

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL COOPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY: A FOCUS ON BORNO STATE OF NIGERIA, 2015-2019

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Abstract

Most West African countries are weak in exercising control and authority in locations that are far away from their national capitals. This weakness of these states offers sanctuary and an enabling environment to terrorist movement within Africa and beyond. The ungoverned remote areas of West Africa and vast empty land of the Sahel regions provide safe haven for international terrorist organisations. The wide spread and diffusion of insurgences and acts of terrorism have sensitized governments and their agencies to not only consciously identify the roots causes of these phenomena but to put a collaborative and complex mechanism to address the problem. This paper therefore examines the effectiveness of regional cooperation against the Boko Haram insurgency with the focus on Borno State of Nigeria especially during the first tenure of President Mohammed Buhari from 2015 to 2019. The paper is anchored on the Security Complex theory. In terms of research method, the paper relies on the Explanatory Design and utilizes empirical data generated from official records and data from secondary sources with descriptive analysis. The paper argues that the West African sub-region between 2015 to 2019 has improved members cooperation to enhance security through the formation of a multinational joint task force to fight insurgents though, the situation still remains fragmented and fragile with serious humanitarian consequence. The paper therefore recommends that beyond military approach, there is also the need to improve the quality of lives of the people and humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and socio-economic development programmes of the affected and ravaged region.

Keywords: Boko Haram, insurgency, regional response, regional security, terrorism.

Introduction

The ongoing counter terrorism and counter insurgency (CTCOIN) operations in the North east of Nigeria in particular and Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) countries in general has undergone several transformation aimed at improving its operation to make it more efficient and result oriented in order to restore normalcy in the region.

However, most West African countries are weak at exercising control and authority in locations that are far away from their National capitals. This weakness of the state offers sanctuary and an enabling environment to terrorist movement within Africa and beyond. The ungoverned remote areas of West Africa and vast empty land of Sahel region provide safe haven for international terrorist organisations. The widespread and diffusion of insurgencies and acts of terrorism have sensitized governments and their agencies to not only consciously identify the root causes of the phenomena but to put a complex and collaborative mechanism to address the problem.

The Boko Haram insurgency in particular cuts across the borders of Nigeria to Niger, Cameroon and Chad – the region known as the Lake Chad Basin. The complications of collaboration across governments and other players has made this conflict particularly confounding to these countries. Through the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the four, countries are trying to cooperate on competitive resource issues related to Lake Chad, which has been drying rapidly and losing surface area. They also face a range of challenges to their democratic order and state legitimacy; powerful business groups frequently shift their alliances between the state and the insurgents based on who they think can best protect trade and provide stability. This influential merchant class is too often overlooked in assessing conditions and the insurgency in northeastern

Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, (Ibrahim and Bala, 2018).

Boko Haram's affiliation with the self-styled Islamic State extremist movement adds the tensions of international terrorism and connections with violence in other countries of West Africa. Groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which originally operated mainly in Algeria but has extended its tentacles into sub-Saharan Africa, contribute to tension as weapons and extremist ideologies spread across the region. Even Boko Haram is fracturing, compounding the complications of resolving the conflict and establishing stability.

The Boko Hara insurgency, furthermore, is both a symptom of state fragility and exacerbates the vulnerability. Long or repeated struggles against a range of economic, social, and political forces have sapped the Nigerian government's capacity to carry out basic constitutional functions, such as providing for the security and welfare of its citizens. As a result, the social contract between the state and its citizens is frayed, and the government's legitimacy is eroding.

Ibrahim, et, al, (2018) observes it that, in conceptualizing the best approach to ending the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, especially in Nigeria, the goals cannot be limited to defeating Boko Haram. They must extend to winning the peace. State building and the cultivation of an inclusive society are vital so that citizens feel they belong and have a fair chance at a livelihood. The interrelated issues that created the crisis – state fragility, poverty, competition over Lake Chad's overstretched resources, violent extremism, and so on – must be addressed comprehensively.

One major element of such an evolution must be a transition away from the Nigerian military's dominance in the northeast and restoration of civilian control of governance and security. Such a process will be complex and needs to take into account the origin and progression of the conflict, the key stakeholders and institutions involved, and the context in which they will interact. However, this analysis is short sighted and fall short of appreciating that the insurgents are engaged in unconventional warfare whose bases are far beyond Nigeria territories and require sustained regional cooperation to degrade them, while providing comprehensive humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, rehabilitation, re-assurance and integration.

With the emergence of the “*Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*” otherwise known as Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, the Lake Chad Basin Commission in 2012 mandated the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) a combined military formation, comprising of units from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to bring an end to the Boko Haram insurgency. Indeed, these regional efforts toward counterinsurgency and counterterrorism reinforce the significance of regional cooperation in dealing with insurgency and terrorism. Yet, such regional efforts are very often confronted with problems and challenges where differing national interests and priorities are generally believed to have limited the effectiveness of regional cooperation on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, (Morch, 2018). It is against this background that this paper examined regional cooperation and management of Boko Hara insurgency with special focus on Borno state of Nigeria, from 2015 – 2018.

Conceptual and contextual discourse

The idea of regional cooperation and management of Boko Haram is rooted on policy that necessitated the need to evolve a robust approach in responding the overgrowing emergence of insurgencies and terrorism in the 21st century era. Therefore, as a point of takeoff, it is imperative to examine what really constitute terrorism and insurgency. These concepts are often shrouded with controversies. Are these concepts synonymous and could therefore be used interchangeable but having inherent characteristic in the dynamic of political violence.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to suggest definitions for terrorism and insurgency. This is important for two distinct but related reasons. While some scholars explicitly state their notion of development, others proceed on the assumption that we all know what the concepts are. The

problem however is that both those who explain their definitions and those who assume them either by design or default, fall prey to several disturbing biases. As a result, most of ever-growing bodies of literature on security is more than bewildering.

The terms terrorism and insurgency have been viewed differently by different people and organisations depending on the perception and circumstance leading to such definitions. There is therefore no single universally accepted definition of terrorism or insurgency up to date. For instance, there is a popular adage that says “one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter”. Some people have also tried to distinguish between 'acts of terrorism' and 'terrorism' itself, arguing that acts of terrorism do not necessarily translate to terrorism. In like manner, ordinarily speaking, the terms militancy and terrorism seem to be used interchangeably by certain individuals trying to defend related acts carried out by them or other people.

“Terrorism” may well be the most important word in the political vocabulary these days, as was stated by one of its prominent students. Alex P. Schmid, Director of the Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrew (Schmid & Jongman, 2005:375). However, one could argue that little has changed since the time when the same scholar concluded in 1984 that academic researchers from many fields have spilled almost as much ink as the actors of terrorism have spilled blood and yet have reached no consensus on what terrorism is (Schmid and Jongman, 2005). After thirty years of hard labour, there is still no generally accepted definition of terrorism, concludes Walter Lacquer of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (Ibid 395). Even though terrorism is not an unprecedented phenomenon. It is as old as the hill... confusion prevails in the question of its nature. Terrorism indeed seems a contested and intensely political concept, perhaps not far from a catch-all political signifier (Der Derian, 2005:23). Elucidating its nature bears relevance in both theoretical and practical terms.

The central questions of why there is no agreed definition of terrorism, so much hard labor has been invested into the effort to find one, as Walter Lacquer's quote maintained. Boaz Ganor, the Director of the International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism, provides a number of reasons;

- 1) Terrorism is a contested concept and political, legal, social science and popular notions of it are often diverging,
- 2) The definition question is linked to (de-)legitimization and criminalization,
- 3) There are many types of “Terrorism”, with different forms and manifestations,
- 4) The term has undergone changes in meaning in the more than 200 years of its existence. (Maikaba & Uba, 2016).

The aggregate definitions are here to stand for the outcomes of the two projects in which numerous other definitions were analyzed in an attempt to arrive at a definition that would be acceptable to the academic community. The first aggregate definition discussed by Schmid is in formal terms a “long” one and, as such, perhaps the description could be considered a more pertinent title. After having sent a draft definition to the members of the research community in the mid - 1980s, Schmid projected their reactions into the final versions, including 16 most common elements. Thus, for the purpose of this paper: -

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent actions employed by (semi)Clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby in contrast to assassination the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (target of opportunity) or selectively (representatives of symbolic targets) from a target population and serve as message generators. Threat – and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization)/(Imperiled) victims and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s), turning it into a target of horror, a target of demands, of a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion or

propaganda is primarily sought (Schmid and Jongman, 2005:28).

The second aggregating project presented by a team of researchers comprised Leonard Weinberg. Ami Pedahzur and Sican Hirsch-Hoefler (2004), who chose the opposite approach, having analyzed 73 definitions appearing in major academic journals in the field of terrorism and political violence, studies in conflict and terrorism and terrorism. The authors decided to refrain from incorporating as many elements as possible and instead proposed of consensus definition based on the lowest denominator: “terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence which pursuit of publicity plays a significant role”.

While for instance, terrorism rarely brings about political change on its own, insurgency attempts to bring about change through force of arms. Similarly, terrorists often apply a wide range of damages when compared to insurgents. On the other hand, while conventional war involves adversaries more or less symmetric in equipment or training, insurgency involves adversaries that are asymmetric, weak, and almost always a sub-state group. Traditionally however, insurgencies seek to overthrow an existing order with one that is commensurate with their political, economic, ideological or religious goals (Gompert & Gordon, 2008:23). According to Kilcullen, “*Insurgency is a struggle to control a contested political space, between a state for a group of states or occupying powers) and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers*” (Kilcullen, 2006:112).

Authority recognized as such by the United Nations, when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents. “The British Army counter-insurgency manual. Army Field Manual (AFM) defined insurgency as:

“an organized protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control”. (Petraeus & Amos, 2006:1-11)

Indeed, as Moore (n.d) aptly notes; while this definition of insurgency may be succinct, it orients on military and security actions, and fails to reflect the wider scope and complexity of contemporary insurgencies, especially their protracted and political, economic, and social; dimensions. With the emphasis on subversion and armed conflict, the foregoing definition identifies insurgency as predominantly a military problem. Yet, insurgencies seek radical change to the existing political, economic or social order through the use of sustained violence and political disruption (Moore n.d). its essence is protracted, asymmetric violence political, legal, and ethical ambiguity; and the use of complex terrain, psychological warfare, and political mobilization, insurgency as Metz (2007) notes arises when a group decides that the gap between their political expectations and the opportunities afforded them is unacceptable and can only be remedied by force. Insurgents avoid battlespaces where they are at a disadvantage often the conventional military sphere and focus on those where they can attain parity, particularly the psychological and the political (Metz, 2007).

Moveh (2018) observes that counterinsurgency can simply be seen as the opposite of insurgency. It involves a combination of measures undertaken by the legitimate government of a country to curb or suppress an insurgency. Thus, while insurgents for instance try to overthrow the existing political authority, the counterinsurgent measures try to reinstate the existing political structures as well as reduce or annihilate the usurping authority of the insurgents. In the main, counterinsurgents hold monopoly of violence, legitimacy, as well as other material resources often exclusively reserved for states. In another submission the “US guide to the analysis of insurgency (2012)” defined counterinsurgency as a “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency”. Indeed, “effective counterinsurgency integrates and synchronizes political, security, legal, economic, development, and psychological activities to create a holistic approach aimed at weakening the insurgents while bolstering the government's legitimacy” (US government, 2012).

The approaches to counterinsurgency may generally be classified into two: the enemy centered

approached and the population centered approach. While the enemy centered approach focusses on the defeat of the insurgent in an essentially militaristic operation, the population centered approach emphasizes the protection of the populace not necessarily through direct military confrontation with the insurgents but through other socio-economic and political programs aimed at winning the support of the populace. These two approaches offer significant insights into the nature of counterinsurgency. Indeed, it has been noted that counter-insurgent campaigns will rarely be purely enemy-centric or population-centric, but will generally include elements of both, with the relative balance changing over time (US government 2012, Galula, 1964).

Thus, a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy recognizes that a sole military solution is not feasible, making it essential for a dual military-political solution that adopts a population-centric approach. Counterinsurgency doctrine rests on the critical pillars of protecting the local population, promoting good governance, eliminating enemy safe for a critical analysis of the subject. For instance, the issue of which organization, group or individuals are more likely to adopt terror tactics and why it is ignored. This indeed is not unconnected to the fact that various actors ranging from state to non-state actors have adopted terror tactics in achieving a diverse range of aims and objectives.

Theoretical framework

The paper is anchored within theoretical discourse of regional security complex theory (RSCT) as its frame of its analysis. This theory posits that international security should be examined from a regional perspective, and that relations between states (and other actors) exhibit regular, geographically clustered patterns Regional complex is the term coined and traceable to Waever (2003).

RSCT suggests an analytical scheme for structuring analysis on how security concerns are tied together in a regional formation where geographical adjacency is the faction of paramount importance. A regional security complex (RSC) can best be described as a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another. The basic concept underpinning (RSC) is that “most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity often associated with proximity. The function of an RSC is mandated by the interaction of anarchy with geographical factors. While global security issues may at times dominate regional concerns, the latter will nevertheless always be present to a greater or lesser extent. In essence, the security of each actor in a region interacts with the security of other actors within the region, often leading to intense security inter-dependence. A “regional security complex” therefore is seen as a group of states whose primary security concerns significantly links closely together, such that their national securities cannot be realistically be considered apart from one another (Buzan, 1991:90). Buzan Waeva (2003) further argue that security complexes depend primarily on the pressures arising from geographical proximity, and the interplay between the anarchic structures as how balances of power play out in the system. They view the international system as coexisting of regional clusters, whereby security complexes are magnified within these clusters.

“Regional security complex” is that a theoretical construct used to reveal the inevitability of interdependence existent in regional sub-systems. They represent an analytical category, or more precisely, units of analysis whose secularization processes are so interconnected and are best understood within the context of such interconnection. It is also important to note that the boarders of “regional security complexes” are defined according to desirable patterns of amity and enmity which is facilitated and deepened by physical proximity.

The theory appears to pay more emphasis on geographical location and adjacency in the realization of security concerns over economic consideration and other determinates of cooperation in the international system. Notwithstanding, the theory is found to be more relevant

considering the idea of a regional cooperation in the management of Boko Haram insurgency in Lake Chad region represents a regional security.

Thus, this laid theoretical and philosophical foundation for the management of regional cooperation in management of Boko Haram insurgency which is the main thrust of this paper.

Methodology

To realize the broad objectives of this paper, it was situated on a sound methodological plane. Literature that abound on regional cooperation and management of Boko Haram insurgency in West African region with particular interest in Lake Chad Basin and similar literature was reviewed. The paper built on elements of past research, verifiable evidence on the issue and observation in order to promote and embrace theoretical unity. Relevant documentary sources for proper analysis included conference papers, relevant topics in textbooks, academic journals, scholarly articles, newspapers, memos, archival records and papers on contemporary argument on the subject matter

Regional Cooperation and Management of Boko Haram Insurgency.

The counter-Boko Haram mandate of the MNJTF embraces several objectives, including ensuring a safe and secure environment in the Lake Chad region, putting a stop to the violence against civilians, supporting the stabilization programs to reduce the impact of the Boko Haram insurgency in the region, and providing efficient assistance to the affected populations. This mandate was designed as a goal driven process, divided into two phases. Offensive Operations: Isolate and neutralize Boko Haram factions; disrupt command and control and communication systems; cut supply lines; shut down traffic circuits; and reduce the potential for military operations. Stabilization Operations: Facilitate the return of displaced persons and refugees; support the restoration of administrations in areas where they are no longer present; support the restoration of public security mission by the security forces in areas of concern; and contribute to the initiation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DOR) process of illegally armed individuals.

Ibrahim and Bala (2018) observed that, the Boko Haram insurgency cuts across the borders of Nigeria to Niger, Cameroon, and Chad-the region known as the Lake Chad Basin. The complication of collaborating across governments and other players has made this conflict particularly confounding to these countries. Through the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the four countries are trying to cooperate on competitive resources related to Lake Chad, which has been drying rapidly and losing surface area. They also face a range of challenges to their democratic order and state and the insurgents based on who they think can best protect trade and provide stability. This influential merchant class is too often overlooked in assessing conditions and the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

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The Boko Haram insurgency, furthermore, is both a symptom of state fragility and exacerbates the vulnerability. Long or repeated struggles against a range of economic, social, and political forces have sapped the Nigerian government's capacity to carry out basic constitutional functions, such as providing for the security and welfare of its citizens. As a result, the social contract between the state and its citizens is frayed, and the government's legitimacy is eroding.

Mahmood and Ani (2018) pointed out that, Cameroon's response to Boko Haram's expansion was initially slow and unfocused. This quickly changed as Boko Haram grew more powerful in Nigeria

and began to threaten Cameroon's sovereignty in its far north. Beginning in 2012, Boko Haram started carrying out limited raids in the far north region of Cameroon, primarily in Fotokol, Amchidé, and Dabanga. These attacks, sometimes deadly, were isolated cases and appeared to be largely ignored because Cameroon's government perceived the Boko Haram threat on its territory to be low. Cameroon focused on preventing smugglers from trafficking in illegal goods, and its slow pace of its defense forces' deployment against Boko Haram militants became a source of tension between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Two particular events set the stage for Cameroonian military operations against Boko Haram. First, on May 17, 2014, the heads of state of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin met in Paris with French President François Hollande, and they approved a regional approach to combating the spread of Boko Haram. This agreement paved the way for a more coordinated effort between countries, in addition to a greater response by each individual country toward the Boko Haram threat. Second, on May 22, 2014, the UN Security Council placed Boko Haram on its terrorist list. This decision convinced the Cameroonian government that there was an urgent need for action against this insurgent group.

The initial Cameroonian security strategy against Boko Haram rested on three pillars. First, Cameroonian forces would pressure Boko Haram at the border with Nigeria. The area of operation would have a limited depth in order to contain the threat close to the border areas. Furthermore, self-defence committees in border villages would be part of the Popular Defense Forces and help with this effort. Second, Cameroon would focus on a broader military deployment throughout the region. To protect the civilian population in these remote areas, Cameroon defense forces would stress tactical mobility, including the capacity to patrol, and its ability to engage in kinetic operations through specific equipment deployed, including MI17 and MI24 helicopters. Third, the Cameroonian government initiated coordinated inter-departmental action with the aim of improving collaboration across sectors. This coordinated effort would allow the population to resume social and economic activities and emphasized the need to go beyond security, as expressed in the report of the Ministry of Justice on the state of human rights in Cameroon in 2015.

In order to execute this three-pronged approach to countering Boko Haram, the area of operations of the Cameroon Army in the far north region was divided into two zones: Zone North and Zone South. First, Operation EMERGENCE 4, which commenced in August 2014, was executed in the northern sector. With the 41st Infantry Brigade (41 BRIM) of the Cameroon Army as its nucleus, it brought together Special Forces squads, various specialized units, amphibious infantry battalions, and artillery battalions. Omar Mahmood, an expert on security issues across sub-Saharan Africa, points out that these security operations succeeded in disrupting food and ammunition supply lines between Boko Haram's strongholds and their different combating units. Furthermore, Operation EMERGENCE 4's achievements were instrumental in the reopening of certain critical regional trade routes, particularly between Fotokol and Garoua, and even the reopening of specific cross-border corridors between Maiduguri, Bama, Banki, Amchide, and Limani (Mahmood and Ani, 2018)

Secondly, Operation ALPHA was executed in the southern sector and controlled the Kolofta, Limani, and Amchidé regions. In addition to the existing forces, several elite infantry Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) troops deployed in this area as the scope of the missions widened. Operation ALPHA established intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) observation posts for monitoring and reporting on activities at the borders. Moreover, Operation ALPHA opted for constructing barriers as part of its operations, digging a series of trenches over a distance of about 100 km along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. This tactic resulted in a significant decline in cross-border insurgent activity. (France, 2018)

Mahmood and Ani (2018), argue that, despite these efforts, deliberate attacks on civilians in border villages in Cameroon did not stop. The districts of Kolofata, Waza and Mayo Moskota

were targeted the most, which is not surprising, given the fact that Boko Haram recruited and trained numerous young men from these densely populated Kanuri districts, many of whom joined to escape poverty. Mahmood observes that, in the far north, sections of the population have gradually resumed their economic activities thanks to the involvement of the Army. Yet, the population was also frustrated by the lack of effective coordination between Operation ALPHA and Operation EMERGENCE 4, which undermined efficiency and results. Cameroonian operations against Boko Haram are summarized in Figure 1.

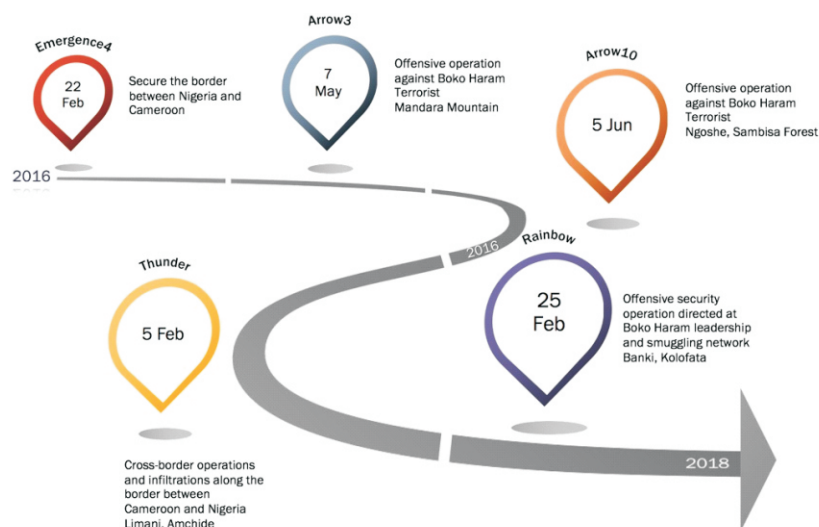


Figure 1. Major Cameroonian Operations against Boko Haram since January 2016

Source: - Adapted from Kerins and Mouaha-Bell, 2018

Beginning in 2014 onward, Boko Haram's violence in Borno State forced thousands of refugees to flee north into Niger, specifically its far eastern Diffa region, which shares many of the same ethnic, religious, and economic characteristics of the population in northeastern Nigeria. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of September 2017, over 115,000 Nigerian refugees live in Niger's Diffa region, and 122,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) left their villages since the beginning of the insurgency in Nigeria. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, observes that, "most of the 250,000 displaced people in Diffa live in 140 informal settlements alongside vulnerable communities, which are feeling the economic and social strain of this large influx of refugees." For example, N'Gagam, located near the border with Nigeria, originally had a population of 1,000 but, as of 2018, accommodates around 13,500 refugees and IDPs fleeing Boko Haram attacks.

Niger, like its neighbours, has executed a number of military operations aimed at diminishing the effects of Boko Haram in its country. In the aftermath of the 2014 Paris Summit, Niger launched Operation INGAR (which means "shield" in Kanuri) in the Diffa region. The operation was designed to halt the northward advance of Boko Haram and protect the population in Diffa in particular. Niger's Minister of the Interior, Hassoumi Massaoudou, described INGAR as "the largest military operation ever mounted in Niger" to face the most urgent problem at that time. Operation INGAR placed the police, gendarmerie, National Guard, and military operating in the Diffa region under one command. Furthermore, Nigerian troops, in cooperation with Chadian armed forces, carried out multiple cross border offensives into Nigeria in 2014 and 2015 to

prevent

Boko Haram from establishing bases in the Nigeria-Niger border region. Despite the remoteness of the Diffa region, Niger was able to halt Boko Haram's advance into the country through a dedicated, well-organized and long-term operation.

Chad also began to take military action against Boko Haram beginning in 2015. Chad has a long history of political turmoil, military coup attempts, and armed rebellions. Initially, like Niger and Cameroon, Chad had not identified Boko Haram as a significant threat until its rapid expansion and seizure of territory in 2014. The rise of Boko Haram threatened two critical assets in particular: Chad's capital city of N'Djamena, which was less than 50 miles from Boko Haram-controlled territory in Nigeria, and several key trade routes critical to Chad's access to the coast that ran through Borno State and the far north region of Cameroon. Beginning around 2014, the Chadian Army responded to Boko Haram's attacks, and gained a reputation throughout Africa as a strong counterinsurgent force.

Assanvo (2018) argue that, Experts in African security interpreted these postures as absence of true solidarity among Lake Chad Basin studies. The implication of this creates therefore, the need for a coordinated effort to counter terrorism and Boko Haram insurgency after each country's independence strategies failed to rid the region of the insurgent threat. One of the challenges that has continued to feature is the observed differences in the operational doctrines of participating contingents which is said to features during combined operation. Whereas the Anglophone countries emphasize on the principle of maintenance of momentum and easy of efforts among others the francophone countries focus on concentration of forces. However, one key principle of war that can address this challenge is flexibility. Participatory countries need to be more flexible and be willing to accept suggestions aimed at achieving more results.

For instance, in 1998, a Multinational Joint Security Force was put into operation, however, it remained limited to infrequent and insignificant patrols on the shores of Lake Chad. Overall, the joint security forces were ineffective in achieving a genuine improvement in the overall security situation because Cameroon did not participate, given a border conflict with Nigeria since 1993 over the Bakassi peninsula. This dispute made Cameroon reluctant to cooperate with Nigerian forces and the patrols were halted in 2000

In reality the security cooperation between the states affected by Boko Haram was very weak until the Paris summit of 2014, when key countries agreed to security issues of regional interest and the Multi-National Joint Task Force appeared as the only instrument available to support these goals. The intractability of the Boko Haram insurgency compelled the LCBC member states and Benin to reactivate the Multinational Joint Security Force on October 7, 2014 to fill the gap left by the regional inertia of the past decade and was rebranded the "Multinational Joint Task Force" (MNJTF). Although the MNJTF was created under the leadership of the LCBC, only four of the six member states – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria – constituted the joint military force along with Benin, which is not a member of the LCBC (Creta Galecizzi, 2018).

The Multi-National Joint Task Force then became a coalition of states united around a common goal: defeating Boko Haram,

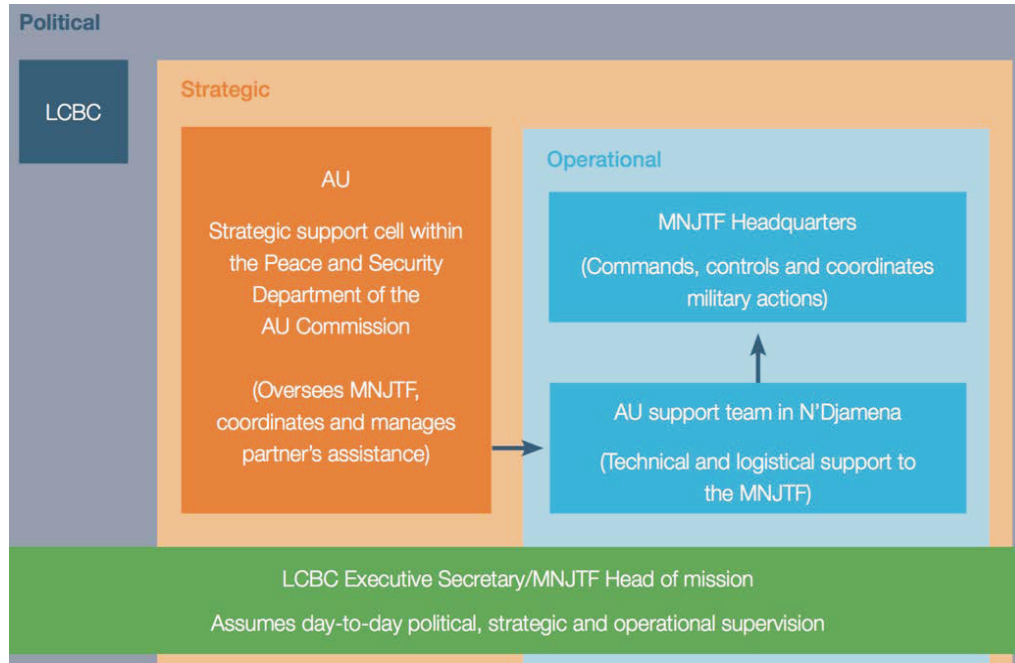


Figure 2. MNJTF Organizational Design

Source: - Adopted from Kerins and Mouaha-Bell, 2018

At their 469th meeting on November 25, 2014, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) fully endorsed the Multi-National Joint Task Force's activation. However, it was not until its 484th meeting, held on January 29, 2015 that the AUPSC authorized the creation of a MNJTF force strength of up to 7,500 military personnel, which it later increased to 10,000, (Tchoffo Kodjo, 2018) noted that, most notably, the troops of the Multi-National Joint Task Force primarily operated in their own country with some arrangements for cross-border operations. This rather made it more of a fragmental approach, and entirely a mandatory affair neglecting social, economic factors. Furthermore, the financial agreements between the regional states were unique and mandated that contributing countries cover a large share of their own operational expenses. The member countries established three components to the MNJTF-military, police and civilian, (Tchoffo Kodjo, 2018).

However, as of 2018, only the military component had been completely activated. The member countries have struggled to put the other components in place and to receive the funding they need to activate the police and civilian components.

The Multi-National Joint Task Force also received financial and training support from the European Union. Additionally, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom had a role in providing technical assistance to the Multi-National Joint Task Force and region states to effectively implement the counter-terrorism initiative in the Lake Chad region.

The transformation of the LCBC from its initial mandate to a counter Boko Haram mission received considerable skepticism because the organisation had not handled a crisis of such magnitude, and the LCBC's initial mission was development and environmental policy in the Lake Chad Basin region. Assanvo (2018) further points out that, although its mandate allows it to carry out and sustain security operations, the LCBC has very narrow and limited experience of military organization. Consequently, it was necessary to provide specialized and multidimensional support to the MNJTF to improve its effectiveness as a counter-Boko Haram force. In addition to the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the European Union, the African Union (AU) became an essential partner to provide this support by offering technical assistance and

coordinating partner support.

Overall, the MNJTF has had considerable success in countering Boko Haram. Some of the most successful military operations took place at the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. From February 11 to 14, 2016 a combined joint offensive as part of Operation ARROW FIVE forced scores of Boko Haram militants to surrender in the Nigerian town of Ngoshe. At about the same time, Operation DEEP PUNCH 2, a sweeping operation in Nigeria's Sambisa Forest that included 497 Cameroonian soldiers positioned in Pulka, Nigeria, completely disrupted Boko Haram's network in the area and cut its main supply routes in the southern part of Borno state. Furthermore, from May 10 to 16, 2016, in the Madaya Forest in Nigeria, the MNJTF Sector 1 offensive combined with Cameroon troops in Operation EMERGENCE 4 to secure the release of hundreds of civilian hostages. Overall, in the first five months of 2016, the MNJTF freed nearly 4,690 civilian hostages, according to figures from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), (Assanvo, 2018)

However, the MNJTF has also had some significant setbacks. The first occurred between January 3 and 7, 2015, in what became known as the "Baga Massacre", which included the death of 2,000 civilians at the hands of Boko Haram. The massacre was due to several causes, including poor planning and a lack of coordination between the regional states. In addition to the large loss of civilian life, the MNJTF command post of the time, located in the town of Baga, Nigeria on the shores of Lake Chad, was completely wiped out by Boko Haram. This event left the MNJTF in disarray.

Assanvo (2018) further explained that, in response to the Bosso Massacre, the MNJTF initiated Operation GAMA AIKI in June 2016, its first comprehensive multilateral campaign. A MNJTF officer explained that GAMA AIKI's priority area of operation was a 10km-wide band of land 65 km long along the border between Niger and Nigeria, around Damasak and Malam-Fatori. It was the first time that Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria worked together on a common operation under a single command and control. Its mission was to destroy Boko Haram last strongholds in the Damasak area. Operation GAMA AIKI took place through August 2016, with the main effort focused on disrupting Boko Haram's leadership and logistical organisation and preventing fuel and small arms smuggling, (Conflict Armament Research, 2018). Ultimately, Operation GAMA AIKI succeeded in destroying insurgent assets in the Metele and Garere areas and completely took Boko Haram by surprise, forcing it to reassess its strategy. Assanvo notes that the concentration of MNJTF forces in a specific place made it possible to liberate the border from Boko Haram, particularly Damasak.

Nigerian Cooperation and Management of Boko Haram

The ongoing discourse on regional cooperation and management of Boko Haram Insurgency to a wider extent derives from global concern because in recent years, there has been a surge in both tempo and range of global insurgencies and terrorism. Virtually, every continent has filed this growing security challenges. Nigeria is one of the latest to be added to the list of states by sectarian insurgencies.

Amid this complex web of issues, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari is seeking to consolidate military gains against Boko Haram by implementing a sweeping program of humanitarian relief and social and economic assistance, known as the Buhari plan, it was unveiled in June 2016 and is "designed to achieve the peace, stability, socio-economic rehabilitation, reconstruction, and long-term sustainable economic development of the region".

The mission is daunting. The government estimates that the conflict with Boko Haram has affected some 14.8 million men, women, and children, Lamb and Gregg (2016). The complexity of the conditions faced by local communities and the national and international authorities and organisations seeking to help them rebuild raises a number of specters, including the prospect of backsliding and recurring conflict. "In complex wars, it can be unclear what winning might even

look like” (Lamb and Gregg, 2016).

One of the most important lessons from the war in Afghanistan is that defeating insurgents or terrorists is not an end in itself. The United State was able to wield its military “shock and awe”, alongside local forces, to dislodge the Taliban regime in 2001. But the lack of a comprehensive peacebuilding agenda to consolidate those gains has allowed the conflict and associated violence to continue, (Barfield, 2016).

In conceptualizing the best approach to ending the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, especially in Nigeria, the goals cannot be limited to defeating Boko Haram. They must extend to winning the peace. State building and the cultivation of an inclusive society are vital so that citizens feel they belong and have a fair chance at a livelihood. The interrelated issues that created the crisis – state fragility, poverty, competition over Lake Chad's overstretched resources, violent extremism, and so on – must be addressed comprehensively.

One major element of such an evolution must be a transition away from the Nigerian military's dominance in the northeast and restoration of civilian control of governance and security. Such a process will be complex and needs to take into account the origin and progression of the conflict, the key stakeholders and institutions involved, and the context in which they will interact.

Some 15 countries surveyed in 2011 by the U.S department of State, Nigeria ranked fifth. It also ranked the 15th in terrorism with 17 kidnappings reported (Ibrahim and Bala, 2018).

The first assumption of this paper is that the ongoing eleven-year Boko Haram insurgency is one of the most violent, destructive, and debilitating of the nation's internal security challenges since independence. The civil war of 1967 to 1970 often known as the Biafran War, had higher levels of casualties but was not as protracted.

The position is in tandem with Zulum (2019), who for example posits that:

The citizens driven out of their homes and villages, and, thus, denied their means of livelihood most important, the displacements, killings and destruction of the properties tore the fabric of the society and ushered in fear, feelings of insecurity, hopelessness and despise among the victims of insurgency and generality of the populace at large (p.42-P.43)

For a country and Lake Chad Basin region at large, security imperative should take over precedence over other objectives of public policy. It should include both immediate, medium-term and long-term strategies to manage, ameliorate and resolve the problems of insurgency in the region. This should include immediate livelihood needs of the populace, including adequate security for especially victims of insurgency and putting in place a social mechanism for reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation action plan for political solution through dialogue with all the stake holders.

The second assumption of this study is that, most West African countries and Lake Chad region in particular are weak in exercising control in locations that are far away from their National capitals. This weakness off sanctuary and the resurgence of Boko Haram activities and led to their control of the island of (Tumbes) of Lake Chad Basin and their alliance with members of Islamic State in the West African Provence (ISWAP). This is compounded by lack of government resources in these areas such as education.

Fundamentally, the assumption implies that the pursuit of regional cooperation and management of Boko Haram insurgency and the extent to which each state in the Lake Chad basin had different security responses to Boko Haram insurgents which created concerns over lack of coordination and cooperation was aimed at successfully countering Boko Haram insurgency.

Kerins and Mouaha Bell (2019) observes that, as the Boko Haram insurgency intensified around 2012, the countries of the Lake Chad Basin initially took different approaches to counter this threat, focusing on their own national interests.

Assanvo, (2018) asserts that, “Whereas Nigeria had carried out a military offensive to halt Boko Haram's territorial gains and retake the localities under the group's control from February 2015 onwards, Cameroon, Niger and Chad had sought instead to contain its expansionist tendencies.” These independent approaches limited the success of countering Boko Haram.

The Nigerian government's response therefore, has evolved from a limited police security operation to a large-scale, joint, combined security and civilian operation aimed at overcoming the country's limited capacity and geographic constraints. This multi-pronged approach began in 2012 with Operation RESTORE ORDER.

Nigerian military personnel, together with police units and the Department of State Security Special Forces, took part in Operation BOYONA. Its mandate was to secure the country's borders, destroy Boko Haram camps, and neutralize the organization's leaders. A number of interviews with soldiers in the Nigerian military, conducted in 2018, noted that this operation suffered from bureaucratic problems and lack of effective coordination, resulting in less-than-convincing results against Boko Haram. Consequently, in August 2013, this task force was supplemented by the creation of the Nigerian Army's 7th Division.

In July 2015, Operation ZAMAN LAFIYA was reorganized and later renamed Operation LAFIYA DOLE, which means “Peace by Force” in Hausa. Initially, Operation LAFIYA DOLE was successful in regaining control in some of the areas lost previously to Boko Haram, (International Crisis Group, 2014). Its accomplishments gradually created conditions that encouraged the return of civilians, governing officials, and civil servants to some parts of Borno State. This progress, however, was limited to some towns and small cities found along the major highways. LAFIYA DOLE prioritized the securing of transport routes and sought to avoid dangerous operations in populated areas. Operation RUWAN WUTA, launched in September 2017, involved extensive air strikes and achieved success in dispersing large groups of Boko Haram fighters. Operation DEEP PUNCH in the Sambisa Forest, also significantly degraded the logistic capability of Boko Haram.

Although the Nigerian military response reduced the potential impact of Boko Haram, overall security in Borno State lags far behind the rest of Nigeria. Nigeria's military operations against Boko Haram are summarized in Figure 3.

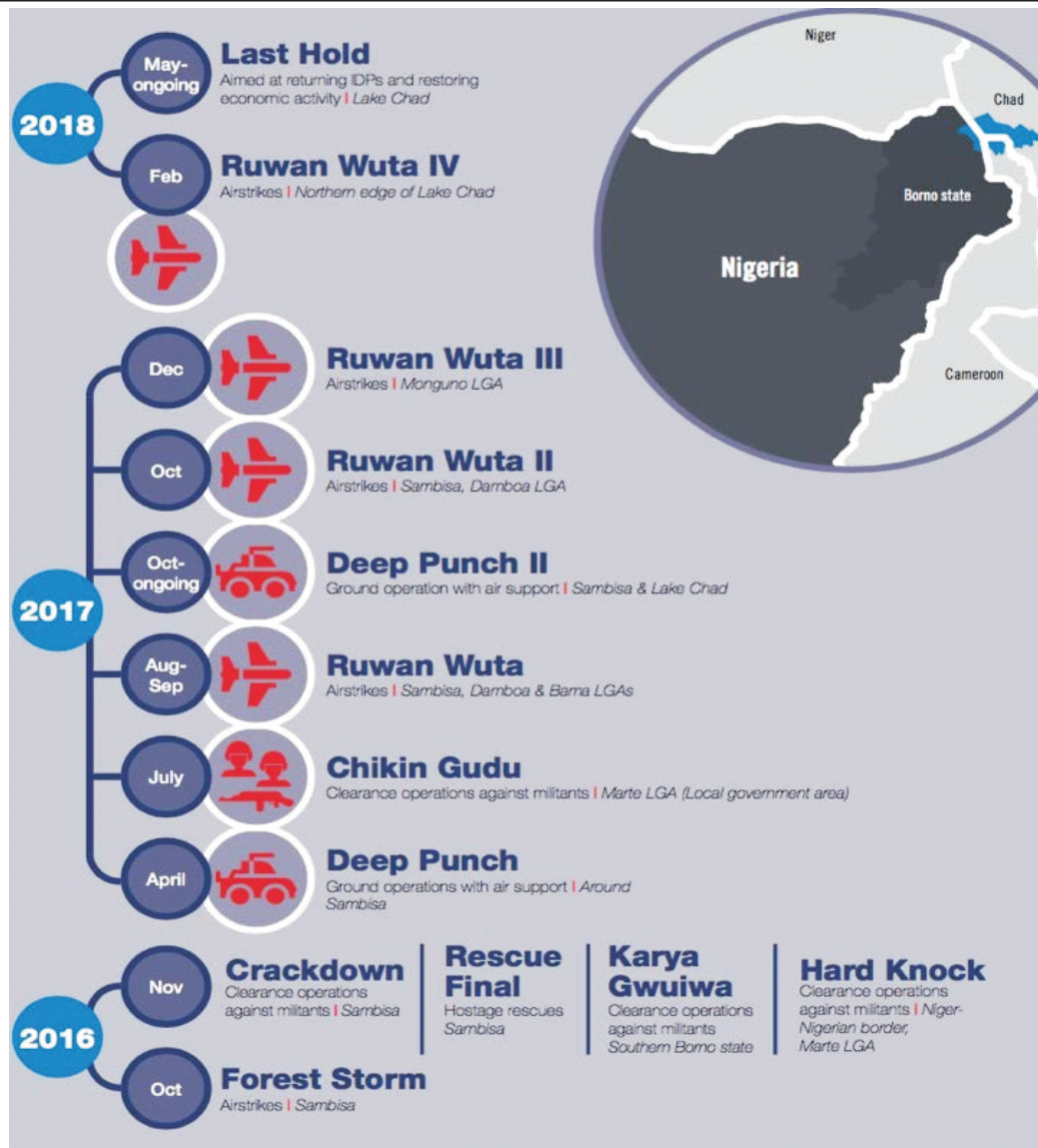


Figure 3. Major Nigerian Military Operations Against Boko Haram

Source: - Adapted from Kerins and Mouaha-Bell, 2018

Successes of Operation YANCIN TAFKI

Operation YANCIN TAFKI was aimed at conducting major offensive operations to destroy Boko Haram Terrorist's enclaves along Marte – Chikin Gudu Axis and Dorona Baga – Duguri – Tumbun Rago – Tumbun Gini Axis among other operational tasks. Following the marrying up of the Chadian troops of Sect 2 Multi-National Joint Task Force in March 2019, it was commenced with long range patrols by the combined troops of (Chad and Nigeria) which led to the neutralization of a key Boko Haram Terrorist Comd Mallam Mousa on March 19 alongside with some fighters and capture of another Commander Suleman Mohammed Garba aka Mallam Nasir and his 2 wives in March, 2019. Subsequently, Cross Kauwa was recaptured. The combined troops thereafter cleared critical staging areas such as Daban Masara, Ali Sherifti and environs. On 16 April 2019, BHTs launched an all-out attack on the combined troops at Cross Kauwa with the intent to recapture it. However, the BHTs assault was defeated with heavy casualties in men and

equipment as 40 BHTs were neutralized while 2-gun trucks, 9 AK47 Rifles, one HK 21 Machine Gun and 4 RPG tubes were captured. Similarly, in June 2019, troops of 145 Battalion in collaboration with troops of MNJTF (Niger) cleared Malkonory, Tumbun Rago and Arege neutralizing 23 BHTs and capturing 4-gun trucks while one VBIED was destroyed, (Biu 2019, p.4).

In June 2019, combined troops of Chad and Nigeria conducted further offensive operations into Baga and Doron Baga where 13 BHTs were neutralized while ammunition and fuel dumps discovered were destroyed. Additionally, in June 2019, the combined troops conducted clearance operations into Doro Naira. During the collaboration of the combined troops of Chad and Nigeria also yielded several dividends. Among the dividends is the stability and restoration of public confidence in major towns like Monguno, Gajiram, Gubio and Damasak. This has been achieved through combined long-range patrols to the notorious areas such as Badu and Gudumbali and physical deployment in Gajiram. Additionally, the security of main supply routes (MSR) such as MSR Monguno – Gajiram – Maiduguri have been enhanced by the regular combined patrols along the MSR and enclaves of BHTs. As a result, in October 2019, the BHTs were beaten in their own game when they ambushed the combined troops. The Chadian swift response emboldened own troops and together they dealt a decisive blow to the terrorists. Resultantly, 15 Boko Haram Terrorists were neutralized, 2-gun trucks were destroyed while one-gun truck and 4 AA guns were captured. So far over 149 BHTs/ISWAP members have been neutralized from March 2019 till date when regional cooperation commenced in earnest. Thus, the success story of Operation **YANCIN TAFKI** goes on and on vindicating the good intention of Head Quarters Multi-National Joint Task Force in conceptualizing the operation, (Biu, 2019, p.5)

Implication

The implication of this study on Borno state of Nigeria has brought to fore that political leadership under the presidential system of government in Nigeria since 1999 is typical of political leadership across the states of the federation. However, in the Northeast of Nigeria, especially Borno state, the nuclear of Boko Haram insurgency, it is a different ballgame. The emergency of insurgency was a game changer. Over the period of more than one decade of insurgency, both the political leadership itself and the security system were actually challenged and over stretched to say the least. Notwithstanding, the incalculable range on infrastructure. The governance resources and critical installation became under siege and weakened while citizens were displeased.

Despite the enormous success recorded so far in the conduct of regional cooperation, there have been some challenges that have hampered the smooth conduct of operations. Notably among the challenges have been funding, inadequate troops, dearth of equipment and lack of efficient coordination and utilization of air assets.

Most crucial of all, the loss of lives, displacements, hopelessness, despair and destruction of properties went beyond the coping mechanism of the state apparatus. These are fundamental realities that made leadership a game changer in Borno state from the rest of the countries not ravaged by Boko Haram insurgency.

Conclusion

Boko Haram insurgence's expansion and its cross boarder sporadic attacks into Niger, Cameroon and Chad have improved the relationship in countries of the Lake Chad region which has yielded several dividends. Among the dividends is the stability and restoration of public confidence in major towns like Monguno, Gajiram, Gubio and Damasak. This was basically realized through regional cooperation of troops contributing in Lake Chad Basin through effective patrol in

notorious and deadly places such as Badu and Gudum Bali. The regular troop patrols have been enhanced. With the establishment of Multi National Joint Task Force in 2016, the five countries of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin improved significantly. The conflict in northeast Nigeria is similar to the conflicts in Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria, where jihadist groups have remained resilient against significant military operations to defeat them. While military operation can achieve temporary security, they do not address the underlying causes and grievance that produced the insurgency. A political solution is required for that, this does not mean, however, that the military cannot be part of the solution, or even lead the way. Through consultation and coordination of collective efforts with people and their community leaders by discussing with all stakeholders, including development partners, in exploring avenues for a lasting political solution. The concept of operations is no doubt comprehensive enough but regular review is necessary to achieve effective results. However, despite tactical successes against Boko Haram and increase in coordinated Multi-National operations, the Multi-National Joint Task Force is still plunged with resource issues, internal conflict, inadequate troops, dearth and command structure.

After several Multi National operation such as Rawan Kada and Amni Fakat which degraded Boko Haram insurgents considerably, the Multi-National Joint Task Force has not been able to fully defeat Boko Haram or IS-WA, and both organisations remain a threat to the stability of Lake Chad region.

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