

The Role of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Fight against Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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Abstract

The major thrust of this study is to assess role of Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The paper relied on primary and secondary sources of data; and adopted Security complex theory, as the theoretical framework. The theory aimed to address the level of security interdependency located between individual units (states), region and the international system as a whole. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis. The study revealed that the presence of the MNJTF has significantly diminished these threats by degrading the capabilities of the sect. The work recommends that the MNJTF should increase its counter-finance capabilities and take immediate action in areas it currently has control over, such as cross-border smuggling and trafficking to limit Boko Haram's access to funding.

Key words: Boko-Haram, Counter-Terrorism, Radicalization, De-radicalization, Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF)

Introduction

The Boko-Haram is a radical Islamic Movement that originated from the Northeast region of Nigeria. The name is translated to mean "Western Education is forbidden". The sect was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf in Gwoza, Borno state of Nigeria (Falode, 2016). But after the death of Mr. Yusuf in 2009, AbukakarShekau assumed leadership and quickly elevated it to a more aggressive and violent terrorist network with affiliations and allegiances to other

international terrorist's organizations like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant/Syria (ISIL or ISIS), Al Qaeda and other extreme networks.

Adetula (2015) noted that the Boko Haram uprising began in July, 2009 in Bauchi north-east Nigeria and spread to Kano, Yobe and Borno states. The immediate cause of the brutal uprising was the sacking of the sect's spiritual home (mosque) in DutsenTanshi, 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 and Ugwueze (2014) also contend 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 26 to 30 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. Okolie and Ugwueze (2015) further observes that approximately 800 people died in that violence and the surviving top members of the sect, including AbukakarShekau, who later assumed leadership fled to Niger and Chad for regrouping and mobilization.

However, in mid-2010, the Boko-Haram re-surfaced with AbukakarShekau as its leader. The group began to target churches, government facilities, security posts and even motor parks and markets. Since then, Boko Haram has claimed tens of thousands of innocent lives across Nigeria and has displaced millions of people both internally and externally (Umar Sani, 2011). 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 6,644 people between 2014 and 2015, surpassing ISIS 6,073 within the same period (Global Terrorism Index 2015, cited in Muhammed, 2016). 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 (Assanvo, 2016).

Unfortunately, the approach towards fighting the Boko Haram had always hung on the individual efforts of the affected states. But the ineffectiveness of such efforts due to the internationalization and trans-nationalization of the terrorist networks as well as the potential of such violent spilling over to neighboring 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. Its mandate was expanded to include terrorism as an area of focus.

According to Assanvo (2016), the MNJTF is an offensive and stabilization force with the objective of combating Boko Haram and other insurgent groups operating around the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). Its current structure was determined by the Lake Chad Basin Commission's (LCBC) head of states and governments during the Extraordinary Summit of the LCBC member states and Benin in Niamey, Niger on 7 October, 2014. On 25 November, 2014, the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) fully endorsed its activation. However, it was

not until 29 January, 2015 that the PSC formally authorized the deployment of the MNJTF for a 12-month period, which was renewed on 14 January, 2016 for an additional 12 months and later December, 2017 for its current operation following the adoption of Communiqué [PSC/AHG/COMM. 2(CDLXXXIV)] at the AU Peace and Security Councils' 484th meeting held on 29 January 2015 (Onuoha and Oyewole, 2018).

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 IliyaAbbah on 31 July, 2015. On January 2016, Gen. Abbah handed over to Major General Lamidi Adeosun as the new commandant of the task force (News Express Nigeria, 2016). But the immediatepast commander of the joint task force for the 2018 operations/mission is Major General Irabor Lucky Eluonye.

The MNJTF mandate is to restore peace and tranquility in areas affected by insurgency in Nigeria and her neighboring 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 14th of 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).

Despite these efforts, the performance of the MNJTF has become a subject of continuous debate among scholars, analysts and commentators. Although, some still believe that the MNJTF has the ability to curtail the Boko Haram threats, and has achieved significantly against the Boko Haram. This school of thought contends that the joint task force has succeeded in establishing a significant offensive against Boko-Haram. One of such notable achievements was the carrying out of 'Operation Gama Aiki' ('finish the job' in Hausa) from June to November 2016 around Lake Chad and in Borno state, which involved simultaneous and coordinated military actions by

all the forces in the four sectors: Baga in Nigeria, Baga-Sola in Chad, Diffa in Niger and Mora in Cameroon. They equally contend that the task force has been instrumental in the release of hostages, the liberation of certain areas previously occupied by Boko Haram and the surrender of many Boko Haram members in Nigeria and Chad (Albert, 2017). Other major operations include: ‘Operation Rescue Finale’, which aimed at routing the insurgent group out of its tactical headquarters in Camp Zairo in Sambisa forest and out of its so-called spiritual headquarters in Alargarno”. Equally, Operation Lafiya Dole has continued to relentlessly conduct several other operations such as “Operation Deep Punch”, “Operation ChikinGudu” and “Operation RawanKada” alongside the Multinational Joint Task Force (Albert, 2017).

Against this backdrop therefore, the study goes beyond the façade of journalistic rhetoric and political statements to ascertain whether the deployment of the Multi-National Joint Task Force has helped to mitigate the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Boko Haram sect have constituted a major security threat in north eastern Nigeria thereby shifting the attention of the government from embarking on policies and programmes that could ensure greater happiness to greater number of people to that of using the limited resources available in fighting the menace of Boko Haram so as to restore the security challenges facing the country.

However, the Nigerian government’s response to the nefarious activities of Boko Haram has made tackling terrorism appear to be the government’s only function or pre-occupation while its other functions seem to go unnoticed. Boko Haram poses tremendous threat to the Nigerian state and its citizenry. The sect did not just emerge suddenly; a lot of factors led to their emergence and by extension their nefarious acts. It is pertinent that any response of the government to this sect must be informed by the factors which led to the latter’s emergence in the first place. International best practices on counter-terrorism should also be taken into consideration. There have been counter-terrorism policies which the Nigerian government has either initially or recently promulgated as a result of the Boko Haram menace. Despite the efforts by the Nigerian government to combat the Boko Haram insurgency, the group continues to pose a threat and challenge to the government of Nigeria.

However, despite the efforts made at putting an institution as MNJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force) which was signed amongst member states, success has not been recorded as initially expected. There is a gap in the current approach by the MNJTF to deal with the insurgency. Also lacking is the use of more pacifying methods to bring peace within the region. Argument of authors like Kuptchan(2001) on the idea of security community like multinational joint task force presuppose a zone within which states have stable expectations of peaceful participation of members in the zone because of the enormity of the security risk and the consequences of failing to participate. Arguing in the same manner Deutsch et al (1989) considered that having a security community like the multinational joint task force is a real assurance that members of the community will not fight each other physically. But the problem with the position of these writers is the strong idealist base of their argument. This so far has proven to be true at least with the current MNJTF as the military alliance and the peace between them (states) has rather proven

unstable. The general objective of this study is to examine the role of Multi-National Joint Task Force and the fight against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria; other specific objectives are as follows:

- ii) To assess the efforts and mechanism put in place to respond to the activities of the sect by the Nigerian government
- iii) To examine the role of multinational joint task forces in fight against Boko Haram in North-East Nigeria
- iv) To highlight the challenges facing MJTF in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East with a view to proffering solutions to the challenges

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of Terrorism

The word terrorism just like some other social sciences concepts has proved to be one of the most difficult concepts to define. Perhaps, the only consensus among analysts with regard to terrorism is that there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept. According to Schmid (2011), Terrorism is a doctrine about the presumed effectiveness of a special form or tactic of fear-generating, coercive political violence and, on the other hand, to a conspiratorial practice of calculated, demonstrative, direct violent action without legal or moral restraints, targeting mainly civilians and non-combatants, performed for its propagandistic and psychological effects on various audiences and conflict parties. Considering the political definitions" popular in governmental circles, Badey, notes the definition offered by the US Department of State in 1983 are still in vogue today. However, he noted that "terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience" (Badey, 1998).

These definitions imply that every terrorist acts depicts a motivation, tactics and victims in order to achieve certain goals or objective. It also involves the use of violence against a non-combatant targets. Hence, if terrorism is taken to be part of a broader insurgency, countering terrorism may also form part of a counter-insurgency doctrine, but political, economic and other measures may however, focus more on the insurgency than the specific acts of terror if it must be combated. Schbley (2003) thinks that the definition of terrorism must be free from prejudiced approaches. He suggests that the definition should be cleared from politics and asserted into criminal justice. Schbley (2003) sees terrorism as violent behaviours committed against the symbolic civilians or their belongings. Hoffman (1998) pointed out that a terrorist is a violent thinker who is dedicated and ready for coercive power to reach his political ends. He also asserted the need for differentiation of terrorism and terrorist from the other kinds of violent behaviors and offenders. In terms of this distinction, Howard and Sawyer (2004), sees terrorism as grounded absolutely in political goals and motives involved in violence and or intimidation intended to attain consequences impacting beyond the initial sufferers or targets directed and controlled by an

organized group which has a chain of command or a cell structure committed by a subordinate group or an informal structure. Terrorism is a word with great rhetorical power but with limited scientific precision. This is because terrorists in one given situation could be regarded as freedom fighters in another. Drawing a definite borderline between terrorists and freedom fighters continue to pose a conceptual as well as theoretical default (Gandu, 2009).

In Gandu's view (2009), there is a thin line between freedom fighters and terrorists but the case of terrorism in Nigeria today is clear. There is no part of the country that is under foreign rule or dominance. Nigeria has enjoyed unbroken stretch of democracy since 1999 with strong political structures that guarantee equal representation and appointments to positions of authority as regulated by Federal Character Commission. Nigeria also established among other things, a strong judicial system where aggrieved parties and individuals can resort to and seek redress. The present terrorist activities in Nigeria is not aimed at fighting for political or religious freedom as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees freedom of worship and political association among others. So, terrorists in Nigeria are not freedom fighters. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees freedom of religion and worship and no individual or section of the country have been denied these fundamental human rights, whether Christians, Muslims, idol worshippers, atheists or any other religion. Any group or section of Nigeria engaging in terrorism with the aim of fighting for freedom to practice their religion or hold political position might not be fighting a just war. The reason is that; the 1999 Constitution guarantees these fundamental human rights. Those who engaging in the acts of terrorism in Nigeria on the basis of fighting for common goals are not but pursuing selfish agenda which is not anchored on fighting for freedom as posited by (Gandu, 2009)

Counter-terrorism

The varying nature of terrorism and their driving force/ the driving force behind them in different countries determine what should be committed into countering it (Crelinsten, 2009). These include funds, personnel, institutions and time (Crelinsten, 2009). These assertions explain why Chailand (1987) sees counter-terrorism as a response to terrorism and also one of the crucial outcomes of it. Echoing this, Richardson (2011) opined that until policy makers have a grip of the factors that lead to terrorism, they may be unable to make and implement policies to prevent the act. A comprehensive policy in response to terrorism is an upshot of an understanding of its root causes (Kundnani, 2015). However, a response should entail police investigation, military actions and preventive measures (Kundnani, 2015). These are hard and soft approaches to countering terrorism. Hoeft (2015) aptly explains this when he acknowledges that 'war on idea' (soft approach) and 'not war on terror' is crucial in dealing with terrorism, but that military actions (hard approach) may be necessary where terrorists defy the soft approach. He concludes that measures in countering terrorism that work for a given country may not work for another (Hoeft, 2015). Lum (2006) succinctly submitted that 'counter-terrorism strategies may include prevention and alleviation of early risk factors, situational prevention of actual events, or post-event responses (Lum, 2006). The Nigerian government has been involved in all of these three phases through programmes like de-radicalization to prevent military actions and post-terrorist attack responses (Amy, 2014; Dasuki, 2013). This study adopts Stepanova's definition because

the definitions for both counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism are inseparable and this aptly captures the Nigerian situation. It also describes the combination of hard and soft approaches to counter-terrorism. Stepanova's definition goes thus:

Counter-terrorism is seen as a security task performed by the security component of a national or international authority, the use of political, legal, economic, civil society and other peace-building instruments for the purposes of both countering and preventing terrorism is more broadly referred to as anti-terrorism (Stepanova, 2003).

Hence, the anti-terrorism referred to in this definition will be jointly adopted with that of counter-terrorism and both will be utilized as a single definition of counter-terrorism.

Radicalization

An understanding of the concept of radicalization lays the foundation for good de-radicalization and counter-radicalization measures (Hoeft, 2015). There is a general agreement among experts that radicalization is a process (Schmid, 2013). This is why Olesen (cited in Schmid, 2013) defined radicalization as 'the process through which individuals and organizations adopt violent strategies – or threaten to do so – in order to achieve political goals'. Concurring to the assertion that radicalization is a process, Borum (2011) views radicalization as the process of building extremist ideologies. Radicalization may be as a result of divisions, grievances, group influence, charismatic leaders' influence, family and peer influence (Hoeft, 2015). However, some terrorists do not subscribe to extreme ideologies: they get enlisted into the terrorist fold for other reasons (Borum, 2011). The reasons why people join terrorist groups is aptly captured by Gupta (2004) when he postulated that some join for selfish interests in order to be able to loot, rape or acquire power; some join for the purpose of ideology to be able to boost the welfare of the group. Gupta (2004) further postulated that others join because they are coerced into doing so.

In contrast, radicalization does not lead to terrorism alone, but it could lead to other forms of political violence like guerilla warfare, damage of public properties and ethnic cleansing among others (Schmid, 2013). However, radicals who subscribe to extreme ideologies have a high tendency of becoming terrorists (Borum, 2011). Summarily, not all radicals are terrorists as radicalism may not always result in violence but may pose a threat which may be a potential violence (Sedgwick, 2010). In Nigeria, not all radicals are terrorists. This explains why the government has embraced counter-radicalization and de-radicalization so as to have ideological transformation. Therefore, the definition provided by McCauley and Moskaleiko will be adopted. 'Radicalization means change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify inter group violence and demand for sacrifice in defense of the in-group' (McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2008).

De-radicalization

Apparently, the low rate of terrorist-related crimes being recorded is proof of the success of any de-radicalization programme (Schmid, 2013). Schmid sees de-radicalization as simply 'preventing and de-programming those already radicalized' (Schmid, 2013). Evidently, de-

radicalization comes after radicalization. De-radicalization is an after effect move. In essence, it is those who have been radicalized and have become terrorists and those who are radicalized and not yet terrorists that need to undergo de-radicalization. For the purpose of this study, the definition by John Horgans will be adopted. According to John Horgans (cited in Counter-terrorism Implementation Task Force, 2008), 'the term de-radicalization, on the other hand, is used to refer to programmes that are generally directed against individuals who have become radicals with the aim of re-integrating them into society, or at least dissuading them from violence'. The thrust of any de-radicalization programme is to rehabilitate and re-orientate a suspected terrorist into the society in order to ensure they do not reembrace violence (Schmid, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted Regional Security Complex Theory as a theoretical framework for this study. Regional Security Complex Theory was propounded by Buzan and Wæver 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 Wæver et al. (1993) have used it to study the post-ColdWar 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 an 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 1998).

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 analyzed 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 how security is clustered in geographically shaped regions.

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, and religious intolerance, among others.

Sawadogo, (2017) emphasizes that the empirical application of RSCT entails the areas of vulnerability whereby the security of each cannot be achieved independently but rather becomes a sine qua non for the other. The basic principles underlying RSCT is that threats (like the Boko Haram) travel faster over short distance than long ones, and insecurity is associated with proximity. Regional security is formed between units with primary security agenda and concerns. The setting up of the MNJTF was in response to the Boko Haram threat which was viewed by the African Union as a security threat not only for the Lake Chad region but the entire West Africa due to its spectrum and proximity.

The theory is significant in the study of the Multi-National Joint Task Force and the War against insurgency because explained the inter-connectedness, interactions, and interdependency between the security architecture of the Lake Chad Basin countries and also identified the transnational tendency of insecurity (in this case, insurgency), and validates the need for a harmonized and integrated regional effort in fighting insurgencies.

Review of the Related Literature

This section centers on the review of the related literature. Closely related literature that has been reviewed or investigated by other scholars.

The Role of Multinational Task Force in Counter-Insurgency in North East Nigeria

The primary goal of counter-insurgency forces is to reinstate the existing political structures as well as reduce or annihilate the usurping authority of the terrorists. Johnson (2017) agreed that counterinsurgency ‘efforts’ are tedious, difficult and require a combinations of different actors both national, and regional governments as well as other relevant stakeholders to combat the complexity and dynamic nature of insurgency.

Obialor and Ugochukwu (2017) noted that “the fundamental challenge of today’s symmetric conflict imposed by extremist groups is that legitimate governments like Nigeria and Lake Chad basin countries are required by international law, national values, human right observers, demands of public safety and the pressure of public opinion, to impose restraints on their own conduct”. This in turn imposes limits on the application of hard military power. Therefore, any effort to combat insurgency must be guided by the use of legitimate force within rules of engagement which recognize the need to uphold human rights, equality and justice in their tactics and methods.

Moreover, due to the nature and complexity of insurgency, and the need to counter it without offending the fundamental rules of engagement and relevant international law,

Nigeria and other Lake Chad countries have resorted to the principle of collective security. According to Olawale (2017), Nigeria and other member countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), (Niger, Chad and Cameroon) including Benin Republic under a multilateral collaboration established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2014. He further observes that the meeting held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 5–7 February between the Lake Chad Basin countries, the AU, ECOWAS, the EU and UN which put finishing touches to the draft operational plans of the MNJTF.

Ndimele (2016) observes that the contributing countries of the MNJTF have begun a joint fight against Boko Haram which has sworn allegiance to ISIS and had killed hundreds of people through suicide bombings by deploying 8,700 soldiers in the Lake Chad region. According to a BBC report (2015) the initial attempts to strengthen the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) involving Nigeria and members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission did not succeed. However, following the massive attack on the headquarters of MJTF in Baga, Nigeria on 5 January 2015, the African Union (AU) approved a regional force of 7 500 troops to contain the excesses of the insurgency group. In fact, Bappah (2016) concludes that not until the active involvement of troops from Chad and Niger from January 2015, Boko Haram insurgents were succeeding in their effort to establish an Islamic caliphate in parts of north-east Nigeria. Since 2010, the Nigerian military, civilian joint task force (CJTF), and the special counter extremism forces have struggled to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Nigeria against Boko Haram insurgents, with little success. The insurgents were able to fly the flag of their ‘state’ in Nigeria’s territory.

Tar and Sunday (2017) contend that “despite some setbacks; the MNJTF has recorded several victories against Boko Haram due to good communication skills which encouraged the local population to collaborate with security forces in recapturing the areas previously held by the sect. William, et al (2016) found that 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. Similarly, Olawale (2017) further observes that the sector 3 dealing with Boko Haram in Nigeria is known as ‘operation Lafiya Dole’ (peace by force). He concludes that ‘although this security regiment is not without problems, it has contributed significantly to the degrading of the capacity of Boko Haram. In Nigeria, for example, the operations of the MNJTF have limited the activities of Boko Haram to the vast Sambisa forest. Their supply lines from neighboring countries also have been totally cut off to the extent that some of them are now beginning to negotiate their surrender. Their capacity to launching suicide attacks on Nigerian cities has been drastically curtailed’.

Usman & Mustapha (2017) argue that several limitations, the MNJTF has thus far managed some successes against Boko Haram. In February 2015 the armies of the MNJTF recaptured thirty-six towns across three states in the north-east of Nigeria. Also,

forces from sector 2 and 4 from Chad and Niger were instrumental in expelling Boko Haram from the key towns of MallamFatori and Damasak, killing 300 fighters in the process. In March 2015 the Nigerian government announced that only three local government areas were under the control of Boko Haram Usman & Mustapha (2017). There is no doubt that since the establishment of the MNJTF, it has recorded some degree of success in the fight against terrorism within the sub-region.

The Human Rights Watch, through its Nigeria's researcher, Mausegund, discovered that in April, 2017 over 11,595 Boko Haram hostages were freed. And in June 2017, a combined effort of MNJTF, 21 Brigade of the Nigerian Army, and the Civilian JTF conducted an intensive military patrol around Zangebe, Maiwa, Algaiti and Mainari villages, all in Mafa local government of Borno state; which is 40 kilometers away from Maiduguri, and liberated over 5,000 hostages (Africa Report, 2020).

It was based on the foregoing that Mr. Feltman, the United Nations under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, asserts that:

“We commend the Lake Chad Basin countries’ efforts to combat Boko Haram. The regional offensive involving Chadian, Cameroonian, Nigerian and Nigerian troops operating under the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and has recaptured 80 per cent of the areas once under Boko Haram control, freed thousands of captives and prevented terrorist attacks (Feltman, 2016).

Nigerian Government Response to Boko Haram Activities

Nigeria is one of the first countries in Africa to comply with the United Nation's conventions and protocols on combating terrorism and a compliant of almost all existing conventions, protocols and resolutions on combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) (US Department of State, 2007). It has also gone further into passing the bills proscribing these offences.

It established a Presidential Advisory Committee on terrorism and further empowered the National Security Adviser to deal decisively with outlaws of these acts. It went on to grant amnesty to Niger Delta militants and empowered the youths through rehabilitation programme. Aside from the passage of those bills, Nigerian government have also established a special agency on terrorism and bombing. A special adviser on terrorism was also appointed by President Goodluck Jonathan. The government promised also to carry out the training of security agents on intelligence and intelligence networking.

Nigeria has also entered into pacts with foreign nations like -the United States of America, France, United Kingdom, Israel and other countries in the fight against terrorism. And these countries have offered to assist Nigerian government in the battle against terrorism especially Boko Haram insurgents This has further strengthened government resolve in fighting terrorism. In the past US, Britain and Israel had assisted Nigeria in technical areas especially in the area of investigation and forensic science.

It has severally made overtures to Boko Haram with the view of reaching a truce a dialogue by sending former President Olusegun Obasanjo to the group. But it failed. Continual efforts are still being pursued with the view of dialoguing with the sect for

peace. It is being observed that with the destruction of the main operational base of the group in Borno State, they will have no option than to surrender to government forces. Government has also established Almajiri Schools in Northern States with the view of using it to educate the teeming illiterate youths in the zone and thereby reduce Boko Haram foot soldiers.

Furthermore, the Boko Haram menace has prompted the enactment of policies by the Nigerian government, as well as the emergence of bilateral and multilateral ties. These include the declaration of state of emergency, imposition of curfew, establishment of the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army in Maiduguri, relocation of military command centre to Maiduguri, banning and restoration of Global System for Mobile Communication (GSMC) services, establishment of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and setting up of administrative panel to negotiate with Boko Haram (Akinbi, 2015; Akpan *et al.*, 2014). Others are setting up a committee on the proliferation of small and light weapons, Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVE) Programme, rolling out of National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), as well as legal frameworks of Transfer of Property Act (TPA) 2011 and TPA 2013 Dasuki, 2013; *The Nigerian Observer*, 17th October 2014).

The bilateral and multilateral moves include MNJTF put in place by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), training of 650 Nigerian soldiers in combat operations by the US DOD, listing of Boko Haram as a proscribed terrorist organization by the UK in 2013, labelling of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) by the United States (US) in 2014, designating Boko Haram as a terrorist organization by the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) in 2014 (Amy, 2014; Campbell, 2014; Onuoha and Ugwueze, 2012; Panapress, 2015). Assistance has also taken the forms of provision of aid by the USAID, and proscription of Boko Haram leaders with placement of \$7 million bounty on AbubakarShekau, the group's leader by the US and Nigeria's recent entry into the Saudi-led Coalition of Muslim Countries against Terrorism (Akinbajo, 2016; Amy, 2014; Campbell, 2014; Onuoha and Ugwueze, 2012; Panapress, 2015).

Akinbi (2015), sees government's response in the form of dialogue, military expedition (in which he discovered that some 'bad eggs' in the military divulge classified information to the sect members which contribute to failure in military operations), declaration of state of emergency, call for international assistance and relocation of military command center to Maiduguri. He concluded that these measures are good options but noted that, in the case of Boko Haram, it has not yielded the desired positive result. He also advocated for the strengthening of the joint task force in the area of intelligence, surveillance among others and the necessity to address poverty. Akinbi's views align with the fact that intelligence is a strong pillar of counter-terrorism (Chaliand, 1987; Bobbitt, 2008). Making an assessment on the level of intelligence, Solomon observed that:

Even within this narrow counter terrorism [sic] lens, Abuja's approach to Boko Haram is problematic. It is indeed hard to fight an organization [sic] when one does not know even its name let alone its organizational [sic] structure. This also points to the human intelligence assets the Nigerian State has on the sect Solomon, (2012).

This portrays the poor intelligence gathering of the Nigerian security system and the need to jettison prejudice in their operations. Equally commenting on intelligence, Babatunde (2009) in his interview with a security agent commented that security agents 'react to but do not prevent' violence of which Boko Haram terrorism is among. He further asserts that slow response to information on potential violence matters result in violent conflict as it was in the case of the Maitatsine riots in the 1980s to the present Boko Haram crises. Solomon (2012) equally observed that Boko Haram will continue to grow except their financial support networks are blocked. This establishes the fact that the terrorists have sponsors as one of the major sources of their finance. Ogbonnaya et al(2014) observed that some terrorists and a couple of their sponsors that have been arrested are being persecuted in various law courts across the country. Isyaku (2013) commented on the arrests that have been made on terrorist-related matters but criticised the bail applications being granted to suspected terrorists amidst endangering the security situation of the country. This is corroborated by Serrano and Pieri (2014) who submitted that the 'weak judicial and penal systems in the country, which also suffer from varying degrees of corruption, have made it so that there is only limited faith that insurgents will be properly prosecuted or effectively detained'. The prosecution of Boko Haram suspects may thus generate some reservations.

Northern Nigeria has suffered low enrolment rate especially at the primary school level (Patrick and Felix, 2013). The reason for this was given by Ruquyyatu (cited in Patrick and Felix, 2013) who blamed the situation on the longstanding effect of Islamic education as most parents are yet to embrace Western education.

Challenges of the Multinational Joint Task Force

The principal challenge of the MNJTF was the initial reluctance of Nigeria to allow foreign interventions into her territory since she considered the fight against Boko Haram to be an internal affair and strictly a Nigerian issue. In fact, the Nigerian authorities considered the MNJTF as a threat to her "sovereignty, national pride and political image". However, "mounting regional and international pressures to address the increasing threat posed by Boko Haram" forced the Nigeria government to reluctantly accept the joint forces, but with the "contingent deplored within their national territory," and "operations aimed at preventing the expansion of Boko Haram, as well as their terrorist groups and eliminating their presence."

Another challenge was the suspicious and tense atmosphere that characterized relations among the four principal contributing countries. Prior to the formation of the MNJTF, Chad unilaterally sent troops into Nigeria without the latter's consent. There was also

some tension between Nigeria and Niger. Niger referred to the Nigerian troops as being “cowards,” while Nigeria referred to the troops from Niger as “serial looters.” This was not a healthy relationship between forces which were supposed to cooperate against Boko Haram. This initial lack of cooperation led to many persistent and uncoordinated military actions by the forces of the different states. Each time there was victory against Boko Haram by the MNJTF; individual countries claimed victory and made propaganda of competence and better training. This mutual suspicion probably explains why the Nigerian government did not permit foreign troops into their territory. It needed confidence-building among the Boko Haram affected countries and the international community to ease tension and encourage collaboration for mutual gains (Ugwu, 2015).

The MNJTF also faced financial challenges which seriously affected its operations and effectiveness. The contributions from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger were largely insufficient to permanently hold back Boko Haram activities. These warranted contributions from friendly countries, which could still not meet up the estimated budget of US\$700 million. These financial challenges were further compounded by increasing economic difficulties faced by the affected countries. Even Chad and Nigeria which are the two biggest military contributors to the MNJTF are currently facing economic hardship with the global economic crisis. Cameroon on her part is facing similar challenges including the huge refugee problems caused by insurgency. Funding of the MNJTF has therefore been very slow as member states have not been respecting their pledges. This has forced the military of the individual member countries to pick up the financial burden, thereby, "creating financial strain on already tight budgets (Yusuf, 2016).

Human rights challenges have also been identified as one the speed breaks against the MNJTF. The Force has been accused of not respecting the basic rights of prisoners and civilians and the excessive use of force without distinguishing between combatants and civilians. This has attracted criticisms from many international organizations and human rights movements. The case of the Cameroonian soldiers accused of killing two women and their babies for being simply accused of being Boko Haramists readily comes to mind. Amnesty International and many Cameroonian local human rights activists have attested to the fact that the gruesome video on social media was actually carried out in Cameroon. The government of Cameroon in reaction ordered the arrest of the soldier accused for perpetrating the killings (Felbab-Brown, 2018).

This notwithstanding, there is also inadequate background information based on local realities. No doubt, 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 analyzing 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. They have often got in with too-late solutions to the conflicts when much damage has already been done. Of course, inadequate knowledge of the conflicts only lead to conflict management approaches which are foreign to the local realities. There are inadequate early warning mechanisms to detect and prevent potential conflicts. Otherwise, the Boko Haram equation should have been solved or relevant local approaches adopted to roll back their activities (Evylin, 2016).

Conclusion/ Recommendations

The emergence 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 armed 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 regional stability of the entire sub-Saharan 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 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 study. 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 their 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; halt in Boko Haram expansion; retaking of almost all the territories previously held by the sect; freeing of abductees; forcing the surrender of Boko Haram members; facilitating the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs); reopening of trans-Saharan road in Maiduguri and many other achievements.

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.

As a result, therefore, the study concludes that even though significant successes have been made on the fight against Boko Haram insurgency, 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 failed to adequately address them. As a means of eliminating the long resurging threats of Boko Haram, the study recommends the following:

1. Nigerian government should de-radicalize the youths 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.
2. The nature of Boko Haram and the environment in which it operates pose operational challenges to the armies combating them. 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.
3. MNJTF should increase its counter-finance capabilities and take immediate action in areas it currently has control over, such as cross-border smuggling and trafficking to limit Boko Haram's access to funding.
4. Anti-corruption should not be based on party, religious or ethnic sentiments: those involved in corruption should be swiftly prosecuted and convicted.

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