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## The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Impact on Border Security, Trade and Economic Collaboration Between Nigeria and Cameroon: An Exploratory Study

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## The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Impact on Border Security, Trade and Economic Collaboration Between Nigeria and Cameroon: An Exploratory Study

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***Abstract:** This article examines how sporadic conflicts between bordering states can be used by emerging terrorist groups to advance nebulous religious and political agendas and threaten regional security in various regions of the world. For example, the unconventional activities of ruthless insurgent groups in Africa (such as the Islamic State of the Maghrib, Boko Haram, and Al Shabaab) often thrive on conflicts and instability between bordering states, driven by religious, political or economic motives, to acquire power, territory, and control over innocent populations. Notorious for the violence and mayhem that these groups have imposed on villages and towns along the Northern Cameroon and Nigeria borders, Chad, Niger, Kenya, and Mali, this study seeks to utilize conventional border studies theory as it applies to public administration and human security along the Cameroon-Nigerian border in West Africa to examine the destabilizing activities and the threat to regional security posed by the Sunni Islamist group known as Boko Haram. To that end, attention will be given to the connection between the history of conflict along this border and the rise of regional terrorist groups, particularly Boko Haram with its ability to exert control and power over the region by exploiting porous borders, in its attempts to impose a very radical brand of Islam on parts of Northern Cameroon, Nigeria, southern Chad, and Niger. More importantly, this study also attempts to highlight the pivotal role that cooperation between neighboring states and external partners (such as the United States, Great Britain, and France) can play in the fight against terrorists groups such as Boko Haram. We suggest that governments along border states must engage in strategic collaborative agreements that would enable them to establish long-term border security arrangements that are necessary to contain the expansionist agendas of groups such as Boko Haram.*

**Keywords:** Border conflicts, border states, Boko Haram, regional security, global theoretical framework, porous borders, military assistance, trans-border incursions, Islamization, transnational organized crime.

### **Introduction**

“Across the world, the existence of militant groups, organized criminal gangs and the nexus between them is not a new phenomenon. In recent times, however, their manifestation and intricate linkages in Africa have become growing sources of concern at a national, regional and even international levels” (Ezirim & Onuoha, 2013). Ezirim & Onuoha (2013) define terrorism as “the premeditated use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction and/or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, and is intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts.” They refer to transnational organized crime (TOC) as “crimes that are not only international (crimes that transcend borders between countries), but crimes that by their nature involve border crossings as an essential part of criminal activity, which can include crimes which take place in one country but still have their consequences significantly affect another country.” With regard to border studies, this paper applies these

definitions to our theory of how conflicts and instability between bordering states are in fact advantageous to rising terrorist groups.

This paper applies post-colonial theory to assess the connection between border conflicts and the emergence of regional terrorist groups by examining the Cameroon/Nigerian border and the rise of Boko Haram, as well as the sect's increased ability to exert control and power over the region in its steadfast attempts towards the Islamization of Nigeria. We review Boko Haram's use of marginalization "tactics" to achieve power and status, and compare and contrast the history of leadership, poverty, and exclusion in both states along the Cameroon/Nigerian border.

Finally, we assert that strong economies make for strong borders and nations. It is imperative for bordering regions to find ways to cooperate and create communities within each that work in collaboration towards the protection of human rights, increased border security, and, more importantly, protection of resources that will be needed to sustain the capacities of nations as they fight terrorist groups.

### **Theoretical Considerations on Border and Border Security**

Over the past several decades, conventional border theories have generally focused on notions of territoriality, the sovereign state, and homogenous ethnicities within boundaries as the central components of border studies. The movement of people across the borders of two sovereign states, it was argued, could either be accomplished through legal or illegal migration by way of other illicit enterprises, such as smuggling. However, as these notions have been challenged and, to some extent, subverted by contemporary border theories and processes of globalization, the concept of the modern state has undergone fundamental changes. Ksenija Voidmar Horvat (2009) argues that contemporary theories about borders center on the reconstitution of borders as parallels to the processes of globalization, de-territorialization, and denationalization of the bond or relationship between the nation (state) and society. He believes that these theories require a rethinking of the concept of borders, processes of bordering, re-bordering, and de-bordering, as well as the use of interdisciplinary investigative methods to properly situate the border within the context of the post-modern territory. Ksenija's argument is supported by the assessments of Newman (2006), Rumford (2006), Delanty and Rumford (2005), and Robins (2006), who all use phrases such as post national, post territorial, transcultural, or transnational to describe the paradigm shift that is emerging in border studies because the traditional link between borders and territory has all but evaporated. In its place has arisen a contemporary perspective that subscribes to the view that the territory has lost its power as the principal agent in defining identity and belonging. Proponents of this perspective believe that borders are fluid, have become plural, and can be moved arbitrarily.

The growth of transnational insurgencies in Africa include the Northeastern Nigeria Sunni-led Boko Haram Islamist terrorist groups, whose violent and bloody incursions into Chad, Cameroon, and Niger have impacted the lives, society, and the economies of these countries; the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab terrorist organizations, which have launched numerous attacks into Kenya and Ethiopia; and the Muslim-oriented Seleka Opposition movement in the Central African Republic, which has conducted trans-border raids into Cameroon and Chad. The insurgent activities do not respect sovereign states or their borders, which certainly calls for a re-conceptualization or re-configuration of the notion of borders to include assessments of the activities and impact of these transnational, non-state actors. The security threat posed by these new and dangerous transnational actors to adjacent states from their original base of operations in Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the former Soviet Republics clearly calls for the

development of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches for evaluating the activities and impact of these non-state actors on border security and international politics. To that end, a global or transnational paradigm that incorporates international collaborative strategies to fight Islamic terrorism (in the interest of international security) should be developed, funded, and supported to combat global Islamic terrorism wherever or whenever it emerges. The United Nations set a precedent in this regard when it established the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTEF), that has sought to put into practice the various UN and regional resolutions aimed at combating terrorism (The Daily Observer, 26 September 2007). These include Security Council Resolution 1373 and the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in September 2006. American assistance (in terms of military advisors and equipment) to Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, which are currently engaged in the fight against Boko-Haram, as well as its support to Kenya and other East African nations fighting Al-Shabaab, is a model worth implementing by other global partners.

### **Cameroon-Nigerian Border: Disputed Claims over the Bakassi Peninsula**

The 1,700 km border between Nigeria and Cameroon (which stretches from Lake Chad to the Gulf of Guinea) has been disputed since colonial times. The disputed areas included parts of Lake Chad in the North and the potentially oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula in the Gulf of Guinea in the south, which was highly coveted by both nations. To that end, it is important to note here that the history between Cameroon and Nigeria is marked by a unique colonial history and a history of conflict over resources, which, in some ways, persists today. In October 2002, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the Bakassi Peninsula, the area along the African Atlantic Gulf of Guinea, rich with oil reserves, rightfully belonged to Cameroon (International Court of Justice, Judgment of 10 October 2002). Although Nigeria initially disputed the International Court of Justice's decision, Nigeria formally and diplomatically ceded Bakassi to Cameroon in August 2008, following the United Nations' brokered Greenleaf Agreement, thus putting an end to 15 years of border conflict (AFP, 2013). It was at this pivotal moment that a United Nations-backed five-year transitional period began, allowing Cameroon to develop an administrative presence in the area. When this period ended on Aug. 14, 2013, Cameroon was finally able to take full sovereignty of the area (Chimtom, 2013).

### **Sowing the Seeds of Collaboration**

It can be argued that the Bakassi Peninsula conflict, in some ways, provided an opportunity for both countries to work through their differences diplomatically after the 2002 ICJ ruling. The trust formed between Cameroon and Nigeria was largely the result of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission (CNMC), a UN-backed assembly comprised of the delegation of Cameroon and the delegation of Nigeria (UNOWA, 2014). The purpose of the CNMC was to resolve any dispute after the ruling by the International Court and for both countries to work on many issues between the neighboring nations, including demilitarization of militarized zones, initiating plans for economic development, as well as protocols to protect the rights of indigenous populations, and the reactivation of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (UNPR, 2014).

With the help of mediators, trust between the two countries gradually improved, paving the way for joint security and economic ventures in support of Bakassi's fishing and oil industries. For this reason, the African Union believes that Cameroon and Nigeria's peaceful resolution should act as a model for other boundary discussions ongoing elsewhere in Africa (Irin, 2014). To this day, the Bakassi agreement is hailed as a victory for African diplomacy by

the United Nations and various countries; so much that on the tenth year anniversary of the ICJ ruling, Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, commended Nigeria and Cameroon for demonstrating commitment to the 2002 judgment (African Press Organization, 2012).

Moreover, this historical victory marked a significant step towards the resolution of a border dispute that had “simmered” between Nigeria and Cameroon for decades, and even brought them close to the brink of war in 1981, with sporadic clashes throughout most of the 1990s (Cornwell, 2006).

### **Uprisings in Northern Nigeria and their Impact on Northern Cameroon**

Northern Cameroon shares much of northeastern Nigeria’s history, as well as its problems. Both regions were part of the pre-colonial Sokoto Caliphate, which, at the time, was the most powerful state in 19th century West Africa. The reason Cameroon has traditionally fared better is because its German colonizers, and subsequent independent governments, introduced a more centralized form of government than the federal structure the British imposed on Nigeria. As a result, uprisings in Nigeria have stemmed from the perception of exclusion in federal government activities by peripheral areas and that has led to feelings of marginalization. Early integration of the Islamic elite into positions of authority in Cameroon helped keep the peace in the region (Dorrie, 2014).

However, there are several factors impacting both countries that leave Nigeria vulnerable to insurgent violence. For one, northern Nigeria is generally poorer than the rest of the country, and residents complain of corruption, inequality, and the government’s failure to address problems (Umukoro, 2014). Poverty is exacerbated by porous borders that have aided in an influx of illegal aliens and weapons into Nigeria to boost the operations of Boko Haram. What is more is that the police are ill-equipped when it comes to surveillance and information gathering, which has been to the advantage of Boko Haram (Osumah, 2014). Economic factors, such as very low levels of per capita GDP, correlate with failed states (Piazza 2008), and, as such, there might be a negative relationship between terrorism and income starting with the poorest countries (Enders et al., 2014). Also, from a political perspective, the vast majority of Nigerians from the Muslim north favor a return to Sharia law as the foundation of their society and its legal system because they feel marginalized by the secular policies of the largely Christian south, which has controlled political power for most of Nigeria’s post- independence history.

### **Who are Boko Haram?**

Boko Haram is the sophisticated and genocidal militant sect driven by the ideology of a fanatical Islamic practice with a fairly controversial origin, tracing back to the early 2000s, and posing a unique problem in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon when compared to other insurgent groups in the country. The core beliefs of Boko Haram are based on the teachings of Muhammed Marwa, who was born in 1927 in Northern Nigeria and moved to Kano at age 18 to become a preacher. His teachings were aimed at the influence of Western culture in Nigerian life: He condemned Western education as the product of infidels and considered the reading of any book other than the Koran as sinful and tantamount to paganism. Initially ignored by Nigerian authorities in the early 1970s, Marwa’s increasingly antigovernment sermons and his growing number of followers finally compelled the government to crack down on the sect in the late 1970s. The government crackdown further fueled a series of uprisings in Kano in the 1980s, masterminded by Marwa’s followers, culminating in the 1982 riots. The government crackdown on the riots

resulted in over 4000 militants killed, including Marwa himself. Marwa's death sparked more riots against the government in Bulumkutu in 1982, where 3,300 people were killed, in Gongola State, where nearly 1,000 people perished in 1984, and in Bauchi State where hundreds more were killed in 1985. It appears that Marwa's main goal was to have Sharia law (which was abandoned by drafters of the 1960 independence settlement in favor of their secular aims) re-introduced in Northern Nigeria. In the 1980s, the belief that Muslim acquiescence to the 1960 settlement was a horrible mistake had taken hold in Northern Nigeria.

Muhammad Marwa's death left a void that was filled by Muhammad Yusuf. Known at birth in 1970 as Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, he founded the militant Islamist group Boko Haram in 2002. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Yusuf was "a radical, young Islamist cleric who created Boko Haram with the aim of establishing a fully Islamic State in Nigeria," who gained support from speaking out against poverty and corruption within the Nigerian government (Foster-Bowser & Sanders, 2012, p 5) He acted as the spiritual leader of the sect until he was killed in the 2009 Boko Haram uprising. Its membership, then as now, largely relates to the depth of feelings about socioeconomic injustice, marginalization, and human insecurity, with a majority of its members being uneducated, poor, jobless, school dropouts, or students from low socio-economic backgrounds. According to Foster-Bowser & Sanders (2012), the group's official name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." However, the name Boko Haram, in the Hausa language, was given to the group by the local people from where the group was founded. It loosely translates to "Western education is evil" or "Western education is forbidden." It has also existed under other names, such as Nigerian Taliban and Yusufiyah sect after the group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf (Ezirin & Onuoha, 2013).

Inspired by the ideology of Salafism (an extreme form of Sunni Islam), Yusuf believed in strict application of Islamic law, which represented his ideal of justice according to the teachings of the Prophet. When Nigerian security forces killed Yusuf during clashes with his followers in 2009, his deputy, Abubakar Shekau, emerged as his successor, replacing Mallam Sanni Umaru, who was acting leader immediately following Yusuf's death. According to Aghedo & Osumah (2012), several individuals have also laid claim to the group's leadership at various times.

Shekau's followers included Yusuf's disciples, who were attracted to Shekau's al-Qaida's style of militancy and his call for a "pure Islamic state in Nigeria" (Zenn, 2014). He has declared loyalty to the militant group Islamic State of Iraq & Syria (ISIS). Nigerian authorities believed that Shekau was killed in 2009 during clashes between security forces and Boko Haram, but in July 2010, Shekau appeared in a video claiming leadership of the group. He has subsequently been reported dead by Nigerian authorities several times, only to re-emerge at another part of Northern Nigeria. In March 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Shekau is a Salafi.

Over the past several years, Boko Haram has been responsible for several violent attacks, including bombings against the Nigerian state in the north, and has extended its mayhem to the south, where it has attacked targets in Nigeria's capital of Abuja. These attacks have occurred at high-profile government establishments, markets, banks, police stations, and churches (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). The sect, which was originally considered to be a domestic terrorist group, has also successfully launched transnational attacks and struck international targets. This has not only fundamentally changed their description and designation, but has put them in the global spotlight (Ezirin & Onuoha, 2013).

The group's leadership claims to have over 40,000 members in Nigeria, as well as some neighboring African countries. Notably, this includes some of the Nigerian political elite, including two former military heads of state and an ex-civilian vice president from the north, who have all been indicted. Some members of the state security agencies are also members of the sect and are alleged to have helped the group with training. This has posed many problems, including the fact that in August 2011 the commander of the U.S. Africa Command, General Carter Ham, held that Boko Haram had, and continues to have, ties with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Somalia's al-Shabaab, two other terrorist groups that are under close watch (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). As a matter of fact, in May of 2014, Boko Haram was added to a U.N. Security Council list of terrorist groups due to their affiliation with al-Qaida. It is now subject to financial sanctions and an arms embargo, and any group that provides any kind of financial or material support to Boko Haram is also eligible to be added to the al-Qaida Sanctions (U.N., 2017).

### **Recruitment and Funding**

Muhammad Shekau has recruited followers among prisoners after freeing them from prison during rescue attacks. He is also known for kidnapping young men and forcefully conscripting them into his movement. Despite several reported attempts by the Nigerian government to reach an agreement with Boko Haram over the past several years, this violent sect continues its relentless attacks against civilian populations in towns and villages in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon, as well as against government, business, and religious targets in Nigeria.

In addition to kidnapping young boys as fighters, the group has used other strategies to recruit followers. It has been known to forcibly recruit young boys in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon into its ranks because of the porous border between the two nations. It has attacked prisons, freed the prisoners, and then recruited them as followers and has been known to provide social services to poor communities among which it recruits followers. The sect has also attracted followers among a growing number of Muslims in Northern Nigeria who feel alienated and marginalized by the secular nature of Nigerian society and prefer to a return to Sharia law as the foundation of Nigeria's legal system. John Campbell (2013) argues that some members join because Boko Haram pays them to kill Nigerian government officials, steal cars in Boko Haram's name, and sell them to business men or government officials. Some of these stolen cars are used to rob banks. Campbell also maintains that immigrants from neighboring countries have joined the sect for economic reasons. Finally, some of Boko Haram members are hard core Islamic fighters from Nigeria who have acquired experience as fighters in North Africa and in the wars going on various parts of the Middle East (Zenn, 2014, p. 3).

Boko Haram's basic source of funding comes from members' daily levies to their leaders, in addition to loot from bank robberies, oil theft, kidnapping and ransoms, and donations from politicians, government officials, and organizations within Nigeria (Ezirin & Onuoha, 2013). The group has been known to also secure financial support from outside the country, with allegations that Boko Haram specifically receives monies from al-Qaeda operatives to recruit and train terrorists in Nigeria. Recently, these ties have become more serious, prompting calls for the international community to strengthen counter-terrorism measures (U.N., 2017). Boko Haram has also benefited from financiers from Borno and bordering areas of Cameroon's extreme Northern Region, who are often ethnic Kanuris, such as Yusuf, Shekau, and most Boko Haram members. The group continues to pursue the Islamization of Nigeria and repudiate democracy and Western education (Foster-Bowser & Sanders, 2012, p 4).

### **Boko Haram Activities in Northeastern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon**

Nossiter (2014) notes that although security tensions along the borders of Northeastern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon have become the chief cause for concern by the governments of both countries, it is the unprecedented level of violence and mayhem perpetrated by Boko Haram that has engendered regional and international condemnation of its activities. In a five-year spree of uprising and violence, primarily in Northeastern Nigeria, a full-scale insurgency characterized by massacres, assassinations, kidnappings, enslavement, terrorism, and other crimes against humanity took place 2009 and 2014 (Sharma, 2014). Human Rights Watch, an international non-governmental organization, has noted a dramatic increase in the number of people who died from insurgent violence in 2014 compared with 2011. In 2011, the organization estimated that 935 people were killed, while in the first six months of 2014 alone, 2,053 civilian casualties and over 95 attacks were recorded (Nossiter, 2014).

By August 2014, Boko Haram declared an "Islamic Caliphate" in the predominantly Christian town of Gwoza, a claim which the Nigerian military immediately rejected, stating that the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state is still intact" (Zaimov, 2014). While it remains unclear if the sect has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, which controlled parts of Iraq and Syria, an August 2014 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) report stated that Boko Haram declared an Islamic state in the towns and villages it had seized in northeastern Nigeria (BBC Africa Bureau, 2014). In November 2014, an AFP report confirmed that more than two dozen towns and villages in northeastern Nigeria were controlled by Boko Haram (Abubakar, 2014).

In 2013, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in three states after a series of deadly attacks by Islamist militant groups. He ordered troops to be sent to the northeastern states, and the Governors of Borno (the town where Boko Haram is originally from) offered their support and cooperation. In mid-April 2014, Boko Haram was thrust into the global spotlight after it abducted 276 schoolgirls between the ages of 15-18 from Chibok, a town of about 60,000 in Nigeria's northeastern Borno state, comprised mostly of Christian families (Akwei, 2014). The abduction of these girls was clearly a turning point in Boko Haram's war against civilian populations. This incident galvanized global condemnation of Boko Haram's barbaric acts of violence and focused attention on the plight of these girls and their families.

The abductions triggered international outrage, protests which heavily criticized the response of Nigerian authorities to the kidnappings. Global pressure for the Nigerian government to intensify efforts to secure the freedom of the girls was unprecedented. Little, if any progress at all, was made in freeing the kidnapped girls (Akwei, 2014). One October 2014 BBC report suggested that a ceasefire deal had been struck with Boko Haram and Nigerian military service chiefs, raising hopes that the girls would be released on the condition that the Nigerian army complied (Ross, 2014). However, an early November 2014 report released by Reuters International News Agency stated that more than 200 of the girls kidnapped by the group six months ago had already been converted to Islam and "married off" to its fighters, or used as porters, and that no "cease fire" deal was ever agreed to, contradicting the earlier BBC report and Nigerian government claims that they would be freed (Abrak, 2014).

More recent developments suggest that on November 17, 2014 the town had been captured by Boko Haram insurgents, only to be recaptured two days later by troops of the Nigerian Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Division (Oduah, 2014). That same month, a suspected Boko Haram suicide bomber disguised in school uniform set off an explosion that ripped through an all-boys school

in Potiskum, a village in northeast Nigeria, killing 47 students. This prompted U.S. and U.N. condemnation of one of the worst attacks against schools with a so-called Western curriculum (AFP, 2014).

### **The Impact of Terrorism on the Economies of Nigeria and Cameroon**

Nigeria is Cameroon's biggest economic partner in sub-Saharan Africa, right next to the Economic and Financial Affairs Council of the European Union (Irin, 2014). Even during its history of conflict, uprisings, and war-like clashes, nothing ever stood in the way of the circulation of goods and people along this border, even during the Bakassi dispute (Irin, 2014). The Nigerian state is a richly endowed nation, being the fifth largest OPEC oil producer and a major oil exporter to the U.S. and to other Western states. According to Aghedo & Oarhe (2012), oil revenue sustains the state and accounts for 98 percent of the country's export earnings, as well as 95 percent of the government's income. However, in spite of such great oil wealth, more than 70 percent of Nigerian citizens have experienced massive unemployment and poverty rates, living on an estimated \$1.25 a day (Aghedo & Oarhe, 2012, p 861). There are also vast economic variations between the north and other parts of the country which should be noted. Aghedo & Oarhe (2012) assert that the northern region of Nigeria fares far worse in the level of infrastructural and human capacity development, in effect, making this harsh human insecurity a fertile ground for anti-state groups, such as Boko Haram. The trans-border incursions of Boko Haram into border towns and villages in Northern Cameroon has contributed to a depletion of the fragile economic base that sustained the three northern regions of Cameroon (the North, the Far North, and Adamawa) and threatened the security of helpless populations in these regions. Cameroon has had to deploy more forces and resources to its northern regions in an effort to contain the increasingly brutal and ruthless campaigns orchestrated by Boko Haram in those areas.

What is more, the Nigerian migrant community in Anglophone (Western) Cameroon always took advantage of the economic opportunities and cross-border trade of its host region (Konings, 2005). Most of the cooperation in this region is the result of an economically-dependent relationship, which remains the stronghold of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

One element that has destabilized the region's economy and security over the last five years is the Nigerian Islamic sect, Boko Haram, whose full-scale insurgency of massacres, assassinations, kidnappings, enslavement, terrorism, and other crimes against humanity have all but paralyzed the daily lives of Northern Nigerians and their day-to-day economy (Sharma, 2014). Because activities of the insurgency have spilled over into Northern Cameroon and parts of Niger and Chad, the need to contain this ruthless group of militants has taken on a regional dimension.

### **Cameroon's Reasons for Collaborating with Nigeria**

It goes without saying that Nigeria and Cameroon's contentious history is one marked not only by past border conflict over resources, but also by a general mistrust of the others' political motivations. Cameroon's initial reluctance in aiding its Nigerian neighbors from the growing Boko Haram threat was most palpable in the media months after President Goodluck Jonathan put the state in Emergency Rule in 2013. The multi-national force enforcing emergency rule in Nigeria's northeast at the time was made up of Nigerian troops, assisted by soldiers from Chad

and Niger. However, Cameroon remained reluctant to engage further for fear of Boko Haram reprisals within its own borders (Hazelwood, 2013).

Following the Chibok school girl kidnappings in northeastern Nigeria, investigations revealed that the Cameroonian government had issued a directive to all its military commanders in charge of border areas with Nigeria. In the directive, Cameroon's Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization gave specific orders to commanders to withhold crucial information from Nigeria about Nigerian insurgents (CamerounWeb, 2014). It was only a matter of time, however, before Cameroon's government would come around and begin slowly building trust in its Bakassi counterpart for the sake of the border's economy. Shortly, thereafter, it created a joint body aimed at securing their common border from Boko Haram and pirates in the Gulf of Guinea (Hazelwood, 2013). Not long after Boko Haram began imposing its atrocities across Northern Cameroon, Cameroonian forces joined Nigeria, Benin, Chad, and Niger in sharing intelligence and border surveillance. On December 2, 2014, following rumors that the terrorist group began recruiting young Cameroonians to fight for them, the Republic of Cameroon recruited 20,000 more defense and security forces to fight Boko Haram (Kindzeka, 2014).

### **Fight Against Boko Haram: Lessons for the United States and its Partners**

After initially refusing to accept military assistance in its fight against Boko Haram from the United States, international efforts on the part of Great Britain and France culminated in meetings between leaders of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. International protocols were subsequently established between these Western powers and the African nations impacted by Boko Haram activities that paved the way for the provision of military assistance in the form of military equipment and advisors to the governments of Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad, and Niger by the United States and its partners. Consequently, in the context of the fight against terrorism, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria (members of the Multinational Joint Task Force - MJTF) have benefited from such assistance to enhance their intelligence gathering capabilities as well as their ability to move troops quickly to areas attacked by Boko Haram. The United States and its Western partners have certainly recognized the fact that an international effort to combat Islamist terrorist organizations in West, East, and North Africa is vital to America's national interest because it will enable the United States to gather important intelligence about these groups that can be used to forestall any future attacks on America. Secondly, the strategic partnership that the United States has established with members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) will assist them in using the military assistance provided by the U.S. to monitor and manage trans-border traffic among and between these nations more effectively. Such actions will strengthen regional security and reduce the brutal violence and inhuman treatment of innocent and helpless populations by Boko Haram insurgents. Third, American media spotlight on the plight of the kidnapped Chibok girls and calls from celebrities in the United States and Europe for the them to be released strengthened America's resolve to assist the Nigerian government to find and rescue these girls.

### **Conclusion**

This study is designed to examine how conflict between border states with porous borders can be used by terrorist organizations to advance obscure religious and political agendas. It argues that the decades old border conflict along the 1,700 km porous border between Cameroon and Nigeria (stretching from Lake Chad in the North to the Gulf of Guinea in the south) inspired

Boko Haram to wage trans-border military operations from Nigeria into Cameroon. While the literature strongly suggests that Cameroon's collaboration with Nigeria is more about economic security than it is about diplomatic collaboration, cooperation between border states in areas with high insurgency remains a key strategy for containing and defeating Islamist terrorist groups. Such a strategy would strengthen regional security and sustain the fragile economic base that supports the economies of Cameroon and Nigeria. Moreover, border economies that stand together have stronger economies and are able to collectively utilize more resources to mitigate future terrorist incursions. To that end, this research proposes the development and implementation of a global collaborative theoretical framework that calls for powerful nations with military and technological resources to assist developing nations fighting terrorist groups. Such a framework, similar to what the assistance that the United States and its partners have provided to the Multinational Joint Task Force nations of West Africa would strengthen regional and international security, reduce the violence directed at helpless populations by terrorist groups, and prevent planned future attacks on partner nations and the United States.

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