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# **A Study of Counterterrorism Strategy and Operations in Sub-Saharan Africa with Reference to Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)**

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**Abstract:** *The study offers a counter-terrorism strategy and operations in Sub-Saharan Africa with reference to multinational joint task force (MNJTF) and multidimensional integrated stabilization mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The study was guided by the specific objective. Literature was reviewed in line with the objectives of the study and Regional Security Complex theory was adopted to this study. The data used in the study were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were sourced from diplomats and some military personnel which form 250 as the population of the study which were obtained through key informant interview (KII) and focused group discussion as an instrument. A sample size of 20 KII including diplomat in the Chadian consulate and 5 each from Malian embassy, MINUSMA desk officer in ECOWAS and some MNJTF personnel of operation Lafiya Dole, while secondary data was obtained through documented report as evidence to support the view point. The result of this study reveals that lack of trust among member countries, sharing of intelligence across the border and inadequate resources were the major challenges of the MNJTF member countries, while lack of capacity due to insufficient number of personnel serve as a challenge for MINUSMA. Therefore, the study concludes that a lot must be done to secure and stabilize those regions affected by terrorism through counter-terrorism measures. The study recommends that the regions porous border should be secured and Nigeria should offer greater respect and collaboration towards other members of the MNJTF whereas MINUSMA should expand its activities beyond support to the peace agreement to empower the mission in order to achieve its goals.*

**Key words:** *Terrorism, Counterterrorism, porous borders, multidimensional integrated stabilization mission in Mali (MINUSMA)*

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon; it is as long as international politics and state building, earlier cases of terrorism predate the world war years. In 2012 the Muslim World League (MWL) defined terrorism as any act of aggression committed by individual, groups or states against human beings including attacks on their religion, life, property or intellect property or honour. The MWL, further stated that any act of violence or threat designed to terrorize people or endanger their lives or security and also, damaging the environment and public facilities is an act of terror. *Muslim world league, (2017)*. The act of terrorism is an instrument for the attempted realisation of a political or religious project that perpetrators lacking mass support are seeking, that is generally involves, coerce target audiences. Therefore, the rise in terrorism has adversely affected regional security or rather security regionalization.

Regional security is a unit whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved. Security Regionalisation is a system of norms, practices, relationships, alliances and institutions constructed or developed by a group of like-minded and/or geographically-contiguous nations to address, enhance or ensure international and/or regional security (Buzan and Wæver 2003). Since 2009, Boko Haram insurgency has attacked the civilians, military, government facilities such as Nigerian police force headquarters in Abuja, multinational assets (such as the UNDP compound in Abuja), government schools as well as capturing territories and spreading to some parts of the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region of Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Nigeria started an onslaught on Boko Haram at the onset of its activities in the Northeast; however, before the formation of the joint task force by the Lake Chad Basin regional authorities, the activities of the sect had spread to neighbouring countries, apparently the terrorists targeted these countries for attacks in retribution for their participation in the regional joint task force and for daring to support Nigeria's efforts in quelling the insurgency (Lake Chad Basin Commission, 2014).

Boko Haram is a radical Islamic movement that originated from the Northeast region of Nigeria. The sect was funded in 2002 by Muhammad Yusuf in Borno state of Nigeria, but after his death its leadership has elevated to a more aggressive and violent terrorist network with affiliations and allegiances to other international terrorist's organisations like the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda and other extreme networks. Studies observe that the Boko Haram has been since 2002, but not until July 2009 when the confrontation between the group and the Nigerian security forces that the sect become a national security threat and regional concern.

The activities of the sect have become so dreadful that the Nigerian government and the international community declared it an insurgent group, because the activities of Boko Haram have continued to dominate headlines around the globe, and the rate of incidence and attacks have exceeded to the neighbouring state like Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. In response to this scourge, the lake chad basin states (Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Nigeria) stepped up a military action leading to the reactivation of the MNJTF as a multinational organisation that can bring an end to the crises along the region.

Historically, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a multilateral security platform formed by Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, it was originally set up in 1994, during the regime of Gen Sani Abacha, with the responsibility of curtailing banditry activities along the northern border of Nigeria. However, in 1998 it was expanded to combat transnational crime in the Lake Chad region, but was mostly dormant until 2012, when it was reactivated to deal with Boko Haram insurgency. In order to cope with the spread of terrorism in the region, the Paris Summit of May 2014, which brought together the heads of state of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, France, Niger and Nigeria, and representatives of the US, UK and EU, who decided to promote regional security cooperation to fight Boko Haram, by means of coordinated patrols and border surveillance, pooling intelligence and exchanging relevant information (Lake Chad Basin Commission 2014).

Mali was the most democratic country in Africa in the past 20 years. Although Mali was the first victim of the North African unrest, there are many other fragile states in its neighbourhood, there were three main reasons for the crises in Mali, firstly, there was a historical conflict in society, the Tuareg minority, who lives in the northern part of the country, wanted autonomy in the Azawad region. Mali had to face deeper economic problems worsened by drought and increased by the global economic crisis, Secondly, there was a revolutionary wave in the Arabic countries, which started in North Africa, and finally, radical Islamist groups joined the rebels thus the Mali crisis presented a threat to the regional and the international security.

Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is essentially a regionally-focused terrorist group located in North Africa drawing its followers largely from the Algerian Islamists group. Its reach has also expanded across the Sahel region South of the Sahara Desert, attracting members from Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Senegal as well as from within Mali. (Morlen, 2013). The final moment which led to the Malian crisis was the Libyan regime change. After Gaddafi's return in Africa in the 1970s he welcomed the Tuareg migrants. Gaddafi integrated them into the Libyan Forces. They played an active role in the civil war on both sides. After Gaddafi's death these experienced and heavily armed fighters had to leave Libya and returned into Mali and that triggered the Mali crisis. The French operations quickly intercepted and suppressed the Islamic militias, and the African led mission had been deployed sooner than planned with the first troops arriving on 17<sup>th</sup> January. After the intervention reached its main goal to stop the extremists and stabilize the northern region AFISMA transformed into a multidimensional peace-building mission (MINUSMA) supporting the stabilization of peace and security in the region, which is UN peace keeping mission in Mali.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a rapid surge in insurgency and terrorists network around the globe. Following the 9/11 which claimed the lives of people in the world and has continued to be plagued by the threat of terrorism and insurgency. The collapse of the Cold War in 1991 did not usher in the eradication of global conflicts. The contemporary global conflicts, which refers to the existing patterns of conflicts in the post-Cold War era, are predominantly symmetric and internal in nature, and reflect breakdowns in states, which implies the disappearance of the structures through which internal power balances are organized and the appearance of 'holes' in the international fabric of sovereign states". Intrastate or internal, rather than inter-state, conflicts are more prevalent in the contemporary international system (Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, 1999).

There are currently fifteen African countries involved in war, or are experiencing post-war conflict and tension. These include Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Liberia in West Africa; Mali in North Africa; Sudan, Somalia in East Africa including Central Africa Republic Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These conflicts have spread across borders and threatened international peace and security through mass refugee flow, proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the rise of local mercenary groups (Bontwell and Klane, 2000).

There are several organized rebellions, insurgences, Islamic Terrorism in Africa, which wreak terrible havoc on African people and threaten national stability, like the militia in

eastern Congo, the Dafur Janjaweed in Sudan, and the coming of the Tuareg in northern Mali and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb [AQIM] that spread to the other African counties, down to the present issue of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The MNJTF is an offensive and stabilisation military forces with the objectives of combating Boko Haram and other terrorist operating around the Lake Chad Basin. MINUSMA focused on attaining progress in the transitional political process in providing security and humanitarian stabilization in Mali. MINUSMA is to guarantee the peace and security of Mali, and to promote the reconciliation process, support the national dialogue, develop human right and reintegration of the Malian populace. The threat and conflict dynamics of terrorism are so pervasive that no one country, not even the super powers like United State of America, can successfully fight terrorism alone. For this reason, there have been a lot of collaborative efforts by states or the international organisation, civil society organisation, and financial institutions in fighting against terrorism.

According to Onuoha and Ezirim (2013, p. 2), in west Africa particularly, terrorist's footprints are increasing due to the activities of AL-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and jihad in west Africa (MUJAO), Ansar Dine, Boko Haram and other militant. (Ugwuaze,2017, pp. 6-7). Similarly, Adetula (2015), and Lee (2015) contend that west Africa happens to be among the worst hit sub-regions in Africa by terrorism due to poverty, poor governance, corruption, communal violence, weak state structure and religious intolerance.

The study argues that despite the plethora of studies carried out on the crises in west Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and their counter-terrorism measures, only few scholars were able to explore comparative cross-regional studies on counter-terrorism operations of MNJTF and MINUSMA. Little was discuss on their comparative analysis. Studies have shown that Nigeria as a nation states appear to be the preponderant hegemonic power in the Lake Chad Regional Security Complex (Tar and Mustapha, 2017), whether peace keeping missions are able to deliver and restore sanity to troubled regions (Ritter, 2014), the need for synergy and functionality amongst Multinational Joint Task Force against insurgency (Albert, 2017), Busher (2014) dwelled on introduction: terrorism and counter-terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa etc. Most of these scholars took single dimension in tackling the problem of terrorism in sub Saharan Africa, therefore this makes the researcher to focus on the comparative Analysis of MNJTF and MINUSMA.

### **Research aims and Objectives**

This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding in to the factors that led to the formation of MNJTF and MINUSMA, and the operational dynamics of MNJTF and MINUSMA, it further identifies the challenges undermining an effective and robust regional counterterrorism operation in the lake chad basin and Mali.

### **Literature Review**

Scholarly approaches and views have been established in conceptualizing terrorism. According to Stillman (2003), terrorism is an instrument, design for the attainment of some political, religious, or ideological goal. Paust (1974), views terrorism as a purposive use of violence or the threat of violence by the precipitators against an instrumental target in order to communicate to a primary target a threat of future violence so as to coerce the primary target into behavior or attitudes through intense fear or anxiety in connection with a demanded power outcome. Metz (2004), sees terrorism as a strategy used by groups which cannot realize their political aims through conventional means of seizure of power. These strategies used is

characterized by continued, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain such as jungles, mountains, urban areas; psychological warfare, and political mobilization which are designed to protect the terrorism and eventually affect the balance of power in their favor.

Şehirli, (2000), observes terrorism as any kind of act done by one or more persons belonging to an organization with the aim of changing the characteristics of the Republic as specified in the Constitution, its political, legal, social, secular and economic system, damaging the indivisible unity of the State with its territory and Nation. Mullins, (1997) sees terrorism as "the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by an individual or an organized group against property or even people with the intention of intimidating societies or governments, often for achieving certain ideological, economical, and political reasons". Moreover, Powell and Abraham (2006), terrorism is a violent move by a person or group of persons to resist or oppose the enforcement of law or running of government or revolt against constituted authority. In other word, terrorism is a move through violence means by a group to resist the law enforced by an existing authority. One of the major debates among scholars of counter-terrorism revolves around the definition of the term. However, this study provides a working definition build upon a growing consensus among social science scholars, regarding the main characteristics of the phenomenon. Omelicheva (2007) defined counterterrorism as a mix of public and foreign policies designed to limit the actions of terrorist groups and individuals associated with terrorist organizations in an attempt to protect the general public from violence. As a type of policy, counterterrorism encompasses a range of actions (e.g., freezing financial assets of terrorist organizations), specific decisions (e.g., a decision to join international treaties aimed at addressing different aspects of terrorism), general guidelines (such as provisions allowing for the use of military forces on the territory of other states), observable behaviours of states (e.g., police raids on possible terrorist sites), and verbal pronouncements of policy makers (e.g., promises of military and economic aid to other states struggling with terrorism). Busher, (2014) identified counter-terrorism as state policies, which are commonly enacted or implemented in response to oppositional terrorist events/threats, and/or policies declared by states as directed, at least partially, at preventing or limiting future oppositional terrorist acts. Nigerian's neighbours have worked through regional organisations including the African Union (AU), the Economic community of west African states (ECOWAS) and the lake chad basin commission (LCBC). The LCBC created the multinational joint task force (MNJTF) in 1998, and it mandate was terrorism as an area of focus. *Vanguard, October 19, 2012* Nigeria and its neighbours have talked about creating such a force since the early days of the group's, back in 2009. Before this, a poorly-arranged multinational military alliance between Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger had the mandate to disrupt the doings of the group. But the most palpable shortcoming of the present multinational responses has been a lack of mutual confidence between the participant states. McQuaid, Julia, et al. *Rethinking the US approach to boko haram, 2015*.

Frank (2016) noted that in 2014, the MNJTF was established by the countries of the Lake Chad Basin to tackle the threat posed by Boko Haram in the region. He further stated that, one of the most concrete steps taken by Boko Haram terrorism is the reorganisation of the MNJTF by the Lake chad basin countries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, chad and non- member country Benin republic. Albert (2017) also observe that the deployment of the MNJTF has to the extent helped in the restoration of state authority in areas affected by Boko Haram and assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to return to their homes. The MNJTF, comprising Nigeria, Chad, and Niger had existed since 1994 to combat trans-border banditry in

the Lake Chad Basin but was inactive until 2012, to combat Boko Haram (Musa,2015)

### **Methodology of the study**

The study adopted qualitative method of exploratory approach to give clear understanding of comparative operational dynamics of MNJTF and MINUSMA in counter-terrorism. In this study both primary and secondary sources of data were collected. The primary data was sourced from the key Informant interview through focused group discussion and in-depth interview as the instruments for data collection. It was conducted and transcribed in English Language. The secondary source for this study involved relevant, related and useful published and unpublished journals, academic articles, periodicals, newspapers and online materials, of the MNJTF/MINUSMA area operations. The study Population comprises of 250 diplomats and officials from the Chadian consulate in Maiduguri, Borno State Nigeria, military officers of the operation lafiya Dole for information of MNJTF and Malian embassy in Abuja, police officers who are working as MINUSMA peacekeepers in Mali and ECOWAS standby force desk officer in charge of MINUSMA, who were available at the time of the interviews and Focused Group Discussion was also conducted with some officials on ground. The sample size for the study is twenty (20) Key Informants Interview. The researcher conducted interview with ten (10) diplomat in Chadian consulate, ECOWAS desk officers, Five (5) diplomats in Malian embassy and Five (5) with Military personnel of the Operation Lafiya Dole or International Organization. The analysis will be manually done by the research assistants; they will extract emerging themes from the translated interviews which will create basis for discussion. (Baker and Edward 2013).

### **Results and Discussions**

#### **Formation of MNJTF/MUNISMA**

The diplomat in the Chadian consulate stated that the formation of MNJTF was very sudden due to the crises of Boko Haram which has threaten the Lake Chad Basin Region. It is there since before the crises to combat transnational crime in the LCB region, the Lake Chad Basin Countries head of state and government during the extra ordinary Summit of 7 October, 2014 in Niamey, Niger agreed on the reactivation of the force to solely deal with Boko Haram crises with in the Lake Chad Region, while the formation of MINUSMA according to the respondent representing MINUSMA in ECOWAS stated that the colossal decay in the polity as a result of corrupt leadership and followership, nepotism, internal strife, and deterioration of national army that degenerates to crisis in the socio-economic sphere of Mali, challenges in security operation, marginalization and unfair treatment by the central government, grievances of some communities especially in the northern Mali that were felt neglected, over dependent on external support and the activities of Ansar Dine and movement for unity and jihad that were pushed up by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Magreb that culminated in January, 2013. Malian government seeks ECOWAS Corporation to collaborate with the French troops to seek assist them in the international sphere to fight the Islamist rebels in the northern Mali conflict. The mission was authorized by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085: pass on 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 which created the deployment of AFISMA troops, to operate for an initial period of one year. With all the challenges witness in the Operation ranging from political instability, security challenges and the presence of extremist across the country led to the United Nations Security Council resolution 2100: to establish MINUSMA in 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2013. Therefore, the result shows that prolonged challenges faced by Mali and her adjoining countries coupled with delaying application of situations to the issues, the MINUSMA took long to establish as a result, the formation of the MNJTF was very sudden due to local arrangement from the countries affected by the regional

crisis. Despite the fact that the situation under MINUSMA has a superb guiding principles of operation and has greatly affected the region, the current situation according to the desk officer of MINUSMA in ECOWAS stated that the situation is calmer presently after 17years of unrest. The MNJTF has been handling the Boko Haram situation for 12years, shorter than that of the MINUSMA. The operational dynamics of MNJTF as witness isolated operation from among the appropriate ingredient to ensure the success of the mission. This goes in line with the view of (Noemi, 2014) who conclude from its study that multi-dimensional operation in security, has close corporations with the French troops in operation against the Islamist in Mali. MINUSMA from the analysis shows that it has encountered technical, financial and logistics challenge during its operation. This goes in conformity with the view of Abdullahi (2005) who mention that MINUSMA has encountered challenges especially financial and logistics aspect has been the major issue bedevilling the mission's success. Whereas, MNJTF has been suffering from financial disbursement, poor logistics, weak coordination between members as sovereign state and bilingual set up.

### **The coverage extent of MNJTF/MINUSMA**

In response to the coverage extent of MNJTF the *diplomat in the Chadian consulate* stated that they are void of any elaborate guide for operation. Nigeria has been the backbone of MNJTF over the years, while the other countries are francophone, this dichotomy in the colonial backing of member's country created a serious problem and disagreement with the troops of these countries. By utilizing the discretion of your home country might not be well understood or attainable by another, whereby retarding certain mission. While the coverage extent of MINUSMA is by reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Mali, and the mandate of each peacekeeping mission is specific to the need and situation of the country concerned. Therefore, the coverage extent of MNJTF is lacking due to the colonial difference of troops of the force in tackling the crises along the region. While that of MINUSMA was reaffirming the basic principles of peacekeeping, including consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mission. The MINUSMA has an elaborate operational dynamic which is void of the country of origin the various forces are drawn from either para-military or military. It is a fact that soldiers have to undergo re-training and sensitization in order to have the capacity to adjust under peace-keeping mission. These new rules that soldiers and the likes drawn from the individual countries, have to abide the following:

- i. screening, selection and training
- ii. Adoption and dissemination of rules and regulations of the operations.
- iii. Integration of human right and protection of civilian's requirement in to the planning and conduct of operations.
- iv. Monitoring and reporting on military operations.
- v. Mechanism and procedures to ensure accountability for human right violation.

### **CONCLUSION**

The persistent threat posed by Boko Haram makes the MNJTF ever more relevant. The emergence of Boko Haram sect has shifted the dynamic of security situation in the history of

Lake Chad Region and the security challenges of arm banditry, smuggling, illegal migration that dominated the porous Nigerian borders with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin republic have transformed into a major threat to the national sovereignty of the LCB countries and the regions of the sub- Sahara Africa. However, this force alone is no panacea, a lot still remains to be done to secure and stabilise those regions affected by the insurgency. The MINUSMA's mandate renewal to clarify its objectives and strategic priorities for the mission, aim to create a political and security environment in which the government of Mali can pursue institutional reforms and national actors can deliver services and peace dividends to the Malian population. The study concluded that there are significant successes on both side (MNJTF/ MINUSMA) but they should put more effort to end the crises that bedevilled the countries affected by the insurgency.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- i. The national actors of MNJTF should prioritise the humanitarian response along with reconstruction efforts, but not at the expense of each other. However, MINUSMA should supply appropriate military equipment and financial support to MINUSMA troop.
- ii. The national actors of MNJTF should increase communications and public knowledge on military operations, to provide a better picture of the campaign against extremism and other developments in the area. Whereas, MINUSMA's leadership should then prioritize and sequence its activities to best achieve the objectives outlined by the Council.
- iii. The MNJTF should provide with adequate intelligence sharing among the Boko Haram affected countries and the international community in general. While, MINUSMA should increase pressure on armed groups to fulfil their commitments to the peace agreement, increasing opportunities for no signatory actors to participate in the political process, linking local-level mediation efforts in the centre of the country to broader national decision making.
- iv. The regions porous borders should be secured by setting up a regional joint boarder police which will be achieved through sending of the forces to technologically advance societies for training. Whereas, the Malian police that are in collaboration with the MINUSMA troops should help with intelligence sharing to facilitate in the achievement of the mission.

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