

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MEMBERS OF LAKE CHAD BASIN COMMISSION MEETING IN ABUJA, 25th May 2021

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to give an overview of regional cooperation in the Lake Chad basin. It focuses in particular on the recent evolution of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), a basin organization which brings together Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic and Libya. Originally set up in 1964 to coordinate access and use of the resources of Lake Chad. The paper adopted the library research instrument using the descriptive method to generate data. Findings show that the region covered by the LCBC has recently been the scene of military cooperation in light of the fight against Boko Haram. Split between the ECOWAS and ECCAS space, the Lake Chad Basin countries find themselves encompassing a region of heightened mobility and porous borders under increasing environmental and security pressure. Over the years, the LCBC seems to have largely failed in its objectives to develop the area and promote sustainable use of the basin's resources. The main players, including the regional hegemon Nigeria have invested some political capital in the project, but favor major politically attractive interventions, such as recharging the lake from the Ubangui River; over structural interventions in the area of agricultural adaptation and environmental conservation around the basin's effluents. The paper concludes that the MNJTF has been greatly effective in its military approach in containing the surge of Boko Haram despite some of the challenges faced by this institution. The recommends that governments in the region must also create stable and conducive economic environment that addresses the concerns of the population especially the youth, so they are not lured into joining these groups because of economic hardship.

Keywords: Lake Chad; Basin; Commission; Meeting; Terrorism; Cooperation

INTRODUCTION

The rise of Boko Haram put the LCBC at the centre of attention, as the affected states needed a political forum to coordinate joint military efforts and cross-border cooperation in the fight against terrorism. The LCBC provided a cross-regional entry-point and the necessary legal framework to host cooperation and channel funds for a

Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin (Global Water Partnership, 2013).

The common threat and first experiences in military cooperation to some extent reasserted the wavering relevance of the organization and deepened political ties between the basin countries. Today, the question remains how this momentum can be harnessed to also reactivate the core mandate of the LCBC as a basin organization (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014).

Brief History of Lake Chad Basin Commission

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC - in French, Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad, CBLT) was created on 22 May 1964 by the Heads of State of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, making it one of the oldest basin organizations in Africa (Berghezan, 2016). The LCBC was created to promote the shared, sustainable management and exploitation of Lake Chad and other water resources in the area (Ibrahim, 2007). In the last decade the region has been marked by insecurity, due to the terrorist activities of the insurgent movement Boko Haram raising issues regarding its mandate in the realm of peace and security (Buzan, 1094).

The organization was created soon after the independence of the member countries in 1960. Although postcolonial, and while the colonial powers France, UK, and Germany had used the lake to demarcate borders, which was set up with the technical support of France, still interested in maintaining some influence in the basin area (Singer, 1961). The 1985 summit gave the LCBC the mandate to enlarge the basin organization, notably to the Central African Republic (CAR), which acceded in 1994. Libya joined the LCBC in 2008 and Sudan, Egypt, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo have observer status (Galeazzi et al; 2017).

Attune to the River Basin development model, the LCBC countries adopted a long-term vision and strategic action plan (PAS) in 2008 and a Water Charter in April 2012. The Water Charter's development and initial implementation was supported by the Fonds Français pour l' Environnement Mondial (FFEM) with Nigeria having reportedly played a leading role in paving the way for its preparation (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014). The Water Charter aims to help the LCBC achieve its Vision 2025 and Strategic Action Plan with an approach inspired by the principles of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). Joint management of water resources is a crucial point in the context of increasing consumption of water throughout the basin, due to demographic trends and human activities (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014).

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION

Water sharing rules between states and users, upstream and downstream basins (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014):

- i. Wetlands and groundwater management rules;
- ii. Criteria to review new projects which might impact on water resources;
- iii. The division of competences and functions between national and regional authorities in water policies, planning, monitoring;
- iv. Harmonization of monitoring and communication tools; and

- v. Supporting the participation of civil society in water and natural resources management.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper fundamentally looks at how intergovernmental institutions created at the level of the region fosters regional integration and solve common problems, in our case, counterterrorism against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin. The paper also looks at existing theories that link international conflict to the risk of losing office. The starting point of this paper was to look at an International Relations theory that adopts the role of non-state actors in international politics. Neoliberalism is the theory adopted in this paper as it envisages regional organizations as valid actors in the international system. Proponents of this theory such as Keohane and Nye (1977), among other things posit that states create interdependence among themselves in various ways such as through political and economic institutions. Economic interdependence for instance, they argue increases the cost of war, hence making it unprofitable for states to go to war. Indeed it is their opinion that institutions play a crucial role in enhancing cooperation between states by creating interrelated games and reducing transaction cost. This, according to Neoliberal Institutionalists is a cogent response that mitigates the anarchy that characterizes the international system. Neoliberalism is antithetical to neorealism and was developed as a response to realist assumptions. The latter capitalizes that anarchy is an irredeemable characteristic of the international system and States are unitary rational actors of the system. Neorealists believe that what matters most to states in this anarchic environment where in they operate is power, measured in terms of material capabilities, as it is the only means to assure ones security. States are concerned with maximizing relative gains. These views and more were developed by major proponents such as Waltz (1979).

Regional Integration theory, with roots in Neoliberalism further explains why states establish regional institutional frameworks to either further strengthen ties among themselves or address a common threat (Karns and Mingst, 2010) categorize two factors that account for the emergence of regional organizations/institutions. In their opinion, regional organizations are created for economic and political reasons. Politically, the emergence of regional institutions could reflect the power dynamics in a particular region or sub-region, a stronger state or group of stronger states can compel weaker ones to join regional organizations. Secondly, a shared political ideology for example, liberal democracy can also account for states willingness to work together through regional frameworks. Thirdly and even more importantly, the existence of a common internal or external threat e.g. a hostile state, terrorist group, humanitarian disaster etc. are all political factors that influence the formation of regional organizations (International Crisis Group, 2015).

The Role of the Commission in the Fight-Against Terrorism

Military cooperation and The Multinational Joint Task Force cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin predates the rise of Boko Haram. The fragility of the basin countries security systems and porous borders allowed for armed groups and common banditry to flourish. In 1994 at the 8th summit of the LCBC, due to smuggling and criminal activities taking place in the area, the member states decided to establish a joint security force based in Baga-Kawa in Nigeria, however only Nigeria committed troops at that stage (Musa, 2013). In 1998, the security force was expanded to include other member states of the LCBC by establishing the Multinational Joint Security Force (MNJSF). This formation had the “initial mandate to conduct military operations in the Lake Chad Region, check

banditry activities and to facilitate free movement of member states' troops across their common border" (Musa, 2013). While the LCBC acted as a political forum, its direct involvement in these early experiences was limited (Baldwin, 1995).

The aftermath of the 2009 "Boko Haram Uprising", which left more than 1,000 dead in Northern Nigeria, inspired the reorganization of the MNJSF. In 2012, in response to the increasingly cross border nature of the insurgency against Nigeria and its neighbors, the MNJSF was re-launched as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). This reorganization led to an increase in the operational capacity of the MNJTF to an estimated 10,000 troops initially driven by Nigeria (Zamfir, 2017). The MNJTF was based in Baga, Nigeria until the base was overrun by Boko Haram in January 2015 (Knoope and Chauzal, 2016).

. Military headquarters were subsequently moved to N'Djamena, and the MNJTF was brought under the political lead of the African Union and its African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The AU mandated the LCBC to be the political coordinating body of the operation. Set up by the LCBC summit, the MNJTF only includes four of the six member states, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, and non-member Benin (Anderson, 1999). The MNJTF members are effectively split between ECOWAS (Nigeria, Niger, and Benin) and ECCAS (Cameroon and Chad) making it difficult for an AU recognized REC, and building block of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), to take the lead. Since the majority of the countries concerned belong to the LCBC and Boko Haram's reach had spread to the shores of the Lake Chad Basin, the organization was seen as a suitable institutional framework for this joint effort providing a pragmatic solution for this cross-regional arrangement (CBLT, 2012). The LCBC in theory provides civilian leadership of the mission but de facto has no involvement on operational activities -the LCBC has little 'on the ground' expertise on peace and security (Arthur, 2010).

The MNJTF is by no means an exclusive framework for cooperation, and national and bilateral deployments take place regularly. In June 2016, for example, Chad deployed 2,000 troops to Niger after Boko Haram took the town of Bosso, causing 50,000 people to flee. The MNJTF is in the first place a framework for coordinating different national military actions (Zamfir, 2017). Under the MNJTF troops are deployed within the countries' own national boundaries, and operate within those as a matter of priority (Assanvo et al., 2016). They may however under specific circumstances operate within a limited perimeter on the territory of neighboring states. Tensions on the mandate have occurred and are likely to increase. While the re-focusing on the original core mandate of water management is sometimes proposed as an option to institutionally strengthen the LCBC, the interest for security aspects has risen since the late 2000s due to the violence exerted by the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast of Nigeria, and, as of 2015, in the wider Lake Chad region. Advances in regional cooperation in security-related areas through the MNJTF could thus conceivably be coordinated under LCBC (Lemoalle & Magrin, 2014). At the same time, however, the LCBC faces serious difficulties in fulfilling its core mandate to coordinate and promote the safeguarding and development of Lake Chad, leading the 2015 joint audit to conclude that despite existing policies and legislation, the future of Lake Chad has not been sufficiently prioritized by member states, noting an absence of institutional coordination on water resource management in the basin (Joint Environmental Audit, 2015).

The Commissions Involvement and Difficulties in the Fight-Against Terrorism

The emergence of Boko Haram constitute threat to Nigeria and the other countries surrounding the Lake Chad area,

the lake was a main driver to reactivate and expand common security approaches by LCBC member states (CBLT, 2012). The actions of the jihadist movement have led to the disruption of communities and livelihoods in the basin area; have created refugee flows and internal displacement, putting populations at risk of food insecurity and creating urgent humanitarian needs (Sambe, 2016). While the decision to re-activate the MNJTF was already taken in 2012, the fight against Boko Haram only gained a regional sense of urgency over the course of 2014 and early 2015. The Paris summit in May 2014 gave another push to enhance regional cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, by means of coordinated patrols and border surveillance, pooling intelligence and information exchange (Zamfir, 2017). In January 2015, the African Union Assembly authorized the deployment of the MNJTF. Despite this authorization, the actual deployment encountered several logistical and financial setbacks, including the attack on the military base in Baga. Engaging with LCBC member states was one of the first foreign policy tasks of the newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, in 2015, in order to revive the establishment of the MNJTF (Stiftung, 2018). President Buhari convened a summit of the LCBC in Nigeria in June 2015, which finally approved the MNJTF concept of operations (CONOPS, which had been prepared over some months with the support of the AU and other international partners, such as the UN and the European Union. At this level then, LCBC can be seen as having managed to offer a platform for issues beyond its narrow water mandate. The command of the force was assigned to Nigeria, then under Major General Lamidi Adeosun, the drive of this country in the setting-up of the MNJTF (Posen, 2002). At the moment the MNJTF is not an integrated regional force with joint patrols and operations but focuses on coordinating national contingents which operate on their own terms and report to their own capitals. The task force also does some coordination of intelligence and joint planning. Another de facto function is to coordinate international financial and technical aid (e.g. seconded officers to the intelligence cells).

The LCBC Executive Secretary Sanusi Imran Abdullahi was designated as MNJTF's civilian head of mission in 2015, in theory with the role of providing the political direction in collaboration with the force commander Major General Adeosun. The LCBC Secretariat plays no specific role in the MNJTF's operations and the LCBC's capacity to carry out and manage this type of action is questioned (Assanvo et al., 2016).

The AU is de facto the primary partner of the MNJTF, rather than the LCBC (Assanvo et al., 2016). LCBC Heads of States had sought the legal framework for the task force from the AU, which in 2015 authorized the deployment of the MNJTF comprising up to 7500 military and non-military staff for an initial period of 12 months in 2015 (Zamfir, 2017). The AU's authorization was needed in order to acquire financial resources, for instance from international donors that already have financial mechanisms to support peace and security operations in Africa. Thus, after the official approval by the AU, the MNJTF attracted a EUR 50m from the European Union (EU) through the African Peace Facility (APF) 17- the highest donation the MNJTF has received since its formation. In addition, the AU provides logistical support to the MNJTF (transport, IT, communications equipment).

The AU's role led to some tensions as some had wished to exploit the opportunity to strengthen the LCBC's Executive Secretariat in the peace and security area since the LCBC had no direct experience in military operations. However, the LCBC is not a Legally Mandated Institution of the African Union, unlike ECOWAS or ECCAS, also limiting its current means of receiving funding and engaging more on peace and security issues, as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). Meetings of LCBC Ministers of Defense also only recently started taking place, the 3rd one being in 2014 (Galeazzi, 2017).

Until now, the MNJTF has suffered from the fact that certain members of the coalition prefer national or bilateral actions (Assanvo et al., 2016). Nigeria essentially continues to approach the fight against Boko Haram in a unilateral way. Niger's request for bilateral assistance from Chad after the attack on Bosso is another case in point. Those arrangements have probably faster reaction times and more flexibility, and could be viewed as more efficient (Mesquita, Siverson and WollerSource, 1992). The MNJTF has also caused frustrations in military hierarchies. In Cameroon, soldiers were expecting salary increases to the level of UN peacekeeping missions, leading to tensions in the ranks (International Crisis Group, 2016b).

The Significant of the Lake Chad Basin Commission Meeting in Abuja 25th May, 2021.

An extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad basin commission member countries on the situation in Chad was held in Abuja the 25th may 2021. At the invitation of H.E Muhammadu Buhari, the president of Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of LCBC, the Heads of state and Government met in an Extraordinary Session on 25 may 2021 in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria. In attendance were President Faustin-Archangel Touadere of the Central African Republic (CAR), Mohamed Bazoum of Niger, Mohamed al-Menfi of the presidential Council of Libya, the minister of state, Secretary-general at the presidency of the Republic of Cameroon, Mr. Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh, representing president Paul Biya and the president of the military Transition Council of Chad, General Mahamat Idriss Deby. The president of ECOWAS, The executive secretary of LCBC, Head of mission of the multinational joint task force (MNJTF) Mamman Nuhu and a host of others. The Summit focused exclusively on the situation in Chad following attacks from mercenary groups leading to the demise of Field Marshall Idriss Deby Itno, the late President of Chad, last April.

In a regional context Characterized by daunting challenges, including security, health, climate, and economic challenges, the reviewed the consequences of this barbaric act for the peace, security, and development of Chad and the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel countries region in general. According to President Muhammadu Buhari in his opening remarks, "The threat of Chadian rebel groups, who wants to overthrow the government, must be taken with all the seriousness it requires. The consequences of a destabilized Chad for the sub-region remain incalculable". He paid a solemn tribute to the memory the late Field Marshall Idriss Deby Itno, as an unrelentless champion of the fight against terrorism and trans-boundary crime. "It is our collective duty, and in honor of the memory of men and women who died in pursuit of peace in the region, to stand in unison as leader of the region to ensure that peace, stability and security are not disrupted in Chad and the region as a whole" added President Muhammadu Buhari. The executive Secretary of the Commission also presented a background paper on the situation in Chad, which was also followed by the remarks of president of the Military Transition Council of Chad. Heads of state and government Al's took the floor to share each in their capacity, their concern about the situation arising in Libyan chaos and the measures aimed at countering the impact of the deteriorating security situation not only in Chad but also in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel in general, with the support of international community (Umar News Center 25 May, 2021).

The Declaration appealed to all Chadians to avail themselves of the newly created Ministry of National Reconciliation Service and priorities dialogue to settle their differences. They called on the international community to assist the transition process of Chad for the return to constitutional Democracy within the eighteen month

stipulated timeframe. Noted also is the imperative of establishing a special fund to support Chad in its transition and strengthening Democratic and governance institutions that would reinforce the social contract and enhance its development.

The efforts of the MNJTF was highly commended in their fight against terrorism and other transnational crimes in the region and called for more collaboration among troops contributing countries towards maximizing the potentials of the force. At the end of the deliberations, the Abuja extraordinary summit urged donors, international financial institutions, and the international community, in general, to support Chad and provide the necessary financial assistance for a constitutional normalcy within the timeframe of the transition period.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The main focus of this paper was to establish whether there was a relationship between regional counterterrorism efforts and leaders' tenure in office. It was argued and found that, when faced with a common threat, countries in the sub-region work together to address the menace and this often has diverse effects on leaders' tenure in office. However it should be noted that the regime type greatly determines the political outcome for leaders in explaining the relationship between regional counterterrorism efforts and political survivals in third world countries. The MNJTF has been greatly effective in its military approach in containing the surge of Boko Haram despite some of the challenges faced by this institution. Also, notably was that, President Goodluck Jonathan lost office in 2015 largely because of public perception of his response to the Boko Haram menace, it will also be misleading not to pay cognizance to other factors like corruption and internal squabbles within the PDP that accounted for Jonathan's . On a policy note, the MNJTF has to intensify its nonmilitary strategies in containing Boko Haram. The problem with this group is not just their violent activities but their ideology. Governments in the region must also create stable and conducive economic environment that addresses the concerns of the population especially the youth, so they are not lured into joining these groups because of economic hardship.

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