



## The Emerging Architecture of a Regional Security Complex in the Lake Chad Basin

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### Abstract

This article explores the emerging regional security architecture to fight terrorism and insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). It diagnoses the evolution of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) as a sub-regional organization that unites Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. In particular, the article critically investigates recent efforts by some members of the LCBC to create regional security architecture under the aegis of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to fight terrorism and insurgency within the Basin. The article argues that this new security mechanism in the Chad Basin is largely driven by resource geopolitics, regional security and Nigeria's quest for hegemonic stability. It is argued that historical contradictions, linguistic differences, resource geopolitics, hegemonic politics, and local national politics have also hampered meaningful progress and undermined the basis for erecting robust new security architecture in Africa's LCB.

### Résumé

Cet article explore l'architecture émergente de la sécurité régionale en matière de lutte contre le terrorisme et l'insurrection dans le bassin du lac Tchad. Il diagnostique l'évolution de la Commission du bassin du lac Tchad (LCBC) en tant qu'organisation sous-régionale qui réunit le Tchad, le Cameroun, le Niger et le Nigeria. De manière critique, il examine les récentes initiatives des membres de la commission dans l'architecture de sécurité régionale sous l'égide de la Force opérationnelle mixte multinationale (MJTF) pour lutter contre le terrorisme et l'insurrection dans le bassin. L'article fait valoir que ce nouveau mécanisme de sécurité dans le bassin du lac Tchad est en grande partie motivé par la géopolitique des ressources, la sécurité régionale et la quête

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de la stabilité hégémonique par le Nigeria. Il montre que les contradictions historiques, les différences linguistiques, la géopolitique des ressources, la politique hégémonique et la politique nationale locale ont empêché des progrès significatifs et sapent la construction d'une nouvelle architecture de sécurité dans le bassin du lac Tchad en Afrique.

## **Introduction**

Terrorism and violence have become disturbing features of the African continent. Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, neither are state responses to it. What is new is the surging wave of Islamist terrorism in Africa (Lumina 2008). The lack of an efficient mechanism within the UN system for addressing security challenges has meant that regional dynamics have become more salient platforms for securitization (Alagappa 1995). For example, Chapter 8 of the UN Charter is known to have provided assistance for regional organizations to devise ad hoc mechanisms for dealing with security challenges in their respective regions. Though the end of the Cold War pushed the agenda of security regionalization to the forefront, the potential for regional organizations to provide a viable platform for building robust supra-national entities has been an observable phenomenon throughout the twentieth century. Emerging security challenges have opened new spaces for security regionalization across Africa and integrated counter-terrorism into their core security agenda. In this realm, countries within the region have emerged as critical 'frontline states' (Flemes and Lobell 2015).

The Lake Chad region today is at a crossroads, facing enormous security challenges from the Boko Haram insurgency with very important implications for regional stability. The largely unsecured borders provide platforms for terrorist activities. The transnationalization of violent terrorism across the region and the emerging counter-terrorism efforts fall into post 9/11 discourses of global terrorism and symbolizes the region's participation in the war on terror (Kagwanja 2006). For instance, in April 2016 US officials declared in N'Djaména, the Chadian capital, that the Lake Chad region was now 'Ground Zero' in Africa's war on terrorism and warned of deepening links between Islamic State and Boko Haram (Klapper 2015:13).

To contain the transnational expansion of the insurgency, governments of the region are increasingly pushing for multilateral security cooperation. Leaders of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) began to articulate a new concept of security involving a more proactive approach that was ready to take initiatives for the first time in multilateral settings. Aware of the growing threat Boko Haram poses to French interests in the Sahel, in May

2014 the then French President spearheaded the Paris Summit for security with some African leaders. The summit brought together the presidents of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, as well as representatives from the US, UK and the European Union, in order to strengthen military and intelligence cooperation to deal with the Boko Haram (Onuoha 2014:9). This was followed by a second summit in Abuja in May 2016, convened by Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, which aimed to lead to the successful conclusion of military operations against Boko Haram in the north-east of Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). The speedy resolution of the humanitarian crises and forced displacements caused by the terrorist insurgency also dominated the Abuja summit (Vanguard 2016).

This article is an exploration of the emerging regionalization of (in) security in the LCB. The article argues that despite a plethora of research on resurging threats of violent terrorism and the media's portrayal of Boko Haram jihadism in the Lake Chad region, little is known within academia of the newly envisioned regional security architecture and the geopolitics of regionalism underpinning the emergence of a new security order and regional reconfiguration. Since 2013, terrorism has emerged as an existential threat to regional stability, yet the widening security agenda that includes military alliance to counter terrorism and bolster regional securitization is underexplored in the literature. Recent efforts by some members of the LCBC to create a regional security architecture under the aegis of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to contain the surging wave of the Boko Haram insurgency reflects the emergence of security regionalisms within the LCB as a response to sub-regional threats to peace and security. In this article, we argue that as a nascent security architecture, the MNJTF, reflects the emergence of a potential supra-national organization that will pave the way for building a regional peace and security architecture in the LCB. The nexus between national and regional security, with an emphasis on politico-military cooperation to tackle terrorism, underpins this emerging security concept.

We also explore the role of geopolitics in the current transnational securitization project in the Lake Chad region, based on a critical evaluation of the possibilities and challenges for the regional security architecture in a complex and contested regional system. In so doing, we attempt to contextualize how the emerging dynamics of counter-terrorism and geopolitics are inextricably intertwined in the current discourse of the regionalization of security arrangements by arguing that governments utilized the threat of terrorism for political ends, defending old security paradigms that prioritized regime stability over human security. In this

context the current security challenges and the evolving architecture of cooperation reflect a classic example of a contested regionalism. In particular, the article focuses on addressing the contestation between regional powers and different regional responses to Boko Haram and the shifts in the distribution of material capabilities of states in the region (Eveslage 2013). In addition, we argue that insufficient funds, operational constraints and poor coordination with international initiatives have also hampered meaningful progress (Kagwanja 2006) and undermined the basis for erecting a robust new security architecture in the region.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

This article conceptualizes regional security within the broader trajectories of International Security Studies by appropriating Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as advanced by Buzan and Wæver (2003), and functionalist perspectives on security regionalization. RSCT provides a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding the emergent structure and dynamics of international security. It also theorizes the historical dynamics and continuities that characterize pre-Cold War (before 1945), Cold War (1945–1989/90) and post-Cold War (from 1990) global transformations, with implications for regionalism and regionalization. The theory has constructivist roots emphasising that the evolution of regional security complexes are influenced by patterns of amity and enmity amongst units in the international system (Buzan and Waever 2003). The realities of conflict and co-operation are dependent on the actions and perceptions of actors as well as power equations.

RSCT was developed to advance the frontiers of knowledge on the interplay of middle level security relations between two extremes – national and global securities. First, the theory views national securities as interconnected, rather than isolated, phenomena. They are inter-connected, yet emphasise the nation as the subject and object of security. This is captured in Buzan's pioneering definition of a security complex as 'a group of states whose security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another' (Buzan 1991:187). Second, the theory views global security as normative, aspirational and often illusive. This is because global security is hinged on the architecture of international law and order, which, unlike municipal or regional order, is difficult to enforce and adjudicate. The third realm is regional security which is seen as realistic in the sense that it provides a space where security units (states) come together – where the two 'extremes of national and global interplay' (Buzan and Wæver 2003:43). A Regional

Security Complex is thus defined as: ‘a set of units whose major process of securitisation, (de) securitisation or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another’ (Buzan and Wæver 2003:44).

### **Mapping of Conflict and Security in the Chad Basin**

Security regionalism in the LCBC could be conceptualized as an evolving but nascent security community that developed specifically to institutionalize a system of economic regionalism. Economic imperatives were a driving force for the creation of the LCBC in 1964 (Ifabiyi 2013). Member states perceived the formation of a region-wide economic community as a strategy for national and regional development. The idea of a regional bloc in the Lake Chad area was considered by the political leaders of the region as a means to put the region in a better position to collectively harness the water resources for food production and also regarded regionalism as an engine to solve the economic malaise, poverty, food insecurity and underdevelopment in the Lake Chad. The philosophical basis for this sub-regional grouping is thus rooted in the tradition of functional cooperation and later neo-functionalism, which advocates functional cooperation in specific areas across national boundaries.

Lake Chad has been a source of economic livelihood for millions of people inhabiting the catchment areas in the four riparian states of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger (Onuoha 2009). The LCB is a huge body of water resources (indeed the fourth largest inland water area in Africa) that is at the heart of the political economy of the region. The lake is of immense strategic importance because it serves as the agricultural hub of the sub-region. Equally, the LCB also constitutes a strategic conduit for national food security (Umara 2014:93). It provides platforms for agricultural activities, including farming, fisheries, livestock production, ground water recharge and, more importantly, human settlement. The raising of livestock by local as well as nomadic herders provides additional means of economic livelihood in the basin. The lake, which provides water for grazing lands for pastoralists and herders, has been the traditional convergence point for pastoralist groups such as the Tuareg, Toubou, Feda, Kanembu, Shuwa, Fulani and Wadai from Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria (Onuoha 2009:45). Thus, harnessing the LCB for national food security is a core national interest for countries of the region. Tapping the lake’s waters for geostrategic national interest led to the formation of regional integration mechanisms underpinned by the establishment of the LCBC in May 1964 by Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria (subsequently joined

by CAR in 1996). During the last four decades, the Lake Chad region has witnessed several violent conflicts, guerrilla wars, warlordism and militias insurgency stemming largely from the Chadian civil war of the 1980s, followed by armed rebellions and factional militias in both Niger and CAR that emerged to capture ungovernable spaces created by a lack of political legitimacy, leadership squabbles, and political fragmentation that bedevilled states across the region (Onapajo 2013).

In the literature there are various explanations as to the root causes of insecurity and political violence in the Lake Chad region, accounts that are largely essentialized and internalized. Particularly pervasive amongst these explanations of conflict has been the 'primordialism' thesis, whereby conflicts are attributed to the existence of intractable conflicts or antagonism between neighbouring or intertwined communities. The primordialists argue that conflict between two or more incompatible ethnic groups is inevitable, and that ethnic violence results from antipathies and antagonisms that are enduring properties of ethnic groups. The instrumentalist approach sees ethnicity as a tool manipulated by elites to further their interest and control state apparatus as the gatekeeper for state resource, whereas the constructivists have argued that ethnicity and ethnic identity is 'socially constructed' (Fearon and Laitin 2000:847). The constructivists meanwhile argued that identities are not fixed and immutable but rather socially constructed. As such, identities are exploited by avaricious elites for their own individual interests (Walter 1999; Nafziger and Auvinen 2002).

Related to this is the Malthusian argument that posits an escalation of inter-group conflict as a result of increasing population levels, environmental stress and scarcity (Homer-Dixon 1994; Kaplan 1994), as have accounts which focus on resource abundance or the 'resource curse' (Ross 1999; de Soysa 2000) as well as explanations based on relative deprivation and pronounced 'horizontal' inequalities between social groups (Addison and Murshed 2002; Nafziger and Auvinen 2002). Similarly, the enduring theme of 'bad leaders' echoes in much of the extensive literature on violent predation and 'warlordism' (Ellis 1998; Reno 1998).

This article rejects such essentialism for its neglect of deep historical roots, in particular how political violence in Africa must be located in their globally and historically constituted social relations. By contrast, the article locates the current wave of political violence and terrorism in Lake Chad not only in the 'internal' characteristics of individual states of the region but within the long history of imperialism now widely understood as a system of neoliberal globalization (Ayers 2010:155). It argues that despite key differences, all these narratives nonetheless consider 'identity' as an internal

root of war (Hanlon 2006) thereby ignoring the external dimension of the root cause of political violence in postcolonial Africa. Thus, the current state of conflict and violence in the region must be located within the historical–structural process of the institutional legacy of colonialism, the postcolonial process of state formation and state building as well as the current dynamics of capitalist accumulation under heightened neoliberal globalization relations. Whereas space will not allow in-depth discussions on the roles wars and conflicts have played in the dynamics of insecurity across regional frontiers, the focus here is on how a surging wave of Boko Haram insurgency generated policy problems linked to regional insecurity in the LCB. In the next section we explore the historical trajectory of the Boko Haram movement.

### **Transnational Terrorism and Security Regionalization in the LCB: The Rise and Rise of Boko Haram**

The Boko Haram insurgency emerged out of a radical Islamist youth movement in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in the north-east of Nigeria in the 1990s. The group leader Mohammed Yusuf established the Shababul Islam (Islamic Youth Vanguard) that was critical of the Nigerian government and actively involved in the introduction and implementation of Sharia in many northern states. The sect calls itself Jamaatu Ahlis Sunna Liddaawati wal-Jihad, or people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad. It is widely known as Boko Haram, loosely meaning Western education is forbidden. Ideologically it is a neo-Salafi movement, which represents a radicalized rebranding of conservative Salafism, which focuses on a dogmatic interpretation of the Qur'an and prophetic traditions (Sergie and Johnson 2015). As a self-constituted religious establishment, the group began its terror offensive against the Nigerian government in 2009. Its principal aim has been to create a Caliphate, a theocratic Islamic State in the entire northern part of the country (International Crisis Group: 2014:10).

The conflict began as a localized social movement but later culminated into a regional conflict across the borders of the LCB. The militant Islamists' transnationalization of jihadism across the borders of Cameroon, Chad and Niger was predicated on the desire to carve out a 'Caliphate' throughout the Lake Chad region opening up the space for forcible contest for territorialization within states by a violent non-state actor. Since 2012, the jihadist group rapidly expanded its operational frontier through the regionalization of terrorism. This was facilitated by taking advantage of porous borders and the collapse of Gaddafi's regime, which triggered regional arms proliferation, thereby aiding jihadist violence in the region (Eveslage

2013). This development changed the earlier narrative that had focused on ending the war within Nigerian territory. Recently, the Islamist insurgent group has utilized northern Cameroon and Niger as logistics and weapon supply routes, fuelling a cross-border insurgency. In March 2015, Boko Haram declared total allegiance to Islamic State proclaiming itself Islamic State's 'West African Province' (ISWAP). Increased flows of weapons from North Africa through Lake Chad's unsecured borders have solidified the group's ties with other radicalized Islamist groups (Oputu and Lilley 2015).

Boko Haram's quest for jihadism evolved from focusing on insurrection and terrorism aimed at conquering large swaths of territory. With pivotal help from transnational actors, Boko Haram began acquiring the capacity to fight conventional wars against the armed forces of states. Thus, the pursuit of the 'Caliphate' has already transformed the group into an integral part of a larger geo-strategic and geo-economic mega-trend (Bodansky 2015). The mujahedin units of Boko Haram have more than a thousand fighters from Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The initial cross-border recruitment was largely drawn from population groupings that belonged to the same tribes and speak the same local languages. However, as the notoriety of the Boko Haram grew throughout the region, forcible conscription via systematic abduction of children led to a steady flow of recruits into its ranks (International Crisis Group 2014).

The transnationalization of this jihadist movement is located within historical and geographical contexts. For example, the European scramble and partition of Africa led to the balkanization of nationalities arbitrarily creating transnational ethnic linkages and fostering sub-national identity conflicts. The emergence of Boko Haram was in Maiduguri, which is located in the north-eastern part of Nigeria bordered by Chad, Niger and Cameroon, which predominantly shares common Kanuri and Shuwa Arabic-speaking populations that have had linguistic, cultural, and ethnic ties for centuries. This phenomenon has increased the cross-border spread of Boko Haram across the Lake Chad region. Similarly, Boko Haram's leadership and collaborative network is also embedded across Saharan and Sahelian Africa, from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. Contemporary Africa's unsecured borders and general ungovernability created the space for breeding neo-Salafi-jihadi groups and precipitated its fast transnationalization across international frontiers. Due to the proximity of some extremist groups in this region and their similar ideology, it is feared that their collaboration would result in the ability to launch globally threatening terrorist attacks (Eveslage 2013). On the contrary, Onuoha (2014) argues that the implications of Boko Haram on regional security can be assessed from four main dimensions,

namely: Boko Haram's expansion in the form of transnational recruitments, training, equipment and funding; its targeted cross-border violence; transnational consequences of its operations; and a potential erosion of Nigeria's role as the *de facto* leader in Africa.

In November 2014, the transnationalization and regionalization of Boko Haram took a dramatic turn when the insurgents abducted the wife of the Cameroonian Deputy Prime Minister, prompting the Cameroonian authorities to bolster their forces in its northern territories, including deploying its Rapid Reaction Brigade. The Cameroonian army pushed back the jihadists into the Chadian borders. Cross-border infiltrations of insurgents into Chad prompted N'Djaména to then join regional collaborations to fight the terrorists. Chad launched interventions into northern Cameroon, after the signing of a bilateral agreement, with the intention of clearing provinces of Boko Haram fighters and camps, and re-securing the supply routes of the militants and curtailing further weaponization of the region. Thus the Chadian army initiated a unilateral offensive to dislodge the insurgents from their Nigerian territories. This was followed by a Nigerian offensive in the same area, while the Nigerien military launched a campaign in the Diffa region in south-eastern Niger to push back insurgent units operating there.

### **The MNJTF: An Emerging Regional Security Architecture in the LCB**

The New World (dis)Order has resulted in the relative neglect of conflicts in the global South (Soderbaum 2001:67). Following the United Nations Security Council's demand for robust transnational and regional counter-terrorism measures (Heupel 2007), states in the region have increasingly been impelled to act collectively. Against the backdrop of emerging security realities, states within the LCBC decided to form a far-reaching generic transnational counter-terrorism measure with the expansion of the mandate of the MNJTF in the LCB. The MNJTF reflects a regional military alliance to coordinate efforts to combat the common threats to their national security posed by the Islamic fundamentalist group. This security architecture, under the ambit of a restructured MNJTF from 'international border control' to 'counter-terrorism', is driven by the changing dynamics of conflict in Africa, in particular the resurgence of violent Islamist terrorism and the geopolitics of regional powers. Reminiscence of the West African security regionalism underpinning ECOMOG in the 1990s, the MNJTF in the LCBC represents a new security frontier. The MNJTF is a platform for African-led multilateral securitization and counter-terrorism measures against Boko Haram to focus solely on security dialogue, bringing together the regional defence chiefs

to coordinate region-wide counter-terrorism measures. Increased threats by Islamic radicalism have led to the integration of counter-terrorism into the LCBC's emerging regional security agenda (This Day 2015).

In January 2014, four countries revisited the Multinational Joint Task Force. MNJTF was originally formed in 1998 to deal with cross-border security issues. At its fourteenth summit of heads of state and government, held in Chad in April 2012, the LCBC decided to reactivate the force and extend its mandate and operational frontier to include containing the growing regional threats of Boko Haram. The headquarters of that force (previously located in the city of Baga in Nigeria's Borno State), fell into the hands of Boko Haram in 2015. Clearly, the LCBC-led MNJTF, in its current configuration, pragmatically shifted its security posture towards containing the regional expansion of Boko Haram. This was largely accentuated by the dismal failure of Nigeria's previous governments to defeat the jihadist group. In this context, the surge of Boko Haram terrorism and the long-awaited national response from Nigeria to combat extremist threats appear to have triggered a regional dimension of securitization (Th eroux-B enoni 2015).

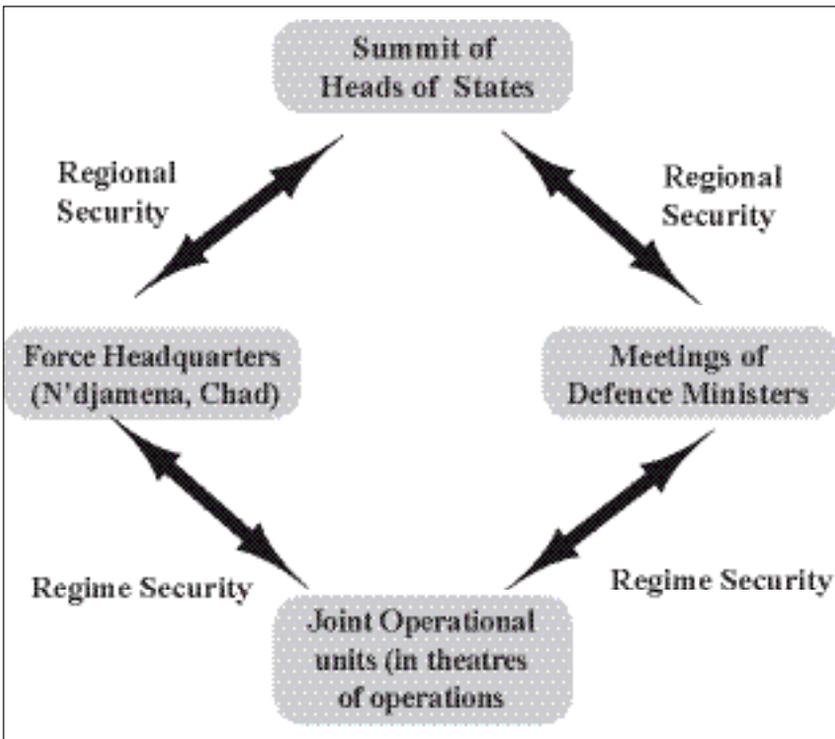


Figure 1: Emerging regional security architecture in the LCBC

At the continental level, the MNJTF, as a regional military coalition to fight Africa's jihadists in the Lake Chad region, was endorsed by the African Union during its Assembly Summit held on 29 January 2015 in Addis Ababa. The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU authorised the MNJTF's deployment. The draft concept of operations (CONOPS) for the operationalization of the MNJTF was reviewed by the PSC on 3 March 2015. Member countries of the LCBC were mandated to mobilize forces to fight the terrorist group. As a follow-up to its decision of 29 January 2015, the PSC held a session on the steps being taken for the operationalization of the MNJTF against Boko Haram by the LCB countries and Benin. The African Union authorization of the MNJTF was requested by member states of the LCBC, as well as by a non-member state, Benin, after a ministerial meeting in Niamey, Niger. It was agreed that the 8,700-strong force headquartered in N'Djaména, Chad, would be authorised to exercise a 'right of hot pursuit' on Nigerian soil. The LCBC member states agreed that harmonizing a concept of operations was a crucial step in obtaining the UN's legitimization (and perhaps funding) for the MNJTF through a UN Security Council Resolution (Théroux-Bénoni 2015).

At a meeting held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on 5–7 February 2015 experts from the LCBC and the AU, with the participation of experts from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the UN formally finalized the draft operational plans. The plan outlined the strategic coordination, rules of engagement, and requirements for supporting and sustaining the mission. The draft concept also outlined the establishment of a Central Military Command and joint coordination mechanisms that would have control over troops contributed by LCBC members and Benin. A force commander rotating among LCBC members and Benin would hold the strategic command and control of the force. Although the AU's decision was to have MNJTF's force size be 7,500, during the Yaoundé meeting representatives of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria announced that they wished to increase the size by 1,200 personnel making up a total troop strength of 8,700. Nigeria is the largest contributor with 3,250 personnel, followed by Chad with 3,000 (*Premium Times* 2015).

The emergence of Muhammmadu Buhari as Nigeria's new president in May 2015 has arguably enhanced the momentum and the political will for a broader regional response to combat Boko Haram. The new president had made ending the Boko Haram insurgency a key point of his electoral campaign, and shortly after assuming office, began reforming his command structure, appointing new military service chiefs, and moving counter-terrorism centres of operations to Maiduguri, the epicentre of the insurgency. He also sought to

increase regional cooperation with Cameroon, Chad and Niger. In a separate but equally momentous bilateral agreement, Nigeria agreed to allow Chadian troops to enter Nigerian territory to fight Boko Haram under the principle of 'hot pursuit' across its borders (Daily Post 2016).

Despite the gains by the regional force (MNJTF), Boko Haram's attacks have continued unabated and the group has expanded its attacks on Nigeria and its neighbours. The terror group's link to Islamic State seems to have strengthened its tactical capacity by shifting terror tactics from head-on battles over territory to ambushes and multi-pronged attacks such as suicide bombings. The jihadist group has responded to the announced relocation of army headquarters to N'Djaména by intensifying multiple raids on Chadian towns. For instance, on 15 June 2015 two suicide bombings by Boko Haram in N'Djaména killed thirty-four people and injured more than 100 (Daily Trust 2016). Essential to preventing transnational regeneration of Boko Haram is cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbours to block supply routes and exfiltration, eradicate rear-bases and training camps, and share intelligence on movements of fighters and sources of funding and supplies.

Despite its limitations in terms of funding, the MNJTF has thus far managed some successes against Boko Haram. In February and March 2014 the armies of the MNJTF recaptured thirty-six towns across three states in the north-east of Nigeria. Forces from Chad and Niger were instrumental in expelling Boko Haram from the key towns of Mallam Fatori and Damasak, killing 300 fighters in the process. In March 2015 the Nigerian government announced that only three local government areas were under the control of Boko Haram. Since his inauguration, President Buhari has worked hard to cement these gains (Oputu and Lilley 2015).

### **The Regional Security Complex, Geopolitical Realities and Rebalancing Power Configuration in Lake Chad**

The geostrategic consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency are rapidly transforming the balance of power of the region. As a result of the emerging security threats from Boko Haram, the Lake Chad region is currently undergoing the emergence of a new security order and regional reconfiguration. Violent terrorism is threatening regional socio-political and economic security and its impact is transcending national systems and affecting the political stability of the region. Regional powers such as Nigeria and Chad perceived that the geostrategic implications of cross-border Islamist jihadism could only be contained by developing architecture of cooperative security to manage the latent threats of terrorism.

Beyond this traditional discourse of regional securitization, it is worth noting that the emerging security architecture of MNJTF has at times clashed with the geopolitical realities of the Lake Chad regional system. Regional distrust and mutual recriminations between Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon persist, and differences in perceptions of threat, responsibility, and priority are hampering progress for regional securitization (Cooke 2016). In particular, historical animosities, linguistic differences between Anglo and Francophone countries (*Economist* 2014) and the emerging geopolitics of oil all affect the structure and dynamics of regional balances of power. All these have serious implications for regional stability and the emergence of the new security architecture. For example, the geostrategic competition between Nigeria, as a regional hegemon, and Chad over the region's oil reserve has triggered power struggles throughout Lake Chad. Similarly, on the southern shore of Lake Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria lack an agreed regionalization of a security frontier due to a long-running territorial dispute over the Bakassi peninsula. In fact, the post-Cold War reconfiguration of regional power in Lake Chad can be better understood through the following geostrategic trends: (1) Nigeria's continued assertiveness as regional hegemon based on the long-held traditional foreign policy posture of the *pax-Nigeriana* narrative; (2) the geopolitical interest of powerful regional actors in particular oil geopolitics; (3) the politics of regime survival.

Until recently, Nigeria perceived the Boko Haram threat as a purely domestic issue, and a matter to be handled by the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). This proved illusive and, therefore, the Nigerian government was eventually compelled to deploy its armed forces, thus depicting the Boko Haram as an existential threat to Nigeria's survival, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the long-run, the Nigerian government and regional allies have come to understand the transnational threats posed by Boko Haram. As Thérroux-Bénoni (2015) argues, the move to a region-wide military coalition in Lake Chad has been tangled up in regional geopolitics. The country's status as a regional, even continental, power in political, military, economic and demographic terms made it difficult for both African and international partners of Nigeria to challenge this assertion, despite serious military setbacks. In other words, Nigeria's symbolic hegemony in Africa, underpinned by its *pax-Nigeriana* foreign policy doctrine designed to dominate the region (Francis 2001), or the continent, appears to be the greatest impediment to the militarization of regional security through an evolving security architecture in the Lake Chad area. For instance, in June 2015 during a summit with LCB countries in Abuja, President Muhammadu Buhari rejected a proposal for an alternate leadership between Nigeria, Chad,

Niger, Cameroon and Benin of a joint military force against Boko Haram (Premium Times 2015). Nigeria perceived such moves as efforts to thwart its ambitions in the region. Pundits regard Nigeria's opposition to rotate the Military High Command of the MNJTF among the Lake Chad countries as linked to its continued pursuit of regional geopolitical dominance. In particular, its growing role and engagement with other countries in the formation of MNJTF is predicated on the grand strategy of reversing its weakened regional influence and hegemony and the populist depiction of Nigeria as the 'giant of Africa', which has been largely echoed in the scholarly literature in the last decades (Ubi and Akinkuotu 2014). However, this populist depiction of Nigeria as the hegemonic leader is challenged by quite a number domestic problems, in particular, its failure in postcolonial state-building and construction of a prebendal and patrimonial state in the postcolonial era by the elites (Lewis 1996; Joseph 1987), lack of democratic legitimacy, endemic corruption, poverty and underdevelopment, which all help to undermine Nigeria's claim to regional or continental leadership and have opened the space for contestation between regional powers and the reconfiguration of the emerging structures for regional order.

Prior to the regional security summit in Paris, large swathes of Nigerian territory were under the control of Boko Haram, increasing the risk of the transnationalization of a refugee crisis as tens of thousands of forcibly displaced refugees flocked to Niger, and northern Cameroon as well as threatening regional cross-border trade. It became obvious that the previous administration of President Goodluck Jonathan of the Nigerian government lacked the political will to contain the Boko Haram insurgency (Onapajo 2013). Challenges to the partnership quickly emerged, though Nigeria was initially reluctant to cede sovereignty to its fellow task force partners, an issue made worse by historic territorial disputes with Chad and Cameroon. Additionally, its military faced low morale as soldiers refused to fight against Boko Haram due to the lack of ammunition and basic supplies. Nigeria's leadership of the coalition was derailed by an election delay in 2015. In the early weeks of the intervention, President Idriss Déby of Chad complained that his forces were defeating Boko Haram and retaking towns in northern Nigeria, only to be delayed by the Nigerian military, which was supposed to deploy to protect the task force's gains (Siegle 2013).

Related to regional power politics is the injection of oil geopolitics into an already volatile mix of ecological factors pushing socio-economic devastation of the region. In particular, Chad's rise as an oil producer led to a competition among different regional orders and the rise of what Soderbaum and Taylor (2008) labelled as the 'regionalisation of neo-patrimonialism',

complicated by the involvement of powerful local politicians on the Nigerian and Chadian sides whose personal investments in Chadian oil meant that their interest was best served by Chad's continued exclusive and unfettered access to the oil reserves, while Nigeria remained bogged down with the Boko Haram insurgency (Didymus 2014). The oil wealth beneath the Chad Basin, in which some Nigerians and Chadians have made investments, is fanning the embers of insurgency in Nigeria as vested economic interests in the crude oil exploration in the Chad Basin fuel the machinery of Boko Haram (Ayu 2015).

To be precise, the Boko Haram insurgency delays resource exploration and production on the Nigerian side of Lake Chad to the benefit of Chad and a few other stakeholders. Prominent businessmen and politicians in both Nigeria and Chad (in association with French companies), have invested heavily in the Chadian oil industry, and, as a result, benefit from Boko Haram's destabilization of the north-eastern part of Nigeria. It is widely believed that it is they who are the principal financiers and arms suppliers to Boko Haram (Ayu 2015). Chad's destabilization role in the region, as part of its economic drive to transform itself into a major oil exporter, with the apparent backing of its former colonial master France, was highlighted by a recent *Global Post* report which indicted France for supporting Déby's destabilization policy in CAR with the aim of securing Chad's unfettered access to its common oil reserves with CAR and disrupting the country's increasing trade and economic links with China (Didymus 2014).

In 2015, Chad shifted and diverted its regional security policy against Boko Haram from 'expediency' of regional security to the 'realism' of regime security. The deteriorating security environment around the Lake Chad area and increased Boko Haram attacks on Chadian soil posed to the Déby regime's issues of survival and stability. This was what served as the main driver for Chad's intervention in Nigeria. On the regional front, Chad faces a threat to its hegemony from other military powers. On the domestic front, it faces a threat to its political stability from opposition groups who perceived Déby's inaction against Boko Haram as a threat to their cross-border trade with Nigeria. Thus, N'Djaména's regional military intervention and security paradigm shift was predicated on the geostrategic calculation for regime survival and legitimacy, which is necessary for the concentration of power and internal hegemony, and is configured as an argument for its regional hegemonic aspirations. The deepening links between Islamic State and Boko Haram prompted Chad's Déby to introduce reforms purposely to ensure long-term stability (Klapper 2015). For instance, on January 2015 Chadian forces crossed the international frontier and recaptured Mallam

Fatori a north-eastern Nigerian town that had been under Boko Haram control, a move that presaged a wider regional intervention under the auspice of the MNJTF (Janguza 2015).

## **Conclusion**

The Chad Basin is fast emerging as a new security complex in terms of the broad attributes identified by Buzan and Waever (2003). In addition to sharing Lake Chad and its resources, countries of the Chad Basin demonstrate a number of factors in common, not least proximate geography, political problems, socio-cultural linkages, economic resources and shared threats to national and regional security. Emerging trends suggest that Nigeria – the region's preponderant power – has been brokering the support of countries to put in place a new regional security architecture, namely the MNJTF, under the aegis of the LCBC. Headquartered in N'Djaména, Chad, the task force has so far worked hard to confront the threats posed by Boko Haram, albeit with modest success. Nevertheless, the rough terrain of the Chad Basin poses a Herculean task for the member states of the Commission.

Nigeria appears to be the preponderant hegemonic power in the Lake Chad Regional Security Complex. But Nigeria's posture is challenged by both local and external factors. Locally, historical animosities and linguistic differences between Francophone and Anglophone countries and, in particular, distrust and mutual recriminations between Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon persist with regard to perceptions of threat, responsibility and priority. These have all adversely affected progress towards security regionalization in the LCB. Externally, French influence within the West African sub-region is a matter of serious concern. The emerging geopolitics of oil on the structure and dynamics of regional balances of power has serious implications for regional stability and the emergence of the new security architecture. For example, the geostrategic competition between Nigeria as a regional hegemon and Chad over the region's oil reserve has triggered power struggles throughout Lake Chad. Territorial disputes – particularly on the southern shore of Lake Chad – have put Cameroon and Nigeria on a collision course. The two countries lack an agreed regionalization of security frontier due to the long-running territorial dispute over the Bakassi peninsula. Local 'national' politics within some member states have also affected the dynamics of regional security in the LCB. For instance, Chad's initial passion for the project has fluctuated between the 'expediency' of regional security and the 'reality' of regime security. The geography and thick largely 'uncharted' vegetation of the LCB have proved to be difficult terrain for joint military campaigns. The terrorists have embedded and taken cover

in the thick jungles of the LCB. Dislodging them would perhaps require more boots on the ground, enhanced drone technology and higher volume of infantry and armoury.

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