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BOKO HARAM'S TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM: IMPLICATION ON WEST AFRICAN POLITICAL STABILITY AND REGIONAL SECURITY

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ASTRACT
Within the context of political stability and regional security, this paper examined the implication of Boko Haram transnational expansion into West Africa Sub-region from its base in Nigeria. As an inquiry after the fact, the Ex-Post Facto research design was adopted while the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) was applied as framework of analysis. The paper found that Boko Haram transnational expansion into Niger, Chad and Cameroon has implication on the region's political stability and security in four major areas. Recommendations were suggested to address the threats posed by Boko Haram cross- border insurgent activities.

KEYWORDS; Political-Stability, Security, Terrorism, Transnational Expansion

Introduction:

The emergence, growth and expansionist motive of transitional terrorist groups today have led to a paradigm shift in the way nation states and the International community responds to and deals with the challenges posed by these centrifugal forces. In recent times, the terrorist activities of these non state actors and their intricate linkages in Africa, especially in West African nation states have become a source of concern at national, regional and even international levels (Ezirin and Onuoha, 2013: 15). Sampson (2015:25) observed that before the advent of Boko Haram terrorist group, terrorism was a perception rather than reality in Nigeria. The author noted further, that it was impossible to conceive of Nigeria as host to terrorist activities a few years back, let alone the high level of terrorism being experienced in Nigeria since 2009. Sampson (2015:30) argued that knowledge of terrorism was restricted to newspaper stories and headlines announcing terrorist attacks in countries such as Pakistan, Iraq, Israel, Afghanistan among others. The narrative has since changed since 2009, when the country witnessed relentless terrorist activities especially in Northern and Southern parts of the country. In the northern part of the country, Boko Haram spearheaded the high profile terrorist attacks with the bombing of the Police Force Head quarters in Abuja, Christmas day bombing at St Theresa Catholic Church Madalla in Suleja and the bombing of the United Nations Building among others.

The destructive actions of Boko Haram according to Hansen and Musa (2017:60) have led to the wanton destruction of lives, properties and the economy of not only the north eastern part of Nigeria but also impacted negatively the economy of West African sub region especially in Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Ogbonna and Jimenez 2018:40) on the other hand

noted that as a result of Boko Haram transnational expansion into the West African sub-region, regional organizations such as Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) are having challenges discharging their mandate of regional development due to the insecurity introduced, which constitute a threat to the security of the region. Most academic writings about the Boko Haram insurgent group in the literature have so far highlighted the socio-political consequences or dimension and very few have addressed the real threat posed by Boko Haram transnational expansion into West African states and its implication on its regional security. This paper attempt to contribute to that knowledge gap.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The thrust of this paper is an enquiry after the fact. In this instance, the appropriate research design adopted to guide the research is the Ex-Post-facto research design that is anchored on secondary data obtained from published books, peer-reviewed academic journals, internet sources and archival materials. Critical content analysis was applied on the data collected to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. What is Security?
2. What is Terrorism?
3. In what ways do Boko Haram transnational expansions constitute a threat to West African States?
4. What are the implications of these threats to the political stability and regional security of West African States?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As noted by Kellstedt and Whitten (2018:175) a theory is critical and important in any research process because, it has the potency and tendency to bring out the logical and causal mechanism within the issues under investigation. In line with the research questions outlined, the theoretical framework adopted for the paper is the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). This theory was developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver in 2003. The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) according to Blanchard (2014:100) is a securitization theory whose primary focus is to conceptually and analytically examine security, threats and threat perception in a geographically and constructive narration with the ideas of threats on states and regions, as well as establishing the process that define what constitute threats to regional security. The paper considers the RSCT an appropriate and relevant theoretical framework of analysis. This is in view of the fact that the terrorist activities of Boko haram have not only presented an existential security threat to Nigeria but also with their transnational expansion into other West African States of Niger, Chad and Cameroon pose a complex regional security challenges. As Blanchard (2014:161) noted, the theory provides a clear theoretical lens for analyzing the terrorist activities of Boko haram insurgent group within the context of the magnitude and intensity of their actions, which have transcend the Nigerian State and have spilled over to other West African States as well.

Conceptual Analysis

Three key concepts of security, terrorism and boko haram insurgency will be critically analysed to enhance the central thrust of this paper.

A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Security

Omeda (2016:3) sees security as a dynamic condition that entails the capacity of a nation to counter threats targeted at its national interests and core values. Nwolise (2016:15) on the

other hand noted that security involves the ability of a state to secure its territory against external attacks through a network of security architecture as well as protecting the democratic structure and citizens by the military, police and para-military agencies from internal uprisings. In his own contribution, Mc Grew (2018:30) asserted that security is anchored on two principal tripods namely, the maintenance as well as protection of the citizenry and the nation economic interest against external aggressions as well as the promotion of an international order that protect the national core values, interest and social order. It is from this perspective, that scholars such as Nwagboso (2016:10) noted that from historical point of view, security has been about protecting people and that without this pre-occupation, security makes no sense at all. Arguing within this context, Gasken (2017:65) pointed out that the primary focus of government is to protect its citizens by guaranteeing their security. The author argued further that the raison d'etre for the legitimacy and existence of any government is its ability to provide adequate security and save society from anarchy. Narrowing the narrative to Nigerian nation state, Dike (2015:35) and Omeda (2016:16) emphasized that security in Nigeria should be holistic and incorporate the citizens as the primary beneficiaries of every security apparatus and deliverables the government can put on the table.

Nnoli (2016:16) presenting a radical perspective of security asserted that the concept has become a convenient term to explain the inexplicable and rationalize the illogical. The author noted that it was in the name of security that the United States of America invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein. In the same claim of security, the Late Muammar Gaddafi killed many Libyan citizens who demanded an end to his forty-two year rule. In addition, Nnoli (2016:17) noted further, Hitler during Nazi Germany, killed over Six million Jews in the name of security, In Nigeria, it is also in the name of security that President Obasanjo, gave a shoot-at-sight order to the army against innocent protesters and the decimation of Odi people of Bayelsa State. It is against this background, that security in this paper is conceptualized as the efforts by government at all levels to strengthen its protective capacity to contain internal and external aggression, control crime, preservation and safety of Nigerians at home and abroad as well as the protection of the country's sovereignty.

A Critical Analysis of the Concept of Terrorism.

It is generally accepted that terrorism is a heinous crime that posed a global security threat in every corner of the globe, yet the concept has no generally accepted definition. According to Professor Ahmad (2019:45) nearly all the definitions of terrorism in the literature, expressed the concept emotively or rather polemically to "arose emotions rather than exercise intelligence". Agreeing with Ahmad, Whitebeck (2020:195) noted that despite the fact that terrorism is extremely dangerous, the concept is subjective and devoid of any inherent meaning. The definitional problem revolves around two major issues, namely, nature of the act and persons who can commit the act. The arguments were that do the perpetrators include states or state-actors or is it only non-state actors? Are acts of terrorism refer to only politically motivated acts or non-politically motivated acts? Are acts of resistance or protests acts of terror? It is as a result of these definitional difficulties, that Faga (2020:119) noted that

> *"One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter"*

In an attempt to contribute to the debate on the definition of terrorism, Kofi Annan the former UN Secretary General, conceptualized terrorism as

> *"any action that is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a government or international organization to do something or not to do something."*

According to Schmid and Jongman (2018:160), the lack of consensus on the conceptualization of terrorism by scholars made most international organization to adopt a sectoral approach which focuses on various aspects of terrorism for instance, the Geneva convention under the defunct League of Nations conceptualized terrorism as

> *"all criminal acts directed against a state and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the general public"*

While the United Nations 1994 Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism conceptualized terrorism as

> *"Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes".*

In an attempt to put an end to the protracted debate and arrive at a generic definition of terrorism, the United Nations General Assembly through its 1999 convention for the suppression of financing of Terrorism conceptualized terrorism as

> *"as any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian or any persons not taking part in hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act is to intimidate a population or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing an act."*

In addition to the definitional difficulties, terrorism is not easily classified. Some of the classification advanced by scholars were based from the perspective the concept was viewed. Hence, we have scholars that classified terrorism from the perspectives of *revolutionary terrorism, friendly fire terrorism, false flag terrorism, Eco-friendly terrorism, International terrorism, State-sponsored among others* (Hanle 2019:125). According to Laqueur (2017:9) the type of terrorist group determines the choice of target victims, but the popular choice of target victims include heads of government and public officials, airlines and national security and economic key points.

Botha (2015:6) identified the causes of terrorism to include psychological motivation, culture and religion. The author argued that psychological motivation is inter-twined with poverty and economic disadvantages that fueled terrorism. In this regard, Meet (2015:165) noted that statistics show that 15 percent of the world's population consumes 85 percent of global resources and that Third World countries are at the receiving end of this inequality. According to Mazrui (1990:40) culture and religion are two key causative factors of terrorism. The author argued that the tenets of certain cultures and religion encourages violence, while religious fundamentalists believed that the end justify the means in achieving religious survival. For Alkali et al (2016:46) colonialism and nationalism with its associated struggle for self determination are factors that trigger terrorism in Africa. The authors noted that there exist a correlational relationship between groups perceived to be engaged in terrorist activities and their struggle for self-determination. Drawings from the analysis presented above, and within the context of Boko Haram insurgency, this paper submit that poverty, economic deprivations, social and political injustice are potential triggers for terrorism in Nigeria.

A Critical analysis of the Rise of Boko Haram and its Transnational Expansionist Agenda.

In order to understand how the jihadist agenda of Boko Haram insurgency constitute a threat to the political and regional security of West African states, it is pertinent to provide a background of its evolution. The emergence of Boko Haram can be traced to the early 2000s

in Kano, against the backdrop of the Maitasine religious movement whose core Islamic fundamental beliefs underpin Boko Haram teachings today. The Maitasine Islamic religious sect, was led by Muhammed Marwa who at the age of 18 moved to Kano and started propagating the teaching of the sect which was a condemnation of Western education as the product of infidels. This rejection of Western education by the Maitasine sect, underpins the central tenet of Boko Haram activities and operations today. According to Simon and Abubakar (2014:16), Muhammed Marwa and his religious sect were initially ignored by the Nigerian government in the early 1970s but when the sect teachings became increasingly anti-government and the number of the sect followers became significantly noticeable, the Federal Government cracked down on them which resulted into the Maitasine religious uprising and riots in northern Nigeria in the early part of 1980s. As a result of the crackdown, statistics showed that 4000 Maitasine militants were killed including Muhammed Marwa. The death of Marwa led to more religious riots against the government in Bulum Kutu in 1982 and the then Gongola State in present day Adamawa, Yobe state, where statistics showed 3,300 and 1000 people were killed respectively in 1984. The Maitasine riots also spread to Bauchi State in 1985, where hundreds more were killed.

The fast spread and acceptance of the anti-western education teachings of Muhammed Marwa in the northern part of Nigeria according to Aghedo and Osuma (2015:49) was due to the belief that Muslim submission to the 1960 settlement of the Nigerian question was a mistake against the desire for the establishment of Sharia Law in Northern Nigeria. The void left by Marwa's death was filled by Muhammed Yusuf, who founded the militant Islamist group Boko Haram in 2002. According to Aghedo and Osuma (2015:50) Boko Haram teachings and insurgency is an off-shoot of the Maitasine Islamic fundamentalist sect. Boko Haram's main goal was the establishment of Sharia law and full fledges Islamic state in Nigeria (Aghedo and Osuma 2015:65). The Boko Haram group under Muhammed Yusuf gained support from speaking out against poverty and corruption within the Nigerian government. According to Foster-Bowser and Sanders (2016:5), despite the death of Yusuf in 2009 while in Police Custody, Boko Haram followers then and now are fixated on socio-economic injustice, marginalization and human insecurity with a majority of its members being uneducated, poor, jobless, school drop-outs or students from low socio-economic back ground. Boko Haram official name is *"Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awall Wal-jihad"* which is an Arabic word which means *"People committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad"* (Foster-Bowser and Sanders, (2016:7). However, the name Boko Haram in Hausa language is given to the group by the local people from where the group was founded. It stands for *"Western education is forbidden"*. According to Ezirin and Onuoha (2017:14), "Mohammed Yusuf as the spiritual head of Boko Haram believed in the strict application of Islamic law as the ideal of justice and when he was killed in 2009, his deputy Abubakar Shekau emerged as his successor. According to Aghedo and Osuma (2015:55), Shekau's followers were mainly Yusuf's disciples who were attracted to Shekau's al-Qaida style of militancy and his propagation of a "pure Islamic state in Nigeria". Zenn (2016:6) also noted that Shekau had affiliated Boko Haram to the Islamic States of Iraq and Syria (1S1S) militant terrorist group led by Abu Bakr al- Baghdadi.

Since 2009, Boko haram has been responsible for several violent attacks including bombings against Nigerian state in the north and has extended its activities to the south. At the peak of the insurgency, Boko Haram was in total control of over eleven (11) local governments in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa paralyzing economic and social activities. Table 1 shows the summary of the violent attacks carried out by Boko Haram from 2009-2014.

Table 1: Summary of Boko Haram Attacks in Nigeria

Date of Attack	States Affected	Incident/Victims
2009	Yobe, Borno, Bauchi and Kano	Over 800 killed, 1000 injured and many persons displaced
2010	Borno, Abuja and Plateau	Over 330 killed, many undisclosed number of persons injured and 700 prison inmates released.
2011	Borno, Kaduna, Yobe, Niger, Bauchi, Abuja, Katsina and Plateau. UN building bombed in Abuja	Over 425 killed, over 300 person injured and many displaced in the listed local states.
2012	Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau, yobe, Abuja, Sokoto and Katsina	Over 1047 killed, 2045 injured and entire villages in North-east displaced.
2013	Borno, Adamawa, kano, Plateau, Gombe, Yobe and Bauchi	Over 732 killed, several hundreds injured in Gombe and Yola and several hundreds across the North-East region displaced.
2014	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe	Over 200 killed, several hundreds injured, 270 girls kidnapped in Chibok Girls Secondary School
05 March 2023	Borno	Latest Boko Haram attack in Ngala Local Government killing 32 fishermen and injuring scores of others.

Total = 3,514 killed, 3,345 injured and over 200,000 displaced and living In IDP Camps in the North-east. **Source**: Human Right Watch (2017): a view from the North-East Nigeria.
According to Ezirin and Onuoha (2017:20) another dimension of Boko Haram activities from 2014 is its expansionist agenda through cross-border attacks on West African states such as Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The authors noted that Cameroon has been the main stage for planning cross-border attacks. These attacks have led Cameroon to step up the tempo of its counter-insurgency activities. Table 2 present a brief summary of Boko Haram activities in Cameroon.

Table 2: Sumary of Boko Haram Attacks in Cameroon.

Date of Attack	Boko Haram Activities	Outcome
19 February 2013	7 members of the Tanguy Moulin-Fournier Family in Dabanga Northern Cameroon kidnapped	Freed in April 18, 2013 in exchange for USDI. 15 million rnsom and release of 16 Boko Haram prisoners held in Cameroon

4th April 2014	Two Italian priest and a Canadian nun kidnapped from the small parish of Tchere, north of Cameroon	Cameroonian security forces released them in June, 2014
17 May 2014	A Cameroonian soldier killed and 10 chinese workers abducted from Waza Cameroon	The victims are yet to be released

Source: Human Right Watch (2017)

Foster Bowser and Sanders (2016:10) also reported that Chad and Niger are also facing threat of instability and insecurity as a result of increasing cross-border attacks from Boko Haram militants. Specifically, the authors reported that in Niger's eastern Diffa region, in May 2014, a dozen Boko Haram jihadist fighters were killed in a counter-insurgency clash by Nigerians forces and a few arrested. These cross-border attacks go to show how Boko Haram with its base in Nigeria is promoting insecurity and political instability in neighbouring countries. According to Zenn (2016:10) with Boko Haram constant foray into Nigeria's neighbouring countries, the jihadist terrorist group has succeeded in spreading its insurgency beyond Nigerian borders in its expansionist agenda and constituting a growing threat to West African political and regional security.

As presented in Table 1, the consequences of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria and its expansion into West African sub-region is the humanitarian outcome of these attacks. According to United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) over six million (6,000,000) people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States have been directly impacted by Boko Haram attacks. In addition, UNOCHA office noted that a huge number of internally displaced person (IDPs) and refugees have been equally created. Specifically, over 300,000 IDPs in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States with 70 percent of them women and children. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also reported that over 650,000 have fled their ancestral homes and staying with families in other parts of Nigeria. These figures do not include those who have fled across Nigeria's proximate villages into Camerron, Chad and Niger.

With the threat from Boko Haram transnational expansionist agenda constituting a clear political and security challenges to ECOWAS and the international community, Zenn (2016:20) noted that efforts have been stepped up as regional and international responses to the Boko Haram insurgency. Each efforts are at both unilaterally and international levels by the countries directly impacted to contain the expanding insurgency. One of such effort, was the Paris Summit on Terrorism put together by the French President, that brought the Presidents of Nigeria, Niger and Chad with representatives from the US, UK and the European Union. The Paris Summit established bilateral and multi-lateral measures to curtail the excesses of Boko Haram. According to Sherman (2017:15) as a follow-up of the Paris Summit, the UK and US have stepped up cooperation with Nigeria in intelligence gathering on Boko Haram to assist Nigeria deal with the transnational expansionist agenda of Boko Haram. In this regard, the UK, US, France, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger republics established an external Intelligence Response Unit (EIRU) on terrorism in 2014 aimed at promoting effective security response to the Boko Haram transnational expansionist threat to West African political stability and regional security. In addition, ECOWAS adopted a political declaration and common position against Terrorism which among other, provides for a regional counter-Terrorism strategy and an implementation plant to assist member states combat the growing menace of Boko Haram expansionist agenda. According to Foster-

Bowser and Sanders (2016:30) ECOWAS limited in its contribution to the suppression of Boko Haram expansionist threat because according to the authors, tactically and operationally, ECOWAS can do little, since it lacks both intelligence architecture and operational stand by force it could use in counter-terrorism operations. They authors argued further that ECOWAS counter-terrorism programmes and activities are largely influenced by donor funding. According to Zenn (2016:20), Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon in their quest to degrade Boko Haram expansionist threat, agreed to put in place a 28,000 strong regional force with each country contributing an equal number of 700 troops in line with the Paris summit action plan. In addition according to Zenn (2016:40) Niger Republic have put in place a strategy to stop Boko Haram infiltration through border-crossing to carry out its terrorist activities in its territory. The author also noted that Cameroon on the other hand has moved from quiet containment to active confrontation with Boko Haram since the Paris Summit in 2014.

For instance, the author noted further that in response to criticism made by Nigerian government over Cameroon weak response to the political and regional security threat posed by Boko Haram expansionist agenda, Cameroon deployed over 1000 soldiers from its elite rapid Intervention Battalion, to the far north, near the border towns to check-mate Boko Haram incursion into Cameroon from the porous northern borders. Chad in her own response to the Paris Summit, according to Zenn (2016:21) stepped up efforts to combat Boko Haram's transnational activities by participating fully in the Multinational Joint Transnational Force (MJTF) as well as offering her territory for major reconnaissance operations led by the US and French military.

The United States of America in her response to Boko Haram terrorist activities in Nigeria and across west Africa classified the group as an international terrorist organisation with proven ties with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Somalia's al-shabaab (Aghedo and Osuma, 2015:35). With the confirmation of Boko Haram affiliation to al-Qaida, the United Nations Security Council in 2017 officially added the group to its list of International terrorist groups and subject to financial sanctions and arms embargo (UN, 2017).

Implications of Boko Haram transnational terrorist Agenda on the Political stability and Regional Security of West Africa.

The paper would attempt to address the implications of Boko Haram transnational expansionist agenda on the political stability and regional security of West African States from four dimensions. The first is from the dimension of logistics involving recruitment, training, equipment and funding. The second dimension has to do with implications arising from Boko Haram violent cross-border attacks. The third dimension is the implication arising from humanitarian consequences of Boko Haram terrorist activities in the sub-region and the fourth dimension is the erosion of Nigeria's influence as the de-facto leader of ECOWAS.

The implications arising from Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria and violent cross-border attacks in Niger, Chad and Cameroon as well as the humanitarian consequences of these attacks have been largely addressed earlier in the analysis. The implications of Boko Haram incursions into west African States within the context of logistics and erosion of Nigeria leadership role in west Africa would now be analysed.

According to Pindiga (2018:11) Boko Haram ability to recruit, train its members unhindered in camps outside its domestic base such as in Niger, Chad, Somalia and Cameroon is confirmation of Boko Haram transnational expansion and reach as well as International network. The author noted that the international network of Boko Haram enhanced the group capacity to recruit and train its foot soldiers from countries of the Sahara-Sahel region.

Intelligence reports from the American sponsored US Africa Command indicated that Boko Haram foot soldiers received training in North Africa from al-Quida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) in their Timbuktu training camp in Mali (Aghedo and Osuma, 2015: 45). According to the American report, Boko Haram fighters were trained on to handle Kalashnikovs and launch shoulder-fired weapons as well as mastered the skill of bomb making. Boko Haram fighters were also sent to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab run training camps, where they were taught how to construct and detonate improvised explosive devices as well as the act of suicide bombing (Connell, 2017:89). Immediately after these training, suicide bombing became a key feature of Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, beginning with the Police Headquarter bombing in 2011. In all between 2011 to 2014, 48 suicide bombings were successfully carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria alone. Connell (2017:90) also noted that their Boko Haram runs an international network of recruitment, training and indoctrination camps in part of West and Central Africa as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Boko Haram recruitment and Training camps in West and Central Africa

S/N	Recruitment Camps	Country	Types of Training
1	Gao	Mali	Weapon handling and combatant training
2	Diffa	Niger	Explosive Bomb making skill and combatant training
3	Kiddal	Mali	Indoctrination, radicalization and combatant training
4	Marova	Cameroon	Suicide Bombing and Explosive handling
5	Maradi	Niger	Weapon handling and combatant training
6	Garoua	Cameroon	Construction and Detonation of IED Training
7	Zango and Ndjamena	Chad	Weapon handling and Combatant Training
8	Kanky Kotsy	Sudan	Explosive Devices Construction and handling
9	Maina Soro and Ridina Quarters	Somalia	Suicide Bombing, Indoctrination And Combatant Training

Source: Connell 2017:101

According to Connell (2017:103) Boko Haram group receives funding from other terrorist or jihadist groups in the Sahel region to sustain its existence and transnational activities. One of such Islamic group is Muslim Yaa'maa based in Algeria whose donation of USD250,000 to Boko Haram was reported to be the cause of the fall-out of the Ansaru group from Boko Haram (Connell, 2017:103). The operations of various recruitment, training and radicalization camps across several West and Central African Countries go to show how far Boko Haram has succeeded in its transnational expansionist agenda by planting deep its seeds in foreign soils. The implication of this development is that given the absence of efficient and democratic governance structures in West and Central African States, Boko Haram would over time transform into an enduring terror group in these regions of Africa with implication for political stability and regional security.

According to Onuoha (2018:16) as a result of Boko Haram terrorist activities, Nigeria, once respected for its influence and role in restoring stability in conflict-torn states in Africa and West Africa in particular, is now looking to the international community for assistance to guarantee peace and security in her own territory. In addition, concern has been raised about Nigeria's ability to continue to play critical role in regional stability in West Africa against the backdrop of sustaining her contributions to peace support operations globally. It is a

known fact in the diplomatic cycle that Nigeria since 1960, have helped to resolve major political and security crisis in Africa and West Africa sub-region, for instance, from the Liberian and Sierra-Leonean crisis – in the 1990s to the more recent political instability in Guinea, Niger, Cote d'ivoire and Mali (Sherman, 2013:20). The reality today is that while Nigeria deploys military and material resources to combat the menace posed by Boko Haram terrorist activities on the domestic front, her capacity to contribute to regional and international security as well as her own internal stability is being threatened. Sherman (2013:22) also noted that because this development Nigeria which had consistently ranked as the fourth largest contributor to UN Peace Keeping operations has since 2011 lost that position to Ethiopia due to the imperative of addressing internal security challenges. According to Connell (2017:95) due to pressing internal security challenges, Nigeria withdrew some of its troops from the United Nations Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. These developments go to show how tackling Boko Haram challenges is reducing the capacity of Nigeria to contribute to regional security. This situation confirms Sherman's assertion that

> *"Nigeria cannot fully achieve its potential as a stable regional leader until Nigeria successfully overcomes the challenge of Boko Haram"*

This statement has implication for ECOWAS's political instability and regional security. The potential erosion of Nigeria's de –facto leadership role and influence will in the long run create a stabilizing vacuum in the event of eruption of political crisis in any of ECOWAS member states.

Conclusion

This paper examined the implication of Boko Haram Transnational expansion into West African sub-region within the context of political stability and regional security. The paper found that Boko Haram Jihadist insurgency and its incursion into Niger, Chad and Cameroon has transformed the group from a localized Nigerian problem into a regional security threat. To address the challenges requires political and military cooperation of the governments of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon in developing a comprehensive strategy, focusing on a both kinetic and non-kinetic approach that would water-down the appeal of Boko Haram insidious idealogy, minimize the group opportunities for recruitment of foot-soldiers as well as choke its financial wind pipe. To this end, the following recommendations are suggested to checkmate Boko Haram threat to Political Stability and regional security in West Africa.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement Counter-Extremist propaganda messages:

In this regard, Nigeria in partnership with the governments of Niger, Chad, Cameroon and the international Community should develop and support a region-wide counter extremist advocacy framed in messages in Arabic, Hausa, Kanuri and a ll the major languages spoken in the west African region. The messages should also embrace their cultures and traditions to debunk Boko Haram ideological narratives thereby making it difficult for the group to recruit citizens from the region.

2. **Articulation of a New Counter-Terrorism Strategy:**

ECOWAS needs to articulate and operationalize a new counter-terrorism strategy that will focus on containment of trans-border illicit flow of arms, weapons, fighters and contrabands. To achieve this objective require the creation of a regional intelligence fusion center at regional level and neighborhood watch at national border communities to assist in curtailing and combating transnational activities of Boko Haram.

3. **Sustenance of regional collaboration:**

To deepen regional cooperation on security it is recommended that the MJTF and EIRU be leveraged upon as platforms for enhancing intelligence gathering and sharing. The platforms should aid in pooling of resources which would enhance the effectiveness of counter terrorism operations.

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