



Rethinking the Functionality of the Multinational Joint Task Force in Managing the Boko Haram Crisis in the Lake Chad Basin

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Abstract

The countries in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in April 2012 and upgraded it in 2015 for managing the ongoing Boko Haram crisis that started in Nigeria in 2002. The decision followed the realization that the problem is not necessarily Nigerian, as initially perceived, but a regional question. This security management formation is with a counter-terrorism mandate. This article takes a critical look at the challenges in the functioning of the security regimen. The most critical of the problems is that, though the countries need to work collaboratively at dealing with a common enemy, they are suspicious of each other over border issues. Nigeria is suspicious of Cameroon and Chad, which are in turn suspicious of Nigeria. This factor has reduced the effectiveness of this security community. The lesson here is that African states need to work on their relations timeously to enable them have smooth working relationship when they have to face a common enemy.

Keywords: MNJTF, Boko Haram, crisis, Lake Chad Basin, security community

Résumé

Les pays du bassin du lac Tchad (LCB) ont créé le Groupe de travail conjoint multinational en avril 2012 et l'ont amélioré en 2015 pour gérer la crise actuelle de Boko Haram qui a commencé au Nigeria en 2002. Il a été constaté que le problème n'était pas nécessairement nigérian comme perçu initialement, mais plutôt une question régionale. La gestion de la sécurité comporte un mandat de lutte contre le terrorisme. Cet article examine de façon critique les défis dans le fonctionnement du régime de sécurité. La

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préoccupation première est que, bien que les pays aient besoin de travailler ensemble pour combattre un ennemi commun, ils sont méfiants à cause des problèmes de frontières. Le Nigeria se méfie du Cameroun et du Tchad et ces derniers se méfient du Nigeria. Une telle situation limite l'efficacité des mesures de sécurité de cette communauté. La leçon est que les États africains doivent avoir des relations de bon voisinage pour faciliter une relation de travail cordiale lorsqu'ils doivent faire face à un ennemi commun.

Mots clés : MNJTF, Boko Haram, crise, bassin du lac Tchad, communauté de sécurité

Introduction

This study presents the Boko Haram crisis as a collective security threat to the countries of Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region necessitating the need for the countries in the region, including Benin Republic, to constitute themselves into a security community – the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) – to manage the situation. This security regimen departs from the existing normative framework for conflict intervention in Africa, which places the responsibility for managing such a problem on the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Our points will be difficult to establish in this respect until the Boko Haram crisis is really positioned as a regional problem. Is it? At the formative stage, it was a Nigerian problem but later became a regional problem through poor management by Nigeria and the indifference of its neighbours. This provided the circumstances under which the MNJTF had to be formed.

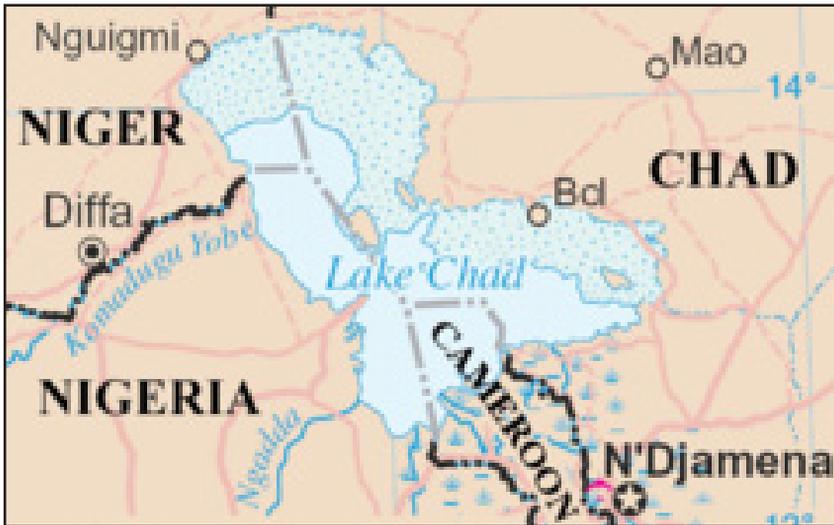
A lot has been published on the origin of the Boko Haram movement with most of the existing work tracing the origin of the sect's bloody encounter with the Nigerian state to 2002 and 2003. The sect was founded by a fiery Islamic cleric known as Mohammed Yusuf. A very senior Nigerian security officer, who had the opportunity of investigating the Boko Haram group, recalled that Yusuf's father died as a committed member of the Maitatsine sect (Kane 2003) responsible for the death of thousands of Nigerians in parts of northern Nigeria in the 1980s, including in the north-east where the Boko Haram crisis is now taking place. This claim points in the direction of the belief that there is something genetic about the religious and troublesome disposition of Yusuf in his lifetime.

The fact remains, however, that Yusuf did not pose any threat to the security of Nigeria until 2002/2003 when his group started to be identified with different forms of religious hate speech. This makes it necessary to identify some environmental conditions for the religious intolerance and

eventual resort to violence. Two factors are important in this respect. The first is the that from 1999 to 2003, politicians in Borno formed and armed the youth around them to fight their political opponents. The murderous gangs were known as 'Ecomogs'. The insecurity in the state escalated when these politicians started to abandon the armed youth shortly after the 2003 elections (Albert and Danjibo 2004). Some of these armed youth turned in the direction of criminal violence, others jumped into the warm embrace of Muhammed Yusuf who was at that time promoting a Salafist ideology condemning the waywardness of the Nigerian political class and the facilitative role of Western civilization.

Whereas Yusuf condemned Nigerian politicians for bad governance, the former members of 'Ecomogs' hated the politicians for using and abandoning them without any 'severance allowances'. Yusuf became a sort of hero to the boys on account of his ability to explain the misbehaviour of these politicians eschatologically and predict what would happen to them later and hereafter. With a view to proving that he belonged to a higher moral ground than the politicians, Yusuf provided the young boys that chose to follow him with different forms of support services such as assistance to establish their businesses and even get married. As word went around about Yusuf's knowledge of the Qur'an, his biting anti-establishment views and his readiness to help the poor, more people joined his congregation. This brought him to a collision path with the Nigerian state, most especially the government of Borno State. Unable to have him imprisoned through several cases brought against him in Nigeria's courts of law, Yusuf was subjected to extra judicial killing by the Nigerian Police in 2009. The belief was that this would lead to the end of the movement but Yusuf was succeeded by a more militant deputy, Abubakar Shekau (also known as Darul Akeem wa Zamunda Tawheed), who has successfully turned Boko Haram into a terrorist organization.

How did the LCB countries come into the picture? Some of the people who came to join the Boko Haram movement included rural and urban peasants retrenched from their farming, fishing and other agricultural vocations by the drying up of Lake Chad.



Map showing the LCB countries

The Lake was the sixth largest in the world with a hydrographic basin area of 2,381,631 square kilometres and an active basin of 966,955 square kilometres. It provides fresh water and agricultural resources such as fisheries and pasture to a huge population in Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Central African Republic, Libya, Sudan and even Algeria. It is today under serious threat of desiccation occasioned by climate change. Its water body reduced from 25,000 square kilometres in 1963 to 2,000 square kilometres in 2010 creating problems of unemployment, water scarcity, environmental pollution, and threats to biodiversity survival, amongst several other livelihood issues. This has compounded the national security problems in the affected states and accentuated regional security of West and Central Africa (Ifabiyi 2013: 196). While doing fieldwork in 2009 for an earlier article (Albert 2009), some of my interviewees in Maiduguri blamed the drying up of the Lake on sins committed by sex workers, corrupt politicians and 'infidels' (a name reserved for all non-Muslims, including Christians).

Many of the people retrenched from their vocations around Lake Chad who came to join the Boko Haram sect know Nigeria's borders with Cameroon, Chad and Niger so well that at the initial stage of Nigeria's counter-insurgency against Boko Haram, they facilitated the use of these neighbouring countries as safe havens. This made it possible for Boko Haram members to fight in Nigeria in the daytime and run back to any of the LCB countries to hide in the evening. The existence of radicalized members of Boko Haram in Nigeria's neighbouring countries was at

this time so significant that when President Olusegun Obasanjo visited the brother-in-law of Mohammed Yusuf, Alhaji Babakura Fuggu, on 15 September 2011 with a view to seeking peace with the group, he told the former Nigerian head of state that 'About 30 to 40 per cent of our members are scattered in neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon' (*Vanguard* 2012). To deal with this problem, the Multinational Task Force, established by Nigeria in 1994 to deal with the rebels from its northern borders, was expanded to include Chad and Niger in 1998, and was further expanded in 2012 to address the escalating Boko Haram crisis. The system was restructured and further expanded in 2015 to include Benin Republic.

Understanding the Security Community

What is a security community? To Kuptchan (2001: 41), it is 'a zone within which states have stable expectations of peaceful change – and those that continue to play by more traditional rulers of geopolitics'. Deutsch et al. consider that security community refers to 'real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way ... [States] retain the legal independence of separate governments – (have compatible core values from common institutions) ... a sense of we-ness ... dependable expectations of peaceful change [whose] communication is the cement of social groups in general and political communities in particular' (Deutsch *et al.* 1957:7). The issues raised here goes beyond the contents of 'democratic peace theory' which emphasizes that democracies do not fight each other. The most salient emphasis of security community is that nations that have similar potential threats would work together to provide a safe environment for themselves given the fact that the international system is anarchical, as the realists argue. This security regimen has been adopted by the countries in the LCB for managing the ongoing Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria following the realization that the problem is not necessarily Nigerian, as initially perceived, but a regional question.

The Multinational Joint Task Force

The MNJTF fighting Boko Haram in the LCB was formed in April 2012. However, this was not the first MNJTF to be formed between the countries. The first was formed in 1994 by the administration of Gen. Sani Abacha to police the north-east region against armed bandits from the Chadian war. At this initial stage, the Force was a solely Nigerian affair. The initial responsibility of the Force was to clear the border regions of the activities of the bandits and promote the free movement of persons and goods across the

borders. In 1998, the Force became truly multinational by incorporating military units from Chad, Niger and Nigeria and the mandate was to deal with common cross-border security problems in the Lake Chad region. Its headquarters were located at Baga in Kukawa Local Government area of Borno State with a Nigerian serving as the Commander. By 2012, the system was upgraded to deal solely with the Boko Haram crisis and was given a counter-terrorism mandate. It is composed of elements of the Chad, Niger and Nigerian Armed Forces with a Nigerian Brigadier General as the commander. It operates side by side with the JTF Operation RESTORE ORDER that has been in charge of the entire Borno State since June 2011. But unlike the latter, the MNJTF in Baga was in charge of the Lake Chad region and administratively and operationally independent of JTF Operation RESTORE ORDER in Maiduguri. However there has been synergy and collaboration between the two JTFs (Musa 2013).

In March 2014, defence and military chiefs from the six-member Lake Chad Basin Commission (Chad, Cameroon, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and CAR) met in Cameroon to agree on the need for a joint task force to combat arms trafficking, terrorism and cross-border attacks as tensions escalate in the region. Cameroon was interested in this particular meeting as the conflict in CAR and the insurgency in northern Nigeria were starting to have adverse an impact on it pushing refugees, weapons and violence into the country from its neighbours. To Cameroon Defence Minister Edgard Alain Mebe Ngo'o the meeting was sort of a 'shock therapy' for LCB member states to address how best to tackle growing threats and security challenges. He denied allegations that militants are using Cameroonian territory as a refuge or base for operations. The meeting agreed that the force would be headquartered in Baga: meaning that they would simply be expanding the scope of the MNJTF already established in Nigeria. It was agreed that the initial mandate of the new task force will be to patrol the Lake Chad region, conduct military operations against arms dealers and suspected terrorists and to facilitate free movement (Kindzeka 2014).

It is doubtful whether Cameroon, Libya and CAR had any serious faith in the March 2014 meeting. When Baga, the headquarters of the MNJTF, was attacked and captured in January 2015 by Boko Haram (Roggio 2015) only Nigeria, Chad and Niger were on the ground. The soldiers serving in the Force had to flee in different directions and Boko Haram took over their base and the town. Chad and Niger had to formally withdraw their troops from the Force, turning it into a solely Nigerian force turning it into a sole Nigerian project. This did not stop the two countries, and Cameroon, however from participating in the military operations against the insurgents.

However, each of these countries fought the battle from the 'rear': in some cases chasing the insurgents into Nigeria. On 29 January 2015, the AU held a summit-level meeting to decide on its level of support for an expanded MNJTF. The meeting was held on the eve of the twenty-fourth AU Assembly Summit in Addis Ababa during which the PSC authorized a more invigorated MNJTF deployment. A meeting was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 5–7 February where the member states of LCB, the AU, ECOWAS, the EU and UN put the finishing touches to the draft operational plans of the MNJTF. The MNJTF's mandate, headquarters, leadership structure, rules of engagement, operational areas and requirements for supporting and sustaining the mission were more clearly defined. This brought the other member states of the LCB on board with the peace mission. Of the 8,700 troops for the mission it was agreed that Nigeria would contribute 3,250 personnel followed by Chad with 3,000.

What changes resulted from the reinvigoration of the MNJTF in 2015? These include the redefinition of the mandate of the force to be more focused on preventing Boko Haram from having free access to the borders of member states of LCB; increasing the number of troops; transferring the management of the force to the Lake Chad Basin Commission; the movement of the headquarters of the force from Baga in Nigeria to N'Djaména in Chad; and giving the position of the Force's commander to Nigeria. Hence, General Buratai was appointed the Commander of the Force in May 2015 but he was appointed Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff in July 2015 and had to transfer the mandate to another Nigerian, Major General Illiya Abbah.

In practice, the MNJTF does not fight all the battles that have to be fought against Boko Haram. Its mandate is limited to securing the borders between LCB countries. It ensues that Boko Haram does not have access to the use of the borders for launching its attacks. With the borders secured, each of the countries are expected to flush out Boko Haram from their respective countries. For example, the force dealing with Boko Haram in Nigeria is known as 'operation *lafiya dole*' (peace by force). This is the force fighting the insurgents in various parts of north-eastern Nigeria, most especially the Sambisa forest. As these internal forces carry out their operations, the insurgents would run towards the borders to escape into neighbouring states and they are expected to be cut down by the MNJTF. This security regimen is not without problems but 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 neighbouring countries 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.

The Functionality of the MNJTF

In assessing the functionality of this security community a key question must be asked. What are the factors for the success of a security community? Do these factors exist in the Lake Chad Basin region for managing the Boko Haram crisis? The point to make in this respect is that the factors making for the success of a security community are probably not different from those making for the success of an international peacekeeping operation. The only difference probably is that in the case of a security community it is not a third party that is providing the security regimen, as conventionally expected, but the countries having the security threats themselves. Other nations could come to support them but they directly take the front seat in protecting themselves against a common enemy. Such a mission must have some basic attributes, which we identified, in the earlier part of this article. The most important of these attributes include a joint definition of the security threat, willingness to jointly solve the problem, and 'trust' in each other.

At the initial stage of the Boko Haram crisis, Nigeria perceived it as an internal problem that did not require the intervention of outsiders. The member states of LCB saw it from that perspective too. Though the MNJTF was established as far back as 1994, it did not start to play any active role in the management of Boko Haram crisis with the involvement of the other nations until 2012 – four years after the Boko Haram sect resorted to terrorist attacks. Even then, the history of the security regimen, as described above, suggests that the other member states of LCB were forced to join the missions by circumstances beyond their control. They would have ordinarily not had anything to do with Nigeria, just as Nigeria would have not wanted to have anything to do with Cameroon and Chad. In other words, the MNJTF lacks the attribute of trust between the member states.

What lessons can be drawn from the foregoing about the functionality of the security community? The first point to be made here is that the MNJTF has all it takes to be considered a good security community. It provides practical space for the application of the mantra of 'African solutions to African problems'. A cursory look at how the system evolved is necessary for establishing the point made here. The African Peace and Security Architecture would find the MNJTF to be a strange system as

it is not one of the regional economic communities recognized for peace and security tasks in the continent. It is simply a formation of the member states of LCB. But why would these countries bypass the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) to establish their own system? Why did LCB countries fail to use the two core security communities around them? These are ECOWAS to which Nigeria, Niger and Benin Republic belong to and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS, in French, *Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale*) to which Cameroon and Chad belong.

The simple answer to the above question is that the MNJTF was put together because of the perceived difficulties the countries would face in getting ECOWAS and ECCAS to jointly give them a peacekeeping mission. The two RECs have different orientations and are probably not too interested in the Boko Haram crisis. It was therefore necessary to bypass these RECs and get the LCB countries to frame their own joint solutions to the problems posed by Boko Haram.

Nigeria did a lot in the direction of bringing peace to the West African sub-region, as evidenced by its leadership role in the peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the country was reluctant to allow foreign intervention on its territory; it aimed to retain ownership and exert its leadership in any attempt to combat Boko Haram (Théroux-Bénoni 2015). It would rather prefer collaboration with the other countries affected by the crisis to secure their borders against the terrorists. It is also doubtful whether ECOWAS has the kind of financial resources for intervening in a big country such as Nigeria. On the other hand, ECCAS would not have been interested in being dragged into a Nigerian crisis which ECOWAS had not shown significant interest in helping to solve. The responsibility for dealing with the problem therefore fell on the Lake Chad Basin Commission to coordinate Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger in finding solutions to their mutual problem.

However it is easier to form this kind of security community than to make it work. The fact remains that the MNJTF would have performed better if some of the factors working against the group were not there. These problems can be broken into two categories: the internal and external. The internal problems are the factors making it difficult for the member states of the MNJTF to work together peacefully. The external factors are the problems coming from outside the immediate environment of the security operation, but which the MNJTF cannot underrate.

The first internal factor is that of trust between Nigeria and Cameroon as well as between Nigeria and Chad. The relationship between Nigeria and

Cameroon was anything but cordial over the 'Bakassi crisis'. The Bakassi peninsula was part of Nigeria but Cameroon contested its ownership with Nigeria leading to some military encounters between the two countries, as a result of which several lives were lost. In 1994, Cameroon approached the International Court of Justice (ICJ) with the plea of taking over the ownership of the oil-rich peninsula and some islands in Lake Chad. The country got a favourable judgment (Aghemelo and Ibhasebhor 2006; Tarlebba and Baroni 2010) but the two countries are still struggling to enforce the decision of the court. The matter was slightly compounded by the resolution of the Nigerian Senate on 22 November 2007 rejecting the ceding of the territory to Cameroon. The decision of the ICJ was said by the Senate to be contrary to Section 12(1) of the 1999 Constitution.

Nigeria also had serious border conflicts with Chad. Indeed, the relational conflict between Nigeria and Chad was worse than that of Nigeria/Cameroon. Almost all regimes in the country, including that of President Muhammadu Buhari, had some particular problems with Chad. Chad contests the ownership of some portion of Lake Chad with Nigeria in the context of the poor demarcation of the boundary between the two nations by the European colonial powers (Vogt 1987). Hence, elements in the border villages resort to different forms of self-help strategies to determine what belongs to Nigeria and Chad respectively. Some of the disputed villages have fishery and invaluable mineral resources. The border disputes continue up to the present. The second conflict issue between Nigeria and Chad pertains to the expulsion of about 700,000 Chadians from Nigeria as a result of the Federal Government's deportation order of 17 January 1983. Chadian fishermen and soldiers responded to this event by denying Nigerians fishing rights in the LCB. To some of these Chadians the Lake Chad belongs exclusively to the Chad Republic and that was why it was named after their country (Johnson 2014: 214).

The frosty relationship between Nigeria and Chad assumed a military dimension from April to 25 May 1983, as a result of which deaths were recorded on both sides. This was the first time Nigeria was involved in a military clash with any of her neighbours (Vogt 1992; Tilde 2014).

There was another problem. From 1978 to 1983, Chad fought an internal civil war that negatively affected Nigeria's trade with the country in addition to promoting the incursion of armed Chadian rebel groups and refugees into Nigeria. So profound was this problem that in 2002, the Governor of Borno State, Alhaji Mala Kachala complained to members of the Presidential Committee on Nigeria's National Security visiting his state that the Lake Chad region was plagued by an influx of armed rebels

and large-scale trafficking in illicit arms and children. Some of these rebels, according to the Governor, use Sambisa Games Reserve as their hideouts. The rebels were blamed for the widespread banditry in the north-east region (IRIN 2002). Sambisa forest has since then constituted a serious security threat to Nigeria.

The third problem Nigeria had was how the Chadian war facilitated massive entry of arms and ammunition into Chad, most especially from France and the US. Nigeria is not comfortable with any of its neighbours being so armed. This made Nigeria suspicious of Chad all the time. But the most disturbing problem to Nigeria was the support that Chad received from Mohammad Ghadafi's Libya. The Libyan leader was not known in his lifetime to be a true friend of Nigeria. Until his death, the Libyan leader worked towards instigating Islamic revolution in Nigeria using different Islamic groups, most especially a Libyan Muslim organization known as Jam'at ad-Da'wa al-Islamiya. This security dilemma accounted for Nigeria's decision to vote in support of the United Nations Resolution Council 1973 (of 17 March 2011) which authorized all necessary measures to protect civilians in the Libyan crisis including the need to degrade the offensive capacity of the Libyan army and destroy the regime's command and control capabilities during the Libyan crisis. NATO implemented the Resolution in a way that led to the death of Ghadafi on 20 October 2011 at the hands of Libyan rebels.

All of this made it difficult for Nigeria to approach both Cameroon and Chad for support at the inception of the Boko Haram crisis. Chad too played a bystander role as the Boko Haram crisis escalated: pretending to be unaware of how the insurgents were using their countries as safe-havens against Nigeria. In December 2011, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan invoked Section 305(1) of the 1999 Constitution to shut Nigeria's borders with all its immediate neighbours except Benin Republic. In 2012, Nigeria's land borders with Cameroon, Chad and Niger were once again closed, based on the allegation that Boko Haram members were using these countries as safe-havens and the launching pad for their operations. There was another closure of Nigeria's borders with Cameroon, Niger and Chad in May 2013. The fourth case was recorded in February 2014 when Nigeria totally shut down its borders with Cameroon in Adamawa State as part of the measures to surmount the activities of the insurgents in the north-east. It was basically meant to halt influx of insurgents into and out of the country (*This Day* 2014). None of these steps stopped the problem. The next option was to collaborate with the countries in dealing with the problem.

Due to Nigeria's persistent allegation that its immediate neighbours were supporting Boko Haram, Cameroon and Chad started to take military actions

against members of the sect in their countries. The other motivating factor was that the terrorists had started at this time to launch some opportunistic attacks on citizens of these countries. Boko Haram responded by including these countries amongst its enemies. This meant the crisis smoothly crossed borders to all the LCB countries. The countries now became more ready to work collaboratively with Nigeria in the MNJTF. In other words, the MNJTF as a security community did not come into being to help Nigeria necessarily but to serve as a platform for the countries of LCB to collectively defend themselves against a common enemy that Boko Haram turned out to be.

The old suspicions between the countries are still there despite the existence of the MNJTF. Nigeria does not trust either Cameroon or Chad; the countries too do not trust Nigeria. This must have worked negatively against the commitment of the countries to the operations and probably slowed down some operational tasks. A 2015 scenario can be used to illustrate the nature of this problem. Whereas the MNJTF set December 2015 deadline for itself to wipe out Boko Haram, Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, General Olonisakin, complained to his Chadian counterpart, General Seyni Garba, who was at the Defence headquarters (Abuja) in continuation of talks on Nigeria–Niger bilateral efforts in fighting Boko Haram that by November 2015 Chadian troops were yet to be deployed as part of about 8,700 troops that were supposed to make up the MNJTF. According to Olonisakin, 'The commander of the Multinational Joint Task Force has gone round the countries involved in this operation to ensure that they are well deployed in their location.... Most of the troops have been deployed especially from Niger which is in the same sector with Nigeria and they are performing their roles effectively' (Information Nigeria 2015). By not mentioning Cameroon but only Niger in his speech, it is doubtful if the Nigerian Chief of Defence Staff equally felt that the country was totally committed to the mission as well.

Nigeria is also not happy with either Cameroon or Chad chasing Boko Haram insurgents right into the Nigerian territory. This is a regular problem. To Nigeria, this is a form of invasion of Nigeria. The country would prefer a situation where the insurgents are chased to the borders and the Nigerian troops are left or invited to finish the job. The second problem is the language barrier between the troops in the MNJTF. Whereas many Nigerian soldiers do not speak French, the soldiers of all the other member states are French speakers and do not understand English in some cases. This makes operational planning and operations in the field difficult in some cases.

A security community that cannot fund itself is not a strong and sustainable entity. This is one of the main external problems faced by the MNJTF today. Hence, the security community is gradually turning the circle to face the same problem that prevented either the AU or RECs (ECOWAS and ECCAS) from doing what the MNJTF is now doing: keeping the countries safe from terrorists. In February 2015, the Institute for Security Studies reviewed efforts towards operationalizing the MNJTF. It observed that while the arrangement for the approval of the draft concept of operations (CONOPS) for the MNJTF was ready for the approval of the Peace and Security Council of the AU, funding remained the core outstanding issue to be addressed by the mission. To this extent, the AU was planning to have a funding conference to address the problem in March 2015 (Institute for Security Studies 2015). The Daily Post newspaper of 28 July 2016 reported the same problem. Like the AU, the UN too was said to be lacking enough resources to support the peace mission. This must have slowed down military operations or limited the extent to which the mission could go.

Another external threat to the functionality of the MNJTF is the kind of influence the Islamic State (IS) in the Middle East and other terrorist organizations around Africa could have on the security regimen. These organizations, to which Boko Haram has pledged allegiance, would continue to radicalize the populations in the LCB countries; foment sectarianism and make a troubled region worse. The organization's working relationship with al Qaeda in the Maghrib is not considered as worrisome as the effrontery of Boko Haram to pledge allegiance to IS in March 2015. IS has distinguished itself through the brutality of its tactics, which include mass killings and abductions of members of religious and ethnic minorities, as well as the beheadings of soldiers and journalists. It is feared to have a telling effect on future operations of the MNJTF. The fears emanate from two angles. If IS truly works with Boko Haram, it would continue to arm it against the MNJTF. Not many people believe that a strong relationship exists between the two bodies. Boko Haram might have publicized its pledge to IS as a mere branding exercise designed to boost its international jihadi credentials, attract recruits and gain support from IS leadership.

In August 2016, IS gave Boko Haram new leadership. It announced the removal of Abubakar Shekau from office as the leadership of the movement and replaced him with Abu Musab al-Barnawi. This is good for Nigeria but might pose a greater challenge for the MNJTF and other African states. Shekau's faction of Boko Haram is still in control of the group in Sambisa forest – that the 'Operation *lafiya dole*' in Nigeria is vigorously fighting. The group is losing energy as most of its supply lines have been cut off. The

group led by al-Barnawi seems to be outside Nigeria. It might not be able to spread its influence into Nigeria as the MNJTF would stop it. At best, it would operate in any of the other LCB countries or take Boko Haram to other parts of Africa, most especially CAR. The lesson in this is that the other African countries should anticipate future problems as the MNJTF clears the LCB countries of the Boko Haram crisis.

Conclusion

To the UN, AU, ECOWAS and ECCAS, the MNJTF is 'another security regimen'. To those reading this article, it is a project to be carefully studied as it could contribute to forging new ways of contiguous countries responding to the security challenges around them. It makes a significant contribution to how the AU's mantra of 'African solutions to African problems' can be achieved. The lesson of the MNJTF is that African countries must start focusing more on what they can do for themselves. In this context, it is necessary for other African countries to study the MNJTF more closely: how the security community was conceived, constituted and is now managed and the challenges besetting it. They too might need the structure in the future for timeously addressing their security challenges, whether in the present form or with some major or minor adjustments.

In this respect, the lesson of the MNJTF is almost similar to that of how ECOWAS established ECOMOG. When the Liberian crisis started in the late 1990s and it was discovered that international intervention might not come early enough, ECOWAS formed ECOMOG. It did not wait for either the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or the UN. Though now supported from outside, the MNJTF was formed by Nigeria and its immediate neighbours to deal with their collective security challenges. ECOMOG was more successful than the MNJTF because of the hegemonic influence of Nigeria, which funded most of the operations. The MNJTF would have equally worked better if there were a big regional power in either West Africa or Central Africa to fund its activities.

Other African states need to take an interest in the MNJTF because of the emerging security issues emanating from it. If the security community works according to plan, it would stamp out Boko Haram and its surrogates from LCB countries. But the mission cannot kill the ideology. What is literally happening now is that the mission is forcing Boko Haram to leave Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. The ideology of the sect, if not the physical members, would certainly move elsewhere within the African continent. Hence, other African countries should start to see themselves as not being totally shielded from the future of Boko Haram and its allies.

One other critical lesson that African states have to learn from the MNJTF is that the mission is not doing excellently well because of the existing border conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon on the one hand and Nigeria and Chad on the other hand. The lesson here is that in times of peace, African states should seek peace with their neighbours. Countries having border conflicts with their neighbours should work on the problems and come to a situation of friendly relationship. This would ease their resolve to collaborate in dealing with common enemies in the future.

Nigeria is winning the war against Boko Haram. Several of the communities in the hands of the terrorists, including a good part of the Sambisa forest, which serves as their stronghold, have been taken back. The other Member States of the LCB are also reducing the nuisance value of Boko Haram around them. But the counter-terrorism would have been faster and more sustainable were the problems identified with the MNJTF not there. It is therefore reasonable to argue that the LCB Member States need more than the MNJTF to decisively defeat Boko Haram. Théroux-Bénoni provides three alternative models for dealing with the problem. The first suggestion is to have a robust regional force such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which has fought the al-Shabaab Islamists since 2007. The second option is to have the AU Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), which was established in 2011. The third possible model is the African-led international support mission to Mali (AFISMA), which enables the Malian army to spearhead military operations supported by the African Force to recapture territory in northern Mali taken by different armed groups (Théroux-Bénoni 2015). None of these models can be activated outside the support of Nigeria as a sovereign nation. The second problem is that the AU lacks the financial resources for using any of these options in dealing with the crisis. Hence, the LCB countries would have to keep dealing with the situation as things are. The situation would get better if the leaders of the countries continue to meet regularly to identify better strategies for collectively defeating Boko Haram as a common enemy.

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