

CROSS BORDER GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY COORDINATION: SOLUTION TO THE NORTH EAST CRISIS

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Introduction:

Our discourse commences with a working definition and brief discussion on the major concepts of this topic i.e. borders or boundaries, cross-border cooperation, cross-border areas, cross-border governance and description of the North East Space within Nigeria, as well as, within the wider sub-region of the Chad Basin. This is followed by an outline of the perspectives of the North East crises, particularly, Boko Haram militancy, its manifestation, and suggestions on the way forward for positive security coordination in the region.

Borders or boundaries

Borders are not new phenomena to human beings. From time immemorial human beings are known to organize themselves into socio political units with more or less an understanding of limits primarily for the protection of their perceived common interest. A border according to Asiwaju (1984), refers more commonly to the boundaries between politically sovereign territorial entities and therefore is viewed as the line that demarcates one country from another. Borders define geographical boundaries and legal jurisdictions of political entities such as Sovereign States, Federal States, Governments and Sub-national entities. It is generally regarded as the representation of people's culture and historical background. Broadly speaking, therefore, borders are critical factors in the promotion of good neighbourliness, peace, integration, development, transnational crime combat and security of a nation-state. Boundaries can therefore be used as barriers or bridges reflecting the degree of understanding and accommodation by the two or more nation-states involved.

African boundaries are known to have emerged as fallout of the Berlin West Africa Conference of November, 1884 to February, 1885 which regulated the scramble for Africa by imperial Europe and thus introduced African to the Westphalian concept of well-defined borders. The

Westphalian concept of borders emerged following the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia (A German city) on October 24th, 1648, which gave precise and well defined borders for European nations States. The borders that emerged in Africa are therefore artificial and arbitrary as testified by the Colonial Actors themselves (Lord Salisbury in 1906) and other border scholars such as Asiwaju, (1984). In the region under reference, continuous culture areas and peoples were divided amongst the four Colonial countries that emerged out of the Lake Chad Basin. Hence, the Kanuri, the Kanembu, the Shuwa Arabs, the Bulala, the Baghirmi, the So, the Kotoko and numerous other tribes who shared common political and social systems are found in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

African borders are also the products of the rivalries that characterized the relationship between the imperial powers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Added and related to these rivalries were the obsessions to exclusively corner certain real or imagined African resources. More often the imperial powers were interested in one resource or the other, the control of commerce and markets or access to trade routes and rivers transport systems. The colonial states and their borders that therefore emerged out of these political and economic rivalries largely depended on how one imperial power out-smarted its rival. The international borders around the Lake Chad region, which is the subject of this essay, for instance, were drawn within the spirit of the rivalries and even intrigues of the three imperial powers:- the Germans, the French and the British and in that regards the interests of the Borno and Mandara Sultanates for instance, their peoples in the region did not matter at all.

As against the spatial realm where, as referred by Lord Curzon, borders are "the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, or life or death to nations" borders can of course be seen from the realm of relationship. The "functional or symbolic" borders reflect man's inherent capacity to make "binary presentation such as; we or they; love or hate; friend or foe; doors or walls; cooperation or conflict; war or peace; integration or disintegration" (Asiwaju: 2015). This arises from the social categorization often referred to as "walls in the head" of "race, ethnicity, culture, religion, church, mosque, industry, business, corporations including multinationals, gender, age grades or generations, families, class,

occupations, and professions". As we will demonstrate, crises or potential crisis areas arising from the "walls in the head" abound in the North East.

The border question therefore has always been a central issue in the African peace and security strategies. As a result, African leaders have adopted a number of decisions to tackle the border issue both as a security concern. In their wisdom, the founding fathers of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU), decided to retain the boundaries as inherited when the member states of the organization each attained independence. This was certainly a security guarantee, of some sorts, to avoid political problems and insecurity which redrawing the borders would have generated. It was one way of achieving continental peace. Thus, the principle of the respect of borders existing at the time of the achievement of independence, also known as the principle of **In-alignability** (intangibility) of Borders, is enshrined in both the Charter of the OAU (Resolution AHR/R.S.16(1)) and the Constitutive Act (Article 4b) of the AU, and subsequent political and legal actions of the two bodies are designed to reduce the conflictual characteristics of Africa's borders. (Ahmad 2015).

Cross-border Cooperation

At both the continental and sub-regional levels, as represented by the African Union and ECOWAS Commission, African boundaries inherited at independence have been accepted as *fait accompli*. But the tasks do not end there as there was need to reduce the weight of the boundaries and to ensure peaceful relationships amongst African countries as well as maintain the socio-cultural linkages of the hitherto divided peoples, **cross-border cooperation** was generally accepted as a policy option so as to deepen regional and sub-regional integration. Consequent upon this necessity, the concept of **Cross-Border Area** (CBA) meaning "a geographical area that overlaps two or more neighbouring states and whose populations are linked by socio-economic and cultural bonds" was accepted. On its part, the ECOWAS has formulated and is implementing Cross-border Cooperation Initiatives (CBI) across the sub-region.

Border Governance:

The attribute of a State include a defined territory with recognized boundaries, a Government, a citizenry and with recognized sovereignty at

local and international levels. This attribute of a state recognizes the importance of boundaries. The spatial definition of boundaries as referred above is the external limit of a state in relation to its limitrophe neighbours, as well as, the internal administrative boundaries within the state. Governance on the other hand, is concerned with the maintenance of law and order, equitable management of resources for the purposes of the prevention of conflicts, the promotion of peace and wellbeing of the citizens. While the state is a means, the people are the objective of the state. The functional or symbolic referential to borders refer to the management of human affairs such as to achieve harmony between the inherent binary categorization referred above.

Several African countries have found it necessary to establish specialized institutions for the management of their borders particularly in terms of dispute resolution, delimitation and demarcation and capacity building in the field of boundary management and promotion of cross-border cooperation. Indeed; the centrality of borders to African countries has led to the emergence of a specialized field of study: border studies which is dedicated to the scientific study of and research in border issues. Scholars such as Asiwaju have dedicated their life time to the promotion of border studies as distinct field of academic enquiry.

The Nigerian National Boundary Commission (NBC) was established by a Military Decree in 1987 but became operational in 1989. The Military Decree was repealed in 2006 and in its place, the National Boundary Commission (Establishment) Act, 2006 was enacted which, besides giving more functions to the NBC, also provides a three-tier boundary management structure for the country. Over the years, the NBC has recorded milestone achievements (Ahmad: 2007) especially in the fields of delimitation and demarcation of Nigeria's international boundaries, the initiation and nurturing of robust cross-border cooperation with the composite authorities of the neighbouring states and the joint exploitation and management of trans-border resources. Besides being the forerunner of similar agencies of other African countries, the NBC has factored in not just the security architecture of Nigeria, but also as part and parcel of the nation's diplomatic relations with its proximate neighbours. Further the NBC has, through its advocacy that awakened the nation to the abysmal dearth of social infrastructural facilities among the nation's border communities, led to

the establishment of the Border Region Development Agency (BCDA) in 2006, dedicated for the coordination of all Governmental activities for the development of the border communities of the country with the main purpose of giving them a sense of belonging to the Nigerian nation.

The North-East Boundaries

The status of the international boundaries of the four countries of the Lake Chad region are not dissimilar to other African countries. Arising from the general artificiality and arbitrariness of the African colonially bequeathed borders, the international boundaries of the Lake Chad Basin are still not well defined. Under the auspices of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the boundaries of the four countries of the Lake Chad area (Chad/Niger, Nigeria/Niger, and Cameroon/Nigeria) were demarcated and accordingly monumented between 1988 and 1990; and duly ratified by the countries. Over the years however, many of the boundary beacons emplaced have been missing and some are in various stages of deterioration. This has led to fresh move by the four countries, still under the auspices of the LCBC, for the replacement and rehabilitation of the beacons. Outside the Lake Chad area, the boundaries of these countries still display the conflictual elements known for African boundaries. It is well known that the whole length of the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary was a subject of nearly a decade long litigation at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The implementation of the judgment especially in the regions of southern Borno, northern Adamawa and parts of Taraba States is currently facing difficulties as there are still several disagreement areas that are yet to be resolved, due in part, to the BH insurgency. The Nigeria-Niger boundary, though on the whole more stable in terms of peaceful relationship, still has some undigested tensions around Tumban Mota, just as seasonal islands along the Nigeria-Chad boundary also bring controversies especially amongst locals and border law enforcement agencies of Nigeria and Chad.

On the internal boundaries between the States and Local Government Areas of the North East Geo-Political Zone, the ongoing encounter between modernity and tradition; the complex webs between ethnicity, demography and economic activities of the locals, elite-created or induced tensions and often crises of varying proportions have been recorded. There are disputes along Adamawa/Gombe boundary (Kwanan Maisaje area), Bauchi/Taraba/Gombe tripartite point, Bauchi/Gombe boundary

(Kaltungo/Alkaleri, as well as, Dukku/Ganjuwa/Alkaleri axes), Bauchi/Yobe boundary (Darazo/Lanzai sector), Gombe/Yobe (Nafada and Fika axis). These are in addition to the intra-state boundary related disputes and crises such as the ones between Kaltungo/Balanga (Tula/Awaki; Tula/Dadiya); the Kaltungo/Billiri (the age-long Lalaipido and LashiKaldok etc. disputes) in Gombe State; the erstwhile Numan/Demsa dispute in Adamawa State; and the Jukun/Kuteb crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s in Taraba State where losses of lives and destruction of properties were recorded.

The North East Space

It is necessary to have at least a cursory knowledge of the area of the subject of this paper, Nigeria's northeast. The North East is both a political, as well as, a geographical referral. As a political referral, it is the region that is described as the North East Geo-political zone, the un-cordified but generally accepted, one of the six geo-political zones of the country. It encompasses six States of the Federation: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. Of these six States, four qualify for the title of Nigeria's gateway States in the north eastern part of the country, being the States having borders with one or more of Nigeria's proximate countries: Borno bordering Cameroon, Chad and Niger; Adamawa and Taraba bordering Cameroon; while Yobe shares border with Niger and therefore, critical subjects of this essay. The other two states, Bauchi and Gombe of the geo-political North East, by their proximity to the northeast gateway States, share same socio-cultural traits and other social and developmental challenges, including the crisis of the northeast.

In view of the complex webs of inter-connections between the crisis in the North East, and particularly, Boko Haram (BH) insurgency, the north east space has to be found and appreciated well beyond the borders of Nigeria. It is a large and expansive, physically challenging area that borders southeast Niger, southern Chad and the far northern Cameroon. Thus it relates directly with three international boundaries and overlaps with three different Francophone countries – two (Chad and Cameroon) from Central African sub-region and Member States of the ECCAS and one (Niger) from the West African sub-region and Member State of ECOWAS. The area encompasses much of the geographical Chad Basin and possibly too, the Mega Chad of great antiquity. In historical perspectives, the region, which is almost synonymous with the geographic Chad Basin, has featured

competitions for the control of the erstwhile Trans-Saharan trade route, the waters of the Lake Chad and the rich alluvial soils of the Lake Chad Basin that support agriculture and pastoral occupations. Southwards, the area features rugged and impregnable high mountains, flush savannah forests, numerous rivers, swamps and lowlands of the Benue valley. Pre-colonial States such as the Kanem Borno and Mandara Sultanates etc. have risen and fallen. The region had also suffered from ravaging, indeed marauding invasions such as that of **Rabeh az-Zubayr Fadlallah** who conquered and ruled Borno from 1883-1900, as well as, the painful and divisibly far reaching colonial conquests and rule.

The Northeast space corresponds with the Niger-Nigeria-Chad-Cameroon Cross-Border Areas (CBA) described largely as 'remote' 'un-governed' and often too, 'un-governable'. The renowned border scholar, Prof. Asiwaju (1984) has described the region thus:

"the Nigerian Northeastern border region vis-à-vis the adjacent localities of the other three proximate neighbouring States in the Lake Chad Basin is characterized by daunting distances and remoteness in the far-flung peripheries of the four national spaces, the Nigerian sides of the borders being observably the most structurally and infrastructurally impoverished. Yet, like most other African CBAs, Northeastern Nigeria (interpenetrated on its different sides by Southwestern Chad, Southeastern Niger and Far Northern Cameroon, all in the Lake Chad Basin) is an area of widely shared cross-border commonalities of ecology characterized by the expansive Lake Chad Basin; history of such all-embracing historic empires as ancient Kanem-Borno; ethnography featuring such transborder peoples as the Kanuri, the Mandara, the Kotoko and Shuwa Arabs; shared occupations such as fishing, arable farming and animal husbandry; as well as socio-economic exchanges, especially informal trade of enormous antiquity; and, above all, the religion of Islam".

Perspectives of the Northeast Crises:

The physical terrain of the Nigeria-Niger-Chad-Cameroon Cross-border area and the social milieu as briefly outlined above, have combined to bring about a paradox: as potential facilitator of positive cross-border interactions and wider regional integration; and thus fertile grounds for positive border governance. At the same time, the area is predisposed to being 'misappropriated' as resources for a wide spectrum of cross-border criminalities, including contraband as well as human and drug trafficking. In the last two decades of the last century, the cross-border spill-over effects of the protracted Civil War in Chad have introduced the more worrisome dimensions of proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the incidental generalized insecurity arising from familiar impunity of operations by armed bandits who used the borders as lines of defence and quick-escape from Nigerian (and possibly Chadian, Cameroonian and Nigerien) law enforcement agencies.

Serious security threats in northeast Nigeria may have started through the instrumentality of the Chadian rebels of the early 1980's as the various rebel groups took over the expansive shores of the Lake Chad region, including Islands in the Lake from where they launched guerilla attacks on the Chadian Government. In addition, such rebels also undertook forays into Nigeria and extreme parts of Northern Cameroon in search for funds and supplies.

The Chadian rebels of the 1980's had taken advantage of the poor presence of government and the remoteness of the extreme northeastern Nigerian regions and far northern Cameroonian areas around the Lake Chad and the socio-cultural similarities and relationships between them and the Nigerian and Cameroonian citizens in the area. The criminal exploits and menace of the rebels reached alarming and intolerable proportion in 1983 when Nigeria engaged its Armed Forces to flush out the rebels. In a lightning operation directed by retired Major General Muhammadu Buhari, then the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 2nd Division of the Nigerian Army with headquarters in Jos, Plateau State, the Chadian rebels were routed and driven away from Nigerian territory.

The relevance of the Chadian rebellious phenomenon is two-fringed. First it has introduced in the northeast space the phenomenon of armed

banditry with all its negative consequences on the socio-political terrain of the region. One important deduction from the Chadian insurgency and armed incursions into Nigeria which necessitated the military's involvement in 1983 was the failure of the conventional Nigerian border law enforcement agencies to curb and prevent it. As we can see, failure to learn from this important lesson at the commencement of the BH insurgency i.e. engaging the military to nip it in the bud, *ab initio*, has its devastating cost to Nigeria. Another negative consequences of the Chadian rebel phenomenon is that it has left behind in its wake a large number of people who are conversant with handling of fire arms and to that effect, who are ready to take up arms either for a fee or as a vocation. This must have provided the technical professional expertise to the BH insurgents in terms of training in the use of fire arms and other Military hardware. On the positive side however, the Chadian insurgency awakened the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin States to the need for coordinated approach for the security of the region. It is not surprising that in 1984, three nations of the member States – Chad, Nigeria and Niger entered into an Accord in Abuja which eventually established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) for the purpose of fighting trans-border crime, including armed banditry around the Lake Chad Basin. It is important to note that Cameroon did not join the MNJTF and this in part may have contributed to its limited success.

The Boko Haram Insurgency

Of all the non-State actors that scourge the northeast space/Lake Chad Basin, it is the insurgency of the *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lid-da'Awati Wal Jihad* (Community dedicated to the Implementation of the Prophet's deeds, call to the religion and Jihad) otherwise known as **Boko Haram** (BH) that posed the greatest damage and threat to northern Nigeria (North East particularly), as well as far northern Cameroon, southern Chad and south eastern Niger. In terms of destruction of lives and property, dislocation of social relationships, disruption and even destruction of the economy and truncation of the pace of human development, the BH insurgency has by far surpassed any of the activities of non-state actors in the northeast space. Necessarily, there is need to know, even in passing, the background of the BH movement, an eye view of its ideology and possibly, *modus operandi*.

Like other Islamic extremist movements, BH's militarism must have its roots in the Middle East and, or followed the patterns of Middle Eastern

Islamic extremist movements. The seeds of Boko Haram is said to have been sown by two Nigerians, Mohammed Ali from Borno State and Abu Umar from Kano who met and were indoctrinated in the rejection of Western Education and other symbols of modern governance by a Syrian preacher called Abu Albasir al-Dardusi in Yemen. Among the early leaders of the movement was Mohammed Yusuf who was killed by the Police in Maiduguri in 2009, an act which triggered the subsequent violence and the crises that engulfed nearly the whole of the North East Nigeria, Northern Cameroon, Southern Chad and Southern Niger with the currents spreading as far as Kano and Kaduna States and the FCT, Nigeria's seat of power.

Because the Boko Haram insurgency was new phenomenon in Nigeria and its neighbouring countries, it was received with great confusion. In a recent lecture, a retired Senior Nigerian Police Officer has this to say as to the Nigerian response to the Boko Haram menace.

"Many took advantage of it including politicians to throw blames at each other. In fact, the insurrection became a potent mirror of Nigeria's ethnic tensions as conspiracies were tailored along ethno-religious lines. Coincidentally, the Boko Haram's declaration of jihad came at the time when a Muslim Northerner died in office and a Christian Southerner became the President. At various points, the Northern Nigeria was blamed for creating the Boko Haram to make the country 'ungovernable' for a President who was not from there. Some had a theory says it was the government that was supporting the insurgents in order to diminish the numerical strength and, ultimately, political influence of the northern part. The Muslims contended that it was the work of the Christians. The Christians blamed Muslims for it. Even within the Muslim community there were accusations among sects. The bucks keep passing".

The conducive atmosphere provided by the Chad Basin, and the weak border governance provided by the four (4) Lake Chad Basin countries, has fertilized Boko Haram's emergence to notoriety as evidenced by its exploits in

terms of military successes and territorial acquisition, BH must have found support from other international terror networks, and other political upheavals in the African Continent. It has been said that there is connection, even if loose, between Boko Haram and other global terrorists movements like al-Shabab, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM) and ISIS. Recently, Boko Haram has confirmed its alliance with ISIS and in a recent communication and seemed to have expanded the scope of its operations away from the North East when it declared itself as a movement for the establishment of the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWA). But the crucial contributory factor in its operation is the relative successes of similar insurrections in Mali (the Tuareg-Cum-Islamists rebellion) and the Saleka Movement in the Central African Republic. Of course, the Libyan debacle which led to the death of the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is responsible for easy access to weapons and possibly, training facilities. Either by design or default the situation seemed to be in favour of the BH insurgents. So while extremists and terroristic ideas are freely moving from the Sahel of East Africa (al-shabab), the Dafur region in the Sudan, the Central African Saleka rebels and from the Tuaregs and Islamists of Mali, dangerous weapons are moving from Libya across the Sahara into the welcome hands of Boko Haram. All these were happening when the Nigerian military was facing challenges. An informed commentator described the Nigerian military as "an institution already bedeviled by corruption and incompetent leadership. The mutual suspicion created by the BH was extended to the military with attention given to tribes and religion of officers and men in ascribing motives to what the military has done or failed to do".

It can thus be seen that BH emerged out of the fertile grounds of Northern Nigerian Islamic radicalism that erupts from time to time such as the Mahdist insurrections in the northeast Emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate in late 19th century, Satiru Rising in Sokoto in 1906, Maitastine uprisings in Kano, Maiduguri, Yola and Gombe of 1980's.

Of all the manifestation of the North East crises, none is as painful as the losses of lives of innocent citizens of the country. Apart from those killed by the BH insurgents, there are many that encountered their deaths consequent upon the hardships brought by the insurgency such as long treks, exhaustion, still birth, hunger and thirst, attacks of wild animals and snakes and many other forms of trauma. The deaths have of course left behind

psycho-social trauma of unimaginable proportions from loss of bread winners and/or loved family members, relations and friends. Controversies abound as to the number of people that have lost their lives as a result of the BH insurgency. Figures ranging from 14,000 to 15,000 civilians are often officially given but locals would always point at a much higher figure. A senior official of Yobe State Government for instance, has confirmed to this writer that in his Local Government Area alone, not less than 10,000 civilians have been killed. As media reports and information from locals confirm, the deaths are increasing by the day as the attacks on remote villages close to the dens of the insurgents and suicide bombings have continued, albeit sporadically. Recently reports have continued to come of BH attacks leading to the deaths of people in Borno and Yobe States. More painful is the fact that through these deaths the nation has lost its able bodied citizens including professionals and artisans.

Apart from the deaths arising from the BH insurgency, another manifestation of the North East crises is the issue of the abductions perpetrated by the insurgents. Thousands of men, women and youths have been abducted and subjected to all manner of atrocities ranging from indoctrination into the BH beliefs, forced marriages and/or outright sexual abuse, forced labour and child soldiering etc. The most famous of the cases of abductions (mother of all abductions) is that of the girls of Government Girls Secondary School Chibok, involving over 200 young girls, which occurred over a year ago. Another forms of abduction include abduction of well to do members of the society for the purpose of extracting the payment of ransom, and that of professionals and artisans who are forced to provide services to the insurgents. Some rays of hope have however began to shine as recent operations by the Nigerian military has led to the release or escape of nearly a thousand women and children from the BH captivity. The horrifying situation of the captives and the agony of their loved ones and the nation as a whole are issues that will remain indelible in the minds of Nigerians.

One of the manifestations of the North East crises is undoubtedly the issue of refugees that arise as a direct result of BH attacks and/or military and other security operations in response to the attacks. The refugee phenomenon are of two categories: internal refugees: the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the refugees who crossed the Nigerian

international boundaries into neighbouring countries mainly Cameroon and Niger and to some extent too, Chad. This latter category are of two groups: civilian refugees and military refugees.

The refugee dimension of the North East crises is perhaps second only to the period of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970. As BH captures a settlement or a territory, the lucky people who manage to escape the onslaught or are close to the scenes of the attacks, naturally find their way to safer grounds and later to IDP camps either within the towns and villages in the affected state or away to a safe distance, often in neighbouring countries. It is reported that in July, 2014, when the International Organization for Migrants (IOM) set up a Displacement Tracing Matrix (DTM) which identified as at April 2015 that there are about 1,491,706 IDPs spread in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe State (DTM Report II). When this figure is combined with the figures of the IDP in far off places like Abuja, Nasarawa, Kebbi, Kano, Kaduna etc, a figure of about 1,600,000 can be obtained, though about 2013 the refugee figure may have run as far as 3.3million according to some reports.

Part of the activities of the BH insurgents in areas close to Nigeria's borders with its proximate neighbours has the effect of forcing thousands of Nigerians flee across the borders to Cameroon, Niger and Chad. In 2014, this occurred from at least three axes: Mubi/Maiha/Madagali in Adamawa State; Gwoza/Bama/Gamboru/Marte axes in Borno State and Malam Fatori axis also in Borno State. It is estimated (Daily Trust, Saturday June 20th, 2015) that there are not less than 200,000 Nigerian refugees in Cameroon, Chad and Niger. On at least three separate occasions, also in 2014, Nigerian military had been forced by the circumstances to cross the border into Cameroon and at least on one occasion they crossed the border into Nigerian territory. Even though the Nigerian Military has explained the cross-over to foreign territories as "tactical maneuvers" many pundits view the development as adding another dimension to the North-East crises, this time around of confidence.

Another manifestation of the BH induced North East crises is the prospect of famine. This is especially in the areas that suffered attacks or occupied by BH fighters and areas of current military operations. The 2014 farming season was destabilized as people were either unable to till their

farms and where they did, the escalation of the insurgency in southern Borno and northern Adamawa especially most of the farmers could not harvest their farms. More worrying presently is the poor prospects of farming in the 2015 farming season. Already there are reports that the refugees that returned home were unable to stay because of the destruction of their homes and many fear going back to their farms due to fear of mines. There is also the fact that the able-bodied men made up of youths and the middle-aged who provide the bulk of the work force on the farms have been seriously decimated through deaths and flight away from the area as they were the high targets of the BH insurgents. This scenario would have the prospects of further worsening a bad situation.

The relevant question to ask: Is the fight against Boko Haram a Nigerian issue? Of course in the beginning, the countries of the Chad Basin, especially Cameroon, must have thought that the fight against BH was a Nigerian issue. Perhaps Nigeria on its part might have felt it could deal with the menace on its own. While the Nigerian citizenry may have been divided on this matter, but it can be said that majority must have felt that the Nigerian security establishment that has dealt with the Biafran rebellion (1967-1970) and that is acknowledged to have performed wonderfully elsewhere in peace keeping operations would clean-up the mess. Hence the initial arrangement of a Joint Task Force (JTF) was followed by the creation of the Nigerian Army 7th Division with Headquarters in Maiduguri. Meanwhile BH's capacity to inflict damages on military and civilian targets increased in ferocity and territorial aggrandizement with the resultant hardships to the people and corrosion of the confidence of the affected people in their government. When elements of the Nigerian Military operation close to the border with Cameroon began to cross into Cameroonian territory, it became obvious that BH can only be fought with the assistance of and close coordination of the neighbouring countries.

There is little doubt that at the beginning of the Boko Haram insurrection up to about end of 2012, Nigeria's neighbours of Cameroon, Chad and Niger must have felt that the Boko Haram was an internal problem that the Nigerian Government had to contend with. Of course, they have had reasons in view of the acclaimed strength of Nigeria's military, the weight of its economy and also the manner in which it dealt with the similar Maitastine uprising of the 1980s, to believe that Nigeria was capable of

containing it. At least the neighbouring countries' responses were limited to the expression of their goodwill to Nigeria and often frantic efforts of securing their territories ensuring that no Boko Haram enters. Cameroon was the best example of this posture. Besides its refusal to join the Multi National Task Force for the security of the Lake Chad area, at one time it even proposed walling a sector of the boundary to ward off Boko Haram incursions and refused the Nigerian Military the rights of hot pursue of the BH fighters into its territory. Chad on the other hand was ambivalent. Conspiracy theorists see the hands of Chad in Boko Haram and are quick to point out the correlation between France, Chad, hydrocarbon interests in the Chad Basin with the alarming successes of BH. Niger may have woken up late; first in response to the influx of Nigerian refugees into Niger and secondly, to Boko Haram's attacks particularly in the Diffa region and the Nigerien Islands in the Lake Chad area.

What Needs to be Done?

That BH insurgency initially thought and seen as a movement of uneducated rag-tag youths, was able to linger for this long (2009 to date) with devastating consequences to the Nigerian nation, its citizens and the neighbouring countries suggest that something or certain things that needed to be done have not been done. This naturally led to the question "where have Nigeria and its neighbours gone wrong?" Answer to this question is pertinent because the BH phenomenon is a security issue of great and disturbing proportions with possible international connections as demonstrated in the preceding pages.

Essentially our area of focus is trans-border relations amongst the four countries of the North East space. And here there is need to examine the critical question of trans-border security. Bilateral or multilateral trans-border security arrangements refer to the measures put in place by nations to prevent, detect, and arrest illegal and criminal activities of groups and individuals across national and international borders for economic benefits, political considerations, and sabotage or for religious and other ideological purposes (Jimenez 2010). It is therefore concerned with the security measures to curb trans-border criminality such as arms smuggling or trafficking in weapons, human traffic, money laundering, and cross-border terrorism. By all standards, the harrowing experience of the four nations of the Lake Chad area and millions of its citizens call for joint bilateral and

multilateral security coordination. This therefore calls for the critical reexamination of the strategies put in place to fight the BH insurgency with the view to finding better strategies within the current global synergies for fighting insurgency and militarism.

The dramatic unfolding of the BH insurgency from a simple irritant group based in Maiduguri, Borno State, to forest-based fighters taking over territories and declaring a **Caliphate** and its internationalization by having links with similar groups especially ISIS; to its aim for the establishment of an Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), clearly indicate that the measures initially put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria may not have worked. This is also suggestive of poor and inappropriate response by Nigeria's proximate neighbours of Cameroon, Chad and Niger as pointed earlier. Here, two major issues are involved: the defeat and neutralizing of BH militancy and the reorientation of the citizenry of the four Lake Chad Basin countries, especially Nigeria, to subject them such that reoccurrence of similar insurrections do not arise. For BH militarism to be defeated, and neutralized concerted African, regional and national efforts are necessary under a **Comprehensive Security Coordination** strategy. This strategy will have to involve the African Union (AU), the two regional Economic Communities; Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and Economic Communities of West Africa (ECOWAS) and the multi and bilateral agencies of the four countries. It will involve, as a matter of fact, coordination at all agency levels—Diplomatic, Military, intelligence, Para military services, the constituent units of the countries especially border authorities, civil society groups and the traditional authorities. On the other hand, the reorientation and/or de-radicalization component must involve public information, communication agencies, of the national governments and NGOs, the intelligentsia, **Ulamas** and clerics, the traditional authorities and other leaders of thought in symbiotic and concerted efforts to prevent future occurrence of the phenomenon. The law enforcement system and the justice administrative system would need to be over-hauled to tune into the reorientation programme.

The structured coordinated security policy being proposed can only operate along strong technology support i.e. a well-equipped real time **Situation Room** and network of **Early Warning Systems** at the levels of the African Union, ECCAS and ECOWAS, LCBC, the National Command and

Structure outfits and Border Authorities i.e. the border States, in the case of Nigeria.

There is indeed adequate basis for the comprehensive security coordination among the four countries of the Lake Chad area. First they are heirs of the age long resources of the region and therefore stakeholders who necessarily must safeguard them. Secondly, the common heritage of culture, political institutions and beliefs systems, largely the Islamic faith and to some extent traditional beliefs systems, call for common concern for the plight of the area. For instance, an Islamic scholar once said that the BH insurgency has retarded the progress of Muslims of the region for many years. And in terms of modern governance institutions, the four countries are severally and jointly linked by either multi or bilateral institutions under which issues ranging from economy; social relationships, diplomacy, health, environment etc. are handled. Instructively, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has bound the four countries in matters of security, boundary issues and environment, all critical issues relating to the wellbeing of their citizens. The Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission (NNJC) on the other hand has provided the platform for wide ranging institutions and frameworks of cooperation between the two countries, their constituents and bureaucracies, including the security institutions. Between Nigeria and Cameroon, the historical bonds of certain parts of the each country having been part of the other (southern part of Cameroon being part of Nigeria and the old Sardauna Province being part of Cameroon) has married the two countries together as a necessary unit of cooperation. Nigeria and Cameroon have two years ago initialed the Joint Border Patrol Committee and are painstakingly implementing the ICJ judgment in respect to their common boundary.

Cross-border Governance generally the world-over encompasses joint support and synergy between the national institutions of the nations involved. For the region under review, the North East space, cross-border governance must, while taking due cognizance of the challenges, be all inclusive and must take the shape of comprehensive Border Management (CBM). Hence, therefore, the AU approved and ECCAS/ECOWAS endorsed principles of Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) generally and Cross-border Cooperation Initiatives (CBCI) in the Cross-border Areas (CBA) must be deployed to link the people, whittle down the weight of the borders without losing sight of security concerns. The border management agencies of the

countries, such as the National Boundary Commission of Nigeria, have great roles to play as they must bring their experiences in managing cross-border cooperation initiatives, such as the Kano-Katsina-Maradi (K²M), Local Bilateral Committees (LBAs) between composite border authorities of Nigeria and Niger and the proposed confidence building measures along the Nigeria-Cameroon borderland communities, as well as, proposed **Governor's Forum** of the border authorities of Nigeria and Cameroon. into play. National institutions such as the Border Communities Development Agency (BCDA) of the Federal Government of Nigeria along with similar national agencies if properly engaged would synergize to bring a positive revolution in the borderland communities in the North East space.

Commendable Initiatives

Evidences abound that the new Nigerian Government under President Muhammadu Buhari intends to go for a paradigm shift in fighting the BH insurgency. Barely three (3) days after his inauguration, Buhari embarked on shuttle diplomacy that saw him in Niger, Chad, and holding vital telephone conversation with President Paul Biya of Cameroon, all in a coordinated effort to wipe out the insurgency bedeviling the four countries. The Nigerian President was among the few African leaders invited to attend the G7 Summit held in Germany from 8th – 9th June, 2015 where the leading industrialized nations of the world promised assistance to Nigeria, particularly and Africa in general, to fight religious extremism and militancy. A week after that saw President Muhammadu Buhari in Johannesburg, South Africa, attending the AU Summit where he stressed, among other issues, the role expected of the continental body in the fight against insurgency, militarism and extremism in the continent. Further, the Nigerian Press has informed us that the Nigerian President would on 20th July, 2015 be a guest of President Barrack Obama of the United States. Apart from the goodwill expressed by the neighbouring countries, the G7 group, the African Union, it is expected that full support and assistance would soon follow. These efforts are of course clear positive paradigm shift on the basis of which, it is expected, comprehensive security coordination through positive border governance would be built and nurtured.

Conclusion

North Eastern Nigeria is not an island in itself just like the whole of Nigeria. That it has become victim of the BH militarism may be seen from

the wider perspectives of militancy challenging the world. However, the crises in the North East has found impetus from the poor border governance bedeviling the countries of the Lake Chad area, previous rebellions in the region, the large army of unemployed youths, the dearth of social infrastructure in the region and the tradition of radical Islamism inherent in Northern Nigeria. The North East crises, as briefly outlined above is the greatest human tragedy that has befallen the area in within this century. Apart of the colossal loses of lives, property and the destruction of livelihoods of the people, BH militarism in the North East has led to fractured traditional trusts amongst hitherto mutually coexisting people, dislocated aged-old social relationships and brought back, by many years, the pace of human development in the region.

Having examined the responses of victims and stakeholders, especially official responses of the Nigerian Government, this essay is of the strong opinion that there is compelling need for a paradigm shift towards, and policy direction for, a structured **Comprehensive Security Coordination** alongside a **Comprehensive Border Management Policy** within the wider framework of **cross-border governance** in the region. To mitigate the effects of the crisis and prevent future occurrences, Government and all stakeholders must embark upon a conscious policy of winning the minds and hearts of the affected people and reorientation drive aimed at de-radicalizing the critical population. In this regard, the expertise and experiences of specialized national institutions such as the NBC and NOA multi and bilateral agencies such as NNJC, LCBC, CNMC, MNJTF, ECOWAS, ECCAS and civil society groups would be indispensable.

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