

## **Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Lake Chad Region**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**T**his paper examined the implications of Boko Haram insurgency on Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region. The study purposely evaluated how Nigeria's foreign policy have been jeopardized, disrupted and negatively affected by the activities of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in the region. The study is purely qualitative in nature and used secondary data. The data were analyzed thematically through content analysis. The linkage theory was adopted in the analysis of this work. The findings of this study revealed that the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorist acts plummeted Nigeria's relevance in the Lake Chad region and the international community. The insurgents' activities led to the displacement of people from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in the form of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fleeing to safer havens within the nation and refugees were fleeing to neighbouring countries like Niger, Chad and Cameroun in the region. It is therefore recommended among others that, Nigerian government should improve the socioeconomic conditions of Nigerians to dissuade them from all forms of recruitment to Boko Haram sect. Nigerian government should deepen collaboration with the governments of Member States of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to devise strategies to meaningfully address the Boko Haram insurgency through military and non-military approaches.

**Keywords:** Insurgency, Boko Haram, Foreign Policy, National image, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

The goal of every foreign policy is to establish and maintain a cordial and beneficial relationship with other nations as well as to build a good image for a nation and meet its national and domestic interests. This invariably means that a good foreign policy is important in formulating, maintaining and sustaining a nation's positive image (Martin, 2016). Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has had vast diplomatic contacts and relations with its immediate neighbours - Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; West African neighbours; Africa and other nations outside Africa and had worked through these both to protect its national interest and to achieve other international political interest. Based on its economic and demographic strength, Nigeria has always considered itself as one of the leading countries in Africa and its foreign policy has been geared to reflect this (Ojukwu, 2011). The major objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy included: defense and preservation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity,

national survival and economic well-being of the people and the promotion of international peace and security among others (Adeniran, 1986).

Nigerian foreign policy is distinguished by an emphasis on Africa and adherence to certain fundamental values after independence: African solidarity and independence; peaceful resolution of conflicts; non-alignment and non-interference in other nations' internal affairs and international economic cooperation and development (Ate & Akinterinwa, 1992). Of note, the focus of Nigeria's external relations has remained Africa. The key issues in Nigeria foreign policy towards Africa have been: promotion of peace, prosperity, stability and development in Africa; promotion of political goodwill and understanding among African countries despite the cultural, linguistic and economic barriers; the discouragement of international intervention and presence in Africa; the promotion of rapid socio-economic development of Africa through regional economic integration; the strengthening of sub-regional economic institutions and the reduction of economic dependence on extra-continental powers; the development of cultural cooperation as a means of strengthening political ties with all African countries; and finally, self-determination for all counties on the continent (Teryima, 2014).

Lake Chad is one of the world's largest and most historical Lake located in the Sahel region of Africa (Latitude 12:30N to 14:30N and longitude 13:00E to 15:30B), which is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, bordering North-Eastern Nigeria, North-Western Cameroon, South-Eastern Niger and South-Western Chad Republic. The Lake was 25,000 km square in the 1940s, but has shrink in its dimensions over the years (Bukar, 2002). Nigeria considered the Lake Chad as a strategic hub of agricultural production and has since the 1970s established the Lake Chad Basin Development Authority to irrigate 165,000 hectares of land for wheat and rice cultivation. The establishment of the Chad Basin Development Authority accompanied the influx of people into the Lake area particularly during the great famine of the 1970s and 1980s. The Hausa speaking Northerners alongside Fulani pastoralists in addition to those engaged in the lucrative fishing business. The influx gradually increased the population of the area, and the recent estimate suggests about 28 million people living in the Nigerian side of the Lake. These people through their occupation provide 40% of fish to Nigerian markets, 78% of livestock and about 10 million tons of assorted grains. These were the situation before the Boko Haram insurgency started its operations (Umara, 2014).

With the advent of the militant group Boko Haram in early 2000s and several incidents of terrorist attacks, Nigeria's foreign policy seems in recent times tilted towards addressing the crises. In other words, in Nigeria, a nation that has suffered terrorist threats by the militant organization and which often seems to have influenced the Afro-centric essence of its foreign policy is facing unprecedented security challenges (Akerele & Oguchukwu, 2022). The menace of the sect has manifested in various forms. These include: attacks on the police and other security personnel, assassinations, kidnapping and hostage taking, sporadic attacks and shootings at relaxation spots and places of worship, bomb explosion and suicide bombing as recorded in the case of the Police Headquarters and the United Nations building both in Abuja that resulted to the destruction of lives and properties, hindered business activities, discouraged local and foreign investors, increases government expenditure on security, and retards Nigeria's socio-economic development. Furthermore, in its campaign of terror spanning almost over a decade since its emergence in 2009, Boko Haram has wrecked serious havoc in Nigeria and neighbouring countries including Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic in the Lake Chad region. Hence, the terrorist activities of the sect have drawn the attention of Nigerian government and the international community towards curbing the menace.

Consequently, the threat posed by the activities of Boko Haram insurgents has brought to the front burner issues of core interests of Nigeria's national security in her foreign policy with her immediate neighbours in the Lake Chad region. This is due to the fact that, Nigeria's failure to address and arrest its internal violence of Boko Haram insurgents, which had spilled over to other neighbouring countries in the Lake Chad region, could change Nigeria's immediate neighbours and other African nations' perceptions of the country's leadership credentials in the region. In spite of the different measures adopted by successive governments through policies and programmes to curb the menace, Boko Haram insurgency has remained pervasive in the region. As a result, it has tarnished the image of the country both internally and externally as well as retarding its economic development all of which have negative impact on the country's quest for her leadership role in Africa. It is against this background that this paper intends to examine Boko Haram insurgency and Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopted linkage theory to examine the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region. The linkage theory evolved from systems analysis (Frankel, 1972). The theory explains that any sequence of behaviour or action, which occurs in one system, is responded to by another system (Rosenau, 1969). Similarly, Feld (1968) opines that linkage theory explains those sequences of behaviour originate in one system and is reacted to by another. According to Gourevitch (1978), the mutually reinforcing nature of elements within a system is reflected similarly in international relations. The interconnected nature of international relations informs the linkage theory and presents the argument that domestic and international politics are so interrelated that they should be simultaneously analyzed. Pada (2006) also posits that the merger that exists between domestic and international factors is fully captured in James Rosenau's Linkage Theory. The theory establishes that domestic factors influence foreign policymaking and vice versa, thereby causing a linkage between the national and international affairs of a state. Rosenau (1969) seeks to understand the relationship between domestic and foreign policy. He focuses on the intricacy between national political systems and the evolution of foreign policy events and processes.

### **Methodology**

This research is purely qualitative and adopted secondary sources of data collection. The secondary sources were employed because of the need to use the existing literature related to terrorism, insurgency, and Boko Haram, Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region. It consists of materials such as text books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, seminar-papers as well as government publications. However, the data generated from secondary sources were analyzed by using qualitative method that is content analysis approach.

### **Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Lake Chad Basin Region**

Lake Chad is one of the world's largest and most historical Lake located in the Sahel region of Africa (Latitude 12:30N to 14:30N and longitude 13:00E to 15:30B), which is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change, bordering North-Eastern Nigeria, North-Western Cameroon, South-Eastern Niger and South-Western Chad Republic. The Lake was 25,000 km square in the 1940s, but has shrink in its dimensions over the years (Bukar, 2002). This lake with its strategic importance to Nigeria is depended on the Central African sub region for water discharge because, the annual flow of water into Lake Chad is about 40 to 50 billion m3 per

annum with Chari-Logone rivers emanating from Mandara and Adamawa mountains of the Central African Republic which meanders through Cameroon and Chad, as its principal sources that contribute 43.25 billion m<sup>3</sup> per annum; the Yedseram, Kumadu-Yobe and Ngada in Nigeria combine to discharge 1.92 billion m<sup>3</sup> with the remaining 7.25 billion m<sup>3</sup> coming from rain fall (GIWA, 2004; LCBC, 2014).

The lake is of immense strategic importance because it serves as the agricultural hub of the sub-region. Equally, the Lake Chad Basin also constitutes a strategic conduit for national food security (Umaru, 2014). It provides platforms for agricultural activities, including farming, fisheries, livestock production, ground water recharge and, more importantly, human settlement. The raising of livestock by local as well as nomadic herders provides additional means of economic livelihood in the basin. The lake, which provides water for grazing lands for pastoralists and herders, has been the traditional convergence point for pastoralist groups such as the Tuareg, Toubou, Feda, Kanembu, Shuwa, Fulani and Wadai from Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria (Onuoha, 2009). Thus, harnessing the Lake Chad Basin for national food security is a core national interest for countries of the region. Tapping the lake's waters for geostrategic national interest led to the formation of regional integration mechanisms underpinned by the establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in May 1964 by Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria (subsequently joined by Central African Republic (CAR) in 1996 and Libya in 2010) (Onapajo, 2013).

The Lake is very important for Nigeria in five interrelated areas: It is an important source of portable water (AEO, 2002) in that drought prone region and is sources of employment for a variety of professions which led to increase in population of up to 22 million people on the Nigerian side of the Lake. The increase in population was facilitated by the fisheries resources that provided dietary requirements to the nation; the seasonal functions also provide excellent feeding ground for through the exposing and submerging of the lake shore (Nieland & Bene, 2003). The recessional lake water also provide very fertile agricultural and pasture land which has been capitalize upon during the period of lake expansion (Isiorho, Matisoff & Wehn, 1996) and finally significant amount of water is stored beneath Lake Chad and is very important for the recharge of ground water system for Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Yobe and Borno states of Nigeria which may also be available for future use (Isiorho, Oguntola & Olojoba, 2000). Nigeria's interest in the sub region therefore stem around the following: To ensure uninterrupted flow of water to the lake particularly to its own side which is at the downstream; to persuade member states using its economic leverage toward effective functioning of the LCBC by obliging to its conventions and treaties; implementation of the proposed Inter Basin Water Transfer Project (IBWTP). The actualization of these areas of concern is encored on the cooperation the Central African sub region can accord to Nigeria (Umaru, 2014).

Nigeria's perception of its status in the World and the African continent could be seen within the context of instrumentalizing multilateral institutions as avenue of attaining its objectives. This could be explained within the context of the active involvement of the country from establishing the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and most recently Gulf of Guinea Commission and New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Therefore, it is the importance attached to multilateralism by Nigeria that facilitated the establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in 1964 (Umaru, 2014). The LCBC has at its statutory responsibilities among others to:

- To regulate and control the utilization water and other natural resources in the basin; to initiate, promote and coordinate natural resources development project and research within the basin area; to examine complaints and to promote settlement of dispute thereby promoting regional cooperation and interaction;
- The Fort Lamy convention recognizes the sovereign rights of the member states over the water resources in the basin, but forbids any unilateral exploitation of the lake's water, especially when such use has negative effect on the interest of the other states. Its also recognizes the right of member states to plan projects, provided that they consult Lake Chad Basin Commission;
- The member states were also supposed to refrain from adapting any measures likely to alter the lakes water balance, its exploitation by other riparian states, the quality of its water and biological characteristics of the fauna and flora in the basin;
- Lastly, the member states must inform the LCBC of all the projects planned within the conventional basin. National sectoral and environmental plans exist in each country to coordinate project plans across the region (LCBC, 2000; World Bank, 2002; FAO, 2012).

The commission was instituted to collectively harness resources which also serve as conflict prevention mechanism brought together Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, and later joined by the Central Africa (CAR) and Libya. Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Egypt remain as observers at the moment and hope to join Commission sooner or later (Umara, 2014).

Furthermore, Nigeria's policy in the Commission hinges on its vulnerability by being at the downstream sector that is dependent on the upstream sectors of the basin. At the same time the country's economic might and corresponding human resources makes the country to envisage the idea of irrigation farming by utilizing the abundant water resources led to the establishment of the Chad Basin Development Authority (CBDA) on its own side. The activities of CBDA led to the influx of Nigerians culminating in the proliferation of fishing business and pastoralism as well as ground water recharge accumulated huge population concentrations. These areas of concern for Nigeria make apparent that unless effective LCBC survives the chance of Nigeria securing access to sustain areas of its strategic interest is threatened. Along this line, Nigeria shouldered more than 50% of the annual budget of the LCBC (LCBC, 2008). In addition, the Summit of Heads of States has always been influenced by Nigeria and all the nine Executive Secretaries of the LCBC have all come from Nigeria (Galeazzi et al., 2017).

Nigeria's commitments in LCBC however failed to bridle the upstream Cameroon from embarking on stream flow modification on the mouth of the principal river of Lake Chad. The construction of Maga Dam is considered as a threat to peace and act of aggression due to Nigeria. The dam grossly reduced the contribution of the river Chari-Logone, upon which millions of people on Nigerian side depends on (FAO, 2006). The construction of this dam has adversely affected Nigerians living downstream sector of the Lake Chad Basin. This dam had inflicted a heavy blow on Nigeria and had even resulted into conflict between two neighbours. Umara (2014) analyzed the construction of this dam in two different perspectives: the first could be within the context of favourable weather climate that bolster the flow of waters which periodically forces Cameroonian authorities to open the dam for flow of water to the lake which in either case cannot stop CBDA on its farming activities. Beside the rainfall regime during that time was no sufficient and Nigerian authorities were less concern about future implications of the dam since the petro dollar will always ensure the importation of the country's food requirement. Secondly, the dam was constructed to systematically convey Cameroonian dissatisfaction of

Nigeria's refusal to cede Bakassi to Cameroon. Thus it is a display of subtle power to bring the giant to its knee through depriving Nigeria with fresh water by rendering its largest irrigation scheme worthless.

Therefore, he concluded that member states have always found it difficult to respect the existing agreement whenever they are face with a choice between national interest and regional cooperation. Nigeria's political and military intervention in Chad as well as other foreign aids to the country could not bridled Chad in supporting Cameroon on issues of constructing dam as explained during the joint mission. Neither Nigeria's policy persuading Cameroon of granting aids worked to stopped Cameroon from undertaking such project. Even the LCBC considered as instrument of Nigeria's foreign policy that is sustained by Nigeria with jurisdiction on the Basin fall short of Nigeria's expectations and therefore is a failure for Nigeria's foreign policy in the region (Umara, 2014).

However, Nigeria being a regional hegemon and downstream power never contemplates on launching military offensive, but by 1990s the level of recession became unbearable as a result of climate change. Nigeria being the most influential and the biggest donour in the commission was presented through LCBC during its third environmental ministers in November, 1989, by Italian company Boniface a project plan to transfer some water of the Congo Basin via Ubangui river in the Central Africa through Chari-Logoni river system and then to Lake Chad, in order to counter the drop in Lake level and Sahel desertification and at the same time to intensity trade with Central African Republic (LCBC, 1998). This plan project influenced Nigeria's active political and diplomatic persuasions to bring in the CAR in to the LCBC as a fifth member (LCBC, 2001), accorded the country preferential trade status within the LCBC and paid up to \$5 million for the salary of its Armed forces and the civil services that threaten peace and security in that volatile country (DATAC bulletin, 2006 in Umara, 2014). This development is rightly observed by the World Bank that:

*The incorporation of Central Africa as fifth member state during the 8th summit of heads of states held in Abuja has been the greatest success for Nigeria's foreign policy in the LCBC. The move enlarges the new conventional basin to include the upper basin of Chari-Logone a principal sources of Lake Chad with an estimated 94% of contribution to the Lake Chad (World Bank, 2002:9).*

This new definition of the conventional basin thus take into account almost all the water resources that supply the lake, the floodplains and the aquifers in the lake area (LCBC, 2000; World Bank, 2002).

Furthermore, Nigeria's policy of persuading Congo Brazzaville and Congo Democratic Republic to accept the membership of the LCBC as well as to approve, the diversion of the river Congo by constructing a 300km navigable canal through Chari-Logone subsystems in the Central African Republic (CAR) is another success for Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). According to Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) news (2003), the feasibility study of the project is expected to cost 10.6 million dollars which is already approved by Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo which shares river Congo, into which Ubangui flows.

Nigeria's strategic interest in relation to Lake Chad therefore stems from Nigeria's ability to succeed in securing flow of water to downstream sectors with a view to reversing the threat posed to its national interest in the region. The success of the proposed Inter Basin Water

Transfer Project (IBWT) is more than the failure as a result of shared interest among the member nations. First the issue of confrontations with Cameroon over Bakassi is over since the territory is handed over to Cameroon. In addition, the climate change and reduction on the rain pattern has led to recession in both Chadian and Cameroonian lands; Second, CAR a host to 300km canal would be opened up for navigation up to Lake Chad and Atlantic coast in addition to the potentials of generating hydroelectric power to supply the region; and lastly the Congo basin's annual inundation of town and cities across Congo Brazzaville and Congo Democratic Republic could be averted through such as diversion as the waters are diverted to run off toward Ubangi. Therefore, all the players in the Lake Chad Basin upstream and downstream alike have a coalition of interests in the proposed inter basin water transfer project which in the end serve Nigeria's strategic interest in the region (Umara, 2014).

Finally, in her commitment to address the issues of cross-border crimes such as armed banditry, drugs and human trafficking alerted the countries of the security importance of this region such that by 1994, the Nigerian government under General Sani Abacha started a military border patrol unit to confront these crimes. This was upgraded to a Multinational Force (MNF) when Nigeria, Niger and Chad agreed to police their respective sides of the borders against cross-border crimes in 1998 (Musa, 2013b). Furthermore, in response to the increased atrocities of Boko Haram insurgency and its cross border activities in the region, the LCBC members and Benin Republic reactivated and upgraded the MNF to a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to be operational inside national borders of LCBC member states (Thérout-Bénoni, 2015). The concepts of operation covering the mandate, objective, specific tasks, command, control and coordination, structures and composition, and zones of operation were agreed in March 2015 (Suleiman, 2017). However, this was highly constrained by the traditional territorial concerns of these nations and the Francophone-Nigeria animosities and border disputes, particularly between Nigeria and Cameroon; and Nigeria and Chad.

### **Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria's Foreign Policy in the Lake Chad region**

Nigeria's image in the comity of nations is crucial to its external relations, because it determines the quality of respect she earns from other States in the global community. The respect and acceptance that a nation earn, is dependent on the core value that it upholds, the effective management of her domestic affairs and the promotion of her citizen's interests as well as the conduct of her external relations (Kehinde, 2008 in Ogoh, Rumah, Emmanuel & Shalok, 2018). However the emergence of the Boko Haram and banditry has made the nation to lose to a large extent the respect and its relevance in the international community. Of course, no country will be disposed to establish a bilateral relation with a country that is widely acclaimed to be an enclave of terrorist. Instead of witnessing foreign investors coming into Nigeria to boost the nation's economy, the country is rather experiencing the exodus of many companies and industries from the country to other countries as a result of insecurity. The continued violence against innocent citizens in Jos, Bauchi, Maiduguri and other parts of the country, carried out with impunity on a daily basis is enough to scare foreigners from coming into the country to invest (Ojukwu, 2011).

The activities of Boko Haram have extensively affected the Nigeria's image in the Lake Chad region. This is because Nigeria has been in the fore front of international peacekeeping assignments within the West African sub region, Africa, and even globally. But the emergence of Boko Haram has deteriorated Nigeria's security architecture. In addition, as a 'Big brother' of Africa, the 'Giant of Africa', the activities of Boko Haram has demystified Nigeria's image in

Africa and the international community as a whole. Nigeria's image has never been brought so low until when Boko Haram insurgency emerged in the Lake Chad region. Nigeria prosecuted a civil war successfully and this one has taken Nigeria by surprise and the country's image has really been affected (Kachalla, 2023). Also, the Boko Haram terrorist group has seriously raised the question of the role and perception of Nigeria as a sub-regional and regional hegemon given the fact that the Nigerian state and armed forces have found it increasingly difficult to dispel or contain the activities of this ragtag group. Once that capability is put to test, other countries looking to Nigeria as a safe haven whenever they face insecurities are now put in a difficult situation (Oluwadare, 2016).

In their analysis, Eseoghene and Efanodor (2016) observed that the kidnap of 276 Chibok school girls to Sambisa forest opened a new vista in the activities of Boko Haram and its implication on Nigeria's external image, as the kidnap drew the attention of the whole world and this led to the famous global campaign of "Bring Back our Girls". The kidnap of the school girls and the crisis within the Armed Forces that led to the dismissal of some officers from the frontline exposed the weaknesses of the counter terrorist measures of the Nigerian government before the world. This attracted negative attention globally, especially by international right groups and humanitarian bodies like Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), who have all written at various times damaging reports on the activities of the Nigerian state. This barrage of criticisms to a very large extent reduced Nigeria to a pariah state among the comity of nations. In corroborating the above assertion, Sule (2023) posits that Boko Haram insurgency has affected the Nigeria's image not only in the Lake Chad region but in the international community because, it has succeeded in exposing Nigeria's bad governance, and bad rule that brought about the emergence of this insurgency and other crises that are challenging the Nigerian state.

Furthermore, Sule (2023) noted that prior to the emergence of Boko Haram, Nigeria was highly respected in West Africa, Africa and the world over. Nigeria in the past has demonstrated political capability, it has demonstrated economic strength; it has demonstrated a vibrant foreign policy. Nigeria succeeded in liberating many African countries including South Africa from Apartheid. It succeeded in countering insecurity in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Congo, Sudan and Cote D'Ivoire. Nigeria earned reputation with its military troops being part of the operations of African Union (AU) and the UN in the peacekeeping mission. But unfortunately, when the Boko Haram insurgency broke out and the Nigerian troops could not contain and curtailed the activities of Boko Haram, even the neighbouring African countries started looking down at Nigeria. For example the issue of Xenophobia in South Africa, where Nigerians are being attacked, killed, molested and maimed in a most brutal way inhumane. It is because Nigeria has lost its image due to Boko Haram terrorism.

Another important source of international disrepute for Nigeria arising from the Boko Haram terror is the rising number of refugees fleeing the consistent attacks to neighbouring states. One of the major characteristics of a major power in the international system is its ability to attract immigrants, especially in terms of providing refuge and asylum to those that are forced to flee their countries as a result of conflict, political repression, humanitarian crises and economic hardship (Ogunnubi, Onapajo & Isike, 2016). Nigeria has played this role in Africa since the oil booms of the 1970s. It offered refuge to many Africans that fled conflicts in their countries (for example, Sierra Leoneans, Liberians and Ivorians), political repression (for example, South Africans and Angolans) and economic hardship (Ghanaians, Togolese, Guineans, Cameroonians, and Burkinabe) (Ogunnubi et al., 2016). The US Committee for



Refugees and Immigrants reported that Nigeria hosted about 10,000 refugees as of 2001, including 4000 Sierra Leoneans, 3000 Chadians, 3000 Liberians and others from another five African countries (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2001). Interestingly, Nigeria adopted a sound integration policy that offered ample opportunities for migrants to live a new and better life. In 2007, Nigeria allowed the last set of refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone to settle permanently in the country (Reuters, 2007).

However, the Boko Haram crisis is reversing this trend. Rather than being a major recipient of migrants from other conflict-ridden African states, Nigeria is contributing to the number of refugees in Africa. People in the Northeastern region of Nigeria that are affected by increasingly deadly attacks by Boko Haram have been fleeing to neighbouring countries. One report suggests that about 192,000 Nigerians have sought refuge in Cameroon, Niger and Chad. The situation is so serious that the UN has launched an appeal fund of USD 174 million to cater for Nigerian refugees in their host countries. Recognizing the enormity of the refugee crisis caused by Boko Haram, UN Refugee Chief António Guterres stated that the situation is comparable to that of the Syrian civil war (Kindzeka, 2015). It cannot be denied that the worsening refugee crisis has impacted negatively on Nigeria's reputation. One way to measure this is the maltreatment of Nigerian refugees in the recipient countries (owing to their incapacity to accommodate many migrants because of their economic situation). For example, in May 2015, an estimated 3000 Nigerian refugees were deported from Niger under disgraceful and harrowing conditions. They were forced to trek for three days back to Nigeria, resulting in many deaths (Umar, 2015).

Over the years since 2009, the activities of Boko Haram sect, has increased the displacement of people from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in the form of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fleeing to safer havens within the nation and refugees fleeing to neighbouring nations like Niger, Chad and Cameroun. It has been noted that majority of these persons are women and children (Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2014). Apart from the epidemiological disaster confronted by IDPs, they also, in the long run, face severe trauma due to extended stay in unsuitable environments. The result of this can be multidimensional. They could become destitute after returning from displaced persons' camps and never go back to normal life (Oluwadare, 2016). This has affected Nigeria's foreign policy negatively as the Nigerian State fail to protect lives of its citizens which constitute her core national interest. The bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters in Abuja on June 16, 2011, the U.N House in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and other high profile bombings attest to this assertion. Nigeria does not seem to have suffered not only the economic setback caused by Boko Haram's bombings, but also the battered image and humanitarian disaster the group inflicted on the country (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

In sum, as experienced in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted on the Nigeria's foreign policy not only in the Lake Chad region, but the entire West African sub region, Africa and the world at large in respect of expectations in the attainment of her foreign policy objectives through different means ranging from the implications for law and order in the country, protection of lives and property, protection of national resources, upholding the institutional basis of the state, and financial expenditure on security. Nigeria's image in the Lake Chad region has been affected by the activities of Boko Haram insurgents due to Nigeria's inability to address the problem that was hitherto internal until its now busy looking for assistance from other neighbouring countries and the international community. In addition, Nigerians are no longer respected when they travel to Member State in

the Lake Chad region as Nigerians; they were treated with disdain and looking at them as those who are radicals and extremists that are causing troubles.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has examined the impact of Boko Haram insurgents on Nigeria's foreign policy in the Lake Chad region. Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian state created enormous demands on Nigeria's foreign policy and her international relations. The domestic uncertainty and loss of international standing ramifies to the citizenry, affecting their psychological state of mind, ability to engage in economically gainful enterprise and acceptance around the world. Boko Haram insurgency has become a torn in the flesh of the Nigerian state and its neighbouring countries in the Lake Chad region. Several lives have been lost, millions of property destroyed and a palpable state of terror, fear and trepidation reign in the region.

The study observed that the containment of the Boko Haram insurgency by Nigerian government should not be guided by the metaphor of war on terrorism, but long term response to address the highlighted risk factors in all its complexity. In addition, important issues such as human security, food security and economic development have been seriously affected by the Boko Haram terrorist activities on Nigeria's foreign relations as they were seen as key issues affecting Nigeria's foreign policy particularly in the Lake Chad region. Indeed, Boko Haram insurgency has become a major threat to Nigerian state and the entire Lake Chad region, since it not only affects Nigeria's international image, but also its ability to attract foreign investment to Nigeria. Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism constrains Nigeria's economic development and consequently its economic and political reach regionally and internationally.

## **Recommendations**

In view of the above, this paper put forward the following recommendations:

- i. Nigerian government should improve the socioeconomic conditions of Nigerians which will disconnect all forms of recruitment to Boko Haram insurgency which includes poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption and bad governance;
- ii. Nigerian government should block all the means in which Boko Haram is securing weapons, finances, logistics, and its support internally;
- iii. Nigerian government must win the hearts and minds of local people by offering assurances and encourage them to assist the military with the intelligence information on Boko Haram;
- iv. Nigerian government should collaborate with the governments of member States of the Lake Chad Basin region and devise strategies to meaningfully address the prevailing grueling socio-economic condition in the region which readily provides fertile ground for easy recruitment of Boko Haram members;
- v. Nigerian government should collaborate with the member states of the Lake Chad Basin to ensure proper coordination of border patrol and efficient regulation of the influx of immigrants into their countries to forestall the movement of illegal arms;
- vi. Security agencies, especially those concerned with intelligence gathering and analysis, must be empowered, motivated, and adequately mobilized to combat criminality and insecurity;
- vii. There is urgent need for robust, targeted training as well as capacity building for military and security forces so as to improve their human right records in counter insurgency and

- terrorism operation against Boko Haram insurgents in order to reclaim Nigeria's lost image in the international community;
- viii. Nigerian government should engage into bilateral and multilateral talks and engagements with the international community in order to attract foreign aids as humanitarian intervention in all the affected areas;
  - ix. Nigerian government should improve its governance capacity by improving traditional state services such as education, health, transport and social protection for its citizens in order to increase the legitimacy of government in the areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

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