were used. Suggestions were made for policymakers to consider for future measures.

Keywords: Terrorism; Migration; Counterterrorism; Cross-border crime; and Multinational force.

Introduction

Terrorism in West Africa is as old as human existence. The international terrorist organization used the West African sub-region as a hide-out and operational base to promote their nefarious acts. It is a place where international terrorist groups used to launch an attack on the continent without any significant global effects. The West African leaders and the international communities undermined the operational base of criminally minded people in West Africa. Terrorism took another dimension on September 11, 2001, when some transnational organized criminally minded people bombed the Twin Towers in the United States of America and became a burning issue for the international communities. Since September 11, 2001, terrorism has become a national phenomenon due to attacks such as kidnapping, bombing, hijacking, and killings, among other attacks launched worldwide.

The post-independence in West Africa witnessed a series of political upheavals, a socio-economic pandemic, an ethno-religious crisis, cultural and environmental factors, and the right to self-determination remains the significant contribution to forming West African terrorist groups. The interruption of political independence in the 1980s due to economic meltdown subjected the member states of the sub-region to a total financial mess. They had no option but to embrace the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The process forced them to liberalize their economy in the structural Adjustment Programme (SAPs) phase, resulting in a high unemployment rate due to the laying off of public employees. The high unemployment rate generated a new sect of terrorist groups in Africa and continues to maintain their link with the international criminal networks in the Maghreb and Arab North Africa. The prevalence of terrorist groups in the West Africa sub-region has consumed West Africa in general and Lake Chad in particular, generating unprecedented confrontation, which sparked destructive inter and intra-state conflict across the globe. The Lake Chad Basin has become a fertile ground for Terrorism due to international networks among the criminally minded people having an immense effect on the lives and properties of the member of the Lake Chad Basin. On this note, this paper aims to interrogate the effectiveness of the ECOWAS mechanism in managing insecurity in the Lake Chad region.

Regional Security Complex

The theoretical framework established and utilized in this study is based on the regional security complex. The regional security complex emphasizes regional perspectives for the security agenda in the Post-Cold War era. Buzan first used this theory in 1983, and later, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde belonging to the Copenhagen School of security studies, in 2003. According to the proponents of this theory, security issues are complex and interlinked. Regional Security Complex

refers to any peace and security pact by countries with related features providing security through bilateral and multilateral arrangements. The notion is founded on the fact that harm to one-to-one is a threat to all. The proponents of this theory argue that security can only be achieved by creating alliances. On this basis, ECOWAS collaborative regional interventions, leading to Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), were implemented to address the insecurity challenges and Boko Haram insurgency in the Sahel Region and West Africa as a whole.

Conceptual Definition of Terrorism

Terrorism is an ambiguous concept and multi-dimensional. Scholars define the concept based on their perspectives and the issues around them. It is an act of violence involving non-state terrorist groups that use different techniques to present their grievance before the government of the concerned states. Terrorism may be defined as legitimate, even when the act is meant to attack civilians, when the terrorist group acts as an agent of the government and state. The such government would put in place all the necessary machinery to carry out the operation without being mindful of the severe effect on innocent civilians. For example, Libyan intelligence was responsible for the Lockerbie air crash in Scotland, and the United States of American intelligence also bombed Libya. The bombing of Coventry, Dresden, and Tokyo with the copulation of dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japanis also considered legitimate. Terrorism, either state-sponsored or non-state-sponsored, is a war of the mind. That is why some scholars define it as psychological warfare that tends to inflict more pain psychologically than physically.

The former United Nations Security Council Ban Ki-moon defined Terrorism in his speech in 2013 as the infiltration of criminally minded people with weapons and money, among others. He also linked the act of Terrorism with the activities of international organized crime to disrupt the relative peace atmosphere of the country through their guerrilla tactics. Article 3 of the defunct Organisation of African Unity, now the African Union, in the AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 1999, defines Terrorism as an act of violation of the criminal laws that endanger the physical integrity of the state, denies people their right to freedom, cause severe injury or death, damage public or private property caused religion, cultural, social or environmental disasters, instill fears into the people, coerce individual and government to make their wish. Samuel views Terrorism and groups them based on their tactics, goals, and strategies . The differences in aims, strategies, and tactics to achieve their goals made them see terrorism as a conglomeration of insurgency that aimed to achieve political goals through guerrilla warfare, revolutionary war, and subversive war. The aim is to instill fear into the people and government to achieve political, religious, economic, or other goals.

Terrorism on a global scale is a complicated and confusing phenomenon that will be difficult to arrive at a unified definition. It could be defined as the tactics used in West Africa by people who view their myopic opinion of being marginalized and choose violence to present their political grievances to the concerned government. For this study, terrorism would be used interchangeably with insurgency, Boko Haram, and other criminally minded groups who aimed to tear the fabric of peace of the state for their gains.

Historical Antecedents of Terrorism in Lake Chad

Lake Chad is a region of four countries (Chad, Cameroun, Niger, and Nigeria) strategically located in central Africa. The Fort-Lamy (N'djamena) Convention was established on May 1964. Lake Chad has remained a hotbed of Islamic terrorists known as Boko Haram since 2009 till now. Before the spread and rise of Boko Haram terrorists in the Lake Chad region, the Lake Chad region was a hotbed of trans-criminal activities. It housed a series of categories of banditries such as ex-convicts, former rebels, the impoverished, and the calibre of high status. In the 1980s, the region witnessed significant violence linked up with the Maitatsine movement, which recorded more than 4,000 fatalities between the 1980s and 1990s. The movement's followers cut across the four countries that made up the Lake Chad region, and the heat of the fatalities was felt more by Nigerians. Apart from the Maitatsine movement in the region, the region also felt the presence of other extremist groups such as The Jama'atuAhliSunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad (JAS); the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Jama'atuAnsaruMuslima fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru).

The first two have followers across the four countries that make up Lake Chad, while Ansaru only has followers in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region of Nigeria. The activities of the groups above have tremendously contributed to the deadliest attacks experienced in the region. The 1990s was a golden age in the series of attacks the banditries levelled against the people of the Lake Chad region, such as road ambushes between Cameroun and its Northern region, Maga and Lake Chad, the border between Cameroon and Chad, the border between Lake Chad and Nigeria. The trans-border banditries coupled with the presence of organized criminal networks have transformed the internal conflict into a full-fledged crisis that ravaged the region, notably Chad, for thirteen years, and the country was saturated with the influx of illegal activities such as arms trafficking, drug, human trafficking among others. The terrorist group finds the region more suitable for their disreputable operation due to the availability and movement of international fighters from North Africa (Libya-Algeria-Mali-Niger-Nigeria). The Lake Chad bandits formed closer ties with the cross-border trafficking networks, allowing them to recruit ethnic groups in the region. Most of these ethnic groups are present in countries with pre-colonial linkages nurtured by shared languages, cultures, and religions.

Aside from this, Chad's thirteen-year war plagued the country with a high level of poverty, corruption, marginalization, and lousy leadership coupled with the practice of unislamic doctrine. The high rate of poverty and unemployment served as a window of opportunity for Muhammad Yusuf, an Islamic cleric, who promised the marginalized and vulnerable a good life in a holy way (Islamic way). The preaching of Muhammad Yusuf has been influenced by the Wahabiyyah group doctrine with the mindset of transforming Nigeria and its bordering region into a theocratic state through his conservative ideology with the idea of killing the infidels, while Christians and Muslims were not spared in the group offensive ideology. The JAS also aims to replace the secular state with his version of an Islamic caliphate.

Historically, Boko Haram originated in Nigeria with a Salafist cleric, Muhammad Yusuf, who opened the Ibn Taymiyyah Masjid and Islamic school in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, in 2002. The poor and influential people around the bordering areas of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, and Niger have attended his Modrasat. The establishment of an Islamic school and masjid in copulation with the assistance rendered by the Islamic cleric to the vulnerable made the cleric gain sizable followers and supporters across the bordering areas. The followers and supporters were recruited as Boko Haram fighters by the clerics.

Unfortunately, Muhammad Yusuf was assassinated by the Nigerian security forces in 2009, and Abubakar Shekau, who was a second in command, took the mantle of leadership as the Boko Haram leader.

The table turned in August 2014 when the terrorist organization in Nigeria swore an oath of allegiance to ISIS, which led to the partition of Nigeria's terrorist organization into two different factions, the Shekau faction and Abu Musab Al-Barnawi faction (the ISIS chosen commander). The aggressive policy of Abubakar Shekau led to the killing of more than 20-25 percent of Chadian Christians. The Al-Barnawi faction of Boko Haram relocated its faction to the Lake Chad region as their new settlement in 2016. It secured the support of international jihadist fighters from the Middle East, Syria, and Iraq. They exerted their influence in the Lake Chad region and generated their income by taxing the community's indigene and collecting fees in the remote community.

Factors Promoting Terrorist Activities in the Lake Chad Region

The rationale behind the spread of terrorists' activities in the Lake Chad region that comprises four countries, Chad, Cameroun, Niger, and Nigeria, is multifaceted due to some factors identified below:

- a. similarities in culture, tradition, and religion between the four countries (Chad, Cameroun, Niger, and Nigeria) has made it easier for Boko Haram in the northern part of Nigeria to spread its tentacle in collaboration with the pre-existing of terrorists in the Chad and Niger. Their

indoctrination made it comfortable for the freedom fighters and international terrorists to seek the collaboration of the Lake Chad region terrorists to achieve a single goal (the creation of Islamic states in major Muslim communities)

b.

support in supplying arms, ammunition, and training for brainwashed child combatants. Aside from this, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has continued to wax the insurgent activities in the region. The prevalence of intra-inter-regional conflicts in West Africa in which small arms and light weapons were preferred in the hands of untrained combatant soldiers. The West African sub-region was saturated with the free flow of small arms due to improper disarmament of used arms in the hands of untrained and combatant soldiers in the aftermath of wars. The improper disarmament of small arms and light weapons in the aftermath of wars has been responsible for the sneaked into the sub-region, making it easy for the banditries to settle in the Lake Chad region for their criminal attacks. The availability of small arms and light weapons has also made the cattle rustlers test their bravery in warfare.

c.

people derived their means of livelihood from the region. The shrinking of the Lake Chad water due to environmental degradation, climate change, and drought has rendered thousands of people jobless, particularly youths. Some youth's inability to make ends meet made them susceptible to the brainwashing of extremist Islamic preachers that offered economic prospects.

d.

abject poverty due to a lack of unemployment opportunities. It has been argued that embracing secular states with western oriented cultures, traditions, and teaching promotes socio-economic inequality, bad leadership, bad policy, marginalization politically and economically viz-a-viz corrupt leaders where a minority group personified the state apparatus left millions of people to roll with abject poverty. The need to fight common enemies with the total rejection of Western doctrine and teachings, viz-a-viz, put an end to abject poverty with the replacement of economic fortune made some families entrust their child to the care of Islamic preachers in quranic schools with the motive to create a serene environment that would free from unemployment and corruption. This invariably gives rise to the spread of terrorism in the region.

The Implication of Terrorist Activities on the Development of Lake Chad

Security challenges have characterized the region due to socio-political and economic upheaval, which has resulted in the institutionalization of various Islamic radicalism, ethnic militias, and fundamentalism, necessitating initiatives to combat Terrorism in the region. Boko Haram

has carried out several attacks across Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and Nigerian borders. This evidence was the massive loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, kidnapping, and looting of government property, such as financial institutions, across the length and breadth of Lake Chad. In 2014 United Nations Organisation ranked Boko Haram as the world's deadliest militant group. It was seen as a security threat to Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroun, with the spillover effects on the neighbouring countries posing a broader risk to the peace and security of the Lake Chad region.

The intensity of terrorist activities in the Lake Chad region continues to have a stunning effect on both lives and properties of the region. The rise of the Islamic sect from Northern Nigeria, coupled with its spread to the rest of the four communities that made up the Lake Chad region, has worsened the socio-political and economic development of the region with a random effect on millions of people. They are also responsible for the death of a potent region's economy and rendered the citizens with abject poverty and malnutrition due to the forceful displacement of people from their comfort zones. The killing and kidnapping of people in the region, coupled with the disruption and destruction of trade activities and closure of some significant markets in the area, led to the exit of millions of people from their comfort abode, abandoning their source of livelihood, trade, and market activities across the four communities of Lake Chad. The forceful displacement of millions of people redrew the demographic and economic architecture of the region and caused a population explosion in the neighbouring countries of West Africa. The study shows that more than 1.9 million have been displaced and left more than 2.7 million people with food insecurity, according to the displacement tracking matrix of the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), while millions of people who are fleeing their comfort zones to internally displaced camps are relying on food aids as their source of living. In the analysis of Kolade et al. (2016), more than 20,000 lives have been lost, while more than 3.3m has been displaced internally across international boundaries since 2012.

The activities of terrorists have also jeopardized the socio-economic development and torn the fabric of relative peace and security in the region. The insecurity in the LakeChad region has made investors and banks relocate their activities from a terrorist war zone viz-a-viz the agricultural produce farmers such as onions, rice, maize, livestock, pepper, and fish have all fled the region for the safety of their lives. The fear of banditry and abductions for ransom, particularly in Northern Cameroun, Nigeria, and other Lake Chad borders, coupled with infiltration of arms, prevents many people from accessing the basic necessity of lives. Many farmers, including livestock farmers, have lost access to their farmland, tools, and markets to create a livelihood for themselves.

In addition, the spread of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region also suffers psychological and physical trauma due to a series of abuse at the hands of banditry and terrorists in the region, such as early and forceful marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse, rape, and female/women recruitment to an armed group. Most young boys and girls recruited to the sect group have been brainwashed by the Islamic sect of Boko Haram by assuring them of heaven if they die during Jihad. The record shows that more than 83 children were used as suicide bombers in 2017 and 469 female suicide bombers in 2018 by the terrorist group to carry out bomb attacks, with 240 attacks. Over 1200 were killed in the attack, and 3,000 people were injured across the Lake Chad region's four communities.

The intensity of terrorist activities across the four countries that made up the Lake Chad region has ranked the region and its people the poorest and most vulnerable in the world, with high records of malnutrition, poverty, and hunger (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2016). The activities of criminally minded people in the region have denied people their fundamental rights of movement and worship and restricted many Muslims and Christians from their worship places due to the spate of kidnapping, hijacking, and planting of bombs to kill innocent citizens. The wave of insecurity trailing the activities of Boko Haram in Cameroun, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria has stressed and endangered a viable socio-economic development that contributed to the ECOWAS regional integration and cooperation in West Africa.

Their activities have also led to the outbreak of epidemics such as cholera and polio. Polio and cholera viruses have seriously affected old and young people, notably the disabled, due to the displacement of medical practitioners and health workers from the region. The forceful displacement, coupled with the restriction of medical practitioners and health workers, has led to the death of thousands of people in the Northern part of Nigeria, Cameroun, Chad, and Niger, including their internally displaced camps. The deterioration of people in the conflict-affected areas has made the concerned countries declare the situation a health emergency.

ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Measures in the Lake Chad Region

ECOWAS has adopted measures and countermeasures to address the security challenges confronting some of its member states in Lake Chad. The rise and spread of terrorist activities from the northern part of Nigeria to cover three of the Lake Chad basin member will jeopardize the economic strength of the West African states if adequate measure fails to roll out. It has exacerbated the socioeconomic development and integration challenges enshrined in the organization's Article and objectives. The ECOWAS effort to address the security challenges across the member states has been elaborated more clearly on the

preventive measure for the region's stability. The rationale for ECOWAS' response to terrorism is governed by the concept of collective security, which holds that the security of all the member states should remain paramount to the ECOWAS Commission. Since security challenges cannot be single-handedly solved by any state alone but require the competence and strategy of a larger body to cope with such a common threat, in this regard, the organization has established a legal mechanism to deal with West African security challenges in the aspect of Terrorism and conflicts. Article 29 of the ECOWAS Protocol on Counter-terrorism, Conflict Management, Peacekeeping, and Security (2006) emphasize mechanism to combat international Terrorism.

ECOWAS took further measures to draft a political declaration and share a position against terrorism on February 13, 2012, during the 42nd Ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of States in Abuja. This led to adopting and implementing a counter-terrorism strategy to address the security dilemma confronting the Lake Chad region viz-a-viz spill-over effects across the West Africa sub-region. This shaped the ECOWAS' three-pronged counter-terrorism strategy: Pursue, Prevent, and Reconstruct to nip in the bud the spread of terrorism in all four countries that made up Lake Chad. The Declaration and Strategy aim to prevent and eradicate terrorism and other criminal activities in West Africa to promote long-term economic growth and ensure the well-being of ECOWAS citizens.

Furthermore, the four countries of Lake Chad took a further step and revisited the mandate of the Multinational Joint Taskforce MNJTF, which was created in 1998 in 2014. The MNTJF scope was expanded to monitor and coordinate joint and combined military offensive actions against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. The decision to expand the scope of the MNJTF was decided at the 14th summit of heads of States and which took place in 2012. The scope of the MNJTF was in three-manifolds; first, the MNJTF is to create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of terrorists and other linked terrorist groups. Second, to facilitate the implementation and stabilization of their programme across the member states in the four countries and other affected areas, particularly the Republic of Benin. Third, they must also carry out humanitarian operations on the affected populations within their capacities. The efforts made by state members are to keep the peace and orderliness in war-torn insurgent areas. By 2015, the MNTJF hit the ground and launched its operations across its member states, including the Republic of Benin. Their action has drastically reduced to the barest minimum the activities of terrorists across the member states through the contributing support of troops, materials, and other logistics for the practical operational framework.

Difficulties in Implementing Counter-Terrorism Mechanisms

The West African sub-region has one of the minuscule number of counter-terrorism mechanisms that cannot be implemented effectively for various reasons. Various African regional organizations, such as ECOWAS, ECCAS, EAC, and SADC, have established counter-terrorism and management systems. However, at a time when the UN and other international institutions are undergoing substantial reforms to improve their capacity to help. African regional organizations on anti-terrorism, however, ECOWAS remain an underdog due to the following critical challenges:

(i) Insufficient of Funding: ECOWAS is cash-strapped and needs help to finance its counter-terrorism measures. For example, ECOWAS allotted 6% of its average annual budget of around \$1.1m, deemed highly insufficient for the job. External finance, which comprised most of the contributions, arrived gradually and with constraints. The organization must develop practical and realistic financial channels to sustain its anti-terrorist duties. Organizations must make ongoing appeals to donors and route aid requests through counter-terrorism endowments.

(ii) Inadequate skill in multi-dimensional command and control duties at the brigade, owing to a lack of finance and equipment.

(iii) Inadequate equipment and logistics for counter-terrorism operations in the region.

(iv) A need for comprehensive coordination and harmonization between member nations and other African sub-regional security bodies.

(v) Linguistic difficulties, a stumbling block to unity, have also hampered successful implementation.

(vi) Mechanism capacities have not yet met the international community's criteria.

(vii) Weak mechanisms for managing peace operations at the strategic level.

Conclusion

The increasing frequency of insecurity crises in West Africa is alarming enough to suggest that the West African regional organization tasked with insecurity management is not doing enough to combat terrorist activities. The entities tasked with enforcing border security are chronically underfunded, negating any attempts to improve security. Their limitations stemmed from various interconnected issues, including a lack of legislative and judicial backing to enforce the regulations, insufficient, outdated, decaying border infrastructure and equipment, and a lack of competence to operate under current standards. In addition, systemic corruption is caused by a lack of desire for security personnel due to low numbers. These problems are aggravated by border inhabitants' adamant refusal to use the appropriate forum to

educate relevant civic society about the terrorists' operations in the region.

Although the ECOWAS Strategy does not give a comprehensive solution to the problem of Terrorism in Nigeria and West Africa in general, it does provide a proactive framework for dealing with Terrorism in all its forms. The organization also evolved from an ad-hoc and normative improvisation in response to terrorist challenges in Nigeria into what is now popularly viewed as a robust institutional mechanism for managing West African sub-regional counter-terrorism measures. This paper concludes that terrorist activities will likely reduce due to the enhanced socio-economic decline in poverty. Consequently, the ECOWAS mechanism has successfully guided the community leadership toward decimating Boko Haram activities in Nigeria and West Africa.

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