

Policy Brief

Implication of COVID-19 for Peace and Security in the Lake Chad Basin Region

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Executive Summary

The Lake Chad Basin Region (LCBR), which basically consists of fringe territories in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, is notoriously fragile and highly unstable. The region is largely characterised by violent extremism and cross-border crimes. With the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and its spread to LCBR in early 2020, it is expected that the impact of the disease would transcend health. It will also

impact the socio-economic conditions of the area and this will complicate the already fragile peace and security landscape of LCBR. This policy brief takes a look at the nature of COVID-19 pandemic in LCBR and its implication for the fragile peace and security landscape of the region. It ends with some recommendations.

Key Points

1. On average, COVID-19 cases recorded in the LCBR territory may not be high compared to the national average in the respective LCBR states. However, the impact of the pandemic on the fragile peace and security landscape is massive.
2. The inconsistency in military counter-terrorism operations during the outbreak of COVID-19 in the LCBR has, in public discourse, again foregrounded the question of effectiveness of over-reliance on the military for the stability of LCBR.
3. LCBR territories are not only weak in basic social services; they are also low-income economies dominated by informal sectors. Most people earn livelihoods from daily earnings. The socio-economic conditions thrown up by COVID-19 may linger for long in LCBR. This may cause public discontent that may trigger massive protest or revolution. If this happens, it may further worsen the peace, security and stability of the LCBR.
4. There is a need for multi-government and multi-stakeholders approach to mitigating the impact of COVID-19 in LCBR. To this effect, the government of the region, through the Lake Chad Governors' Forum, Lake Chad Basin Commission, United Nations and other relevant stakeholders, should formulate a collective approach to COVID-19 in the region so that a uniform approach that takes the peculiarity of the area into cognisance is adopted.
5. One of the best ways to mitigate increasing poverty arising from COVID-19 and its containment measures is to resuscitate the desiccated Lake Chad to enable fishing, farming, herding and other livelihood activities that will improve local earnings in the LCBR area.
6. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the challenges it brings to fighting Boko Haram in terms of serving as force multiplier for the group and force de-multiplier for governments of LCBR and other stakeholders have shown that Boko Haram's insurgency must be ended as quickly as possible before it gets more worrisome than it now is.
7. Rather than focusing on mitigating the spread of COVID-19 only, which is almost becoming the trend in LCBR, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and donor agencies working in LCBR should deploy triple nexus of Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP nexus) as a new model for their activities in the region so they can combat the spread of COVID-19 while at the same time contribute to the humanitarian and development needs of the people of the areas and also promote peace.

Background

The Lake Chad Basin Region (LCBR) is a peculiar region in sub-Saharan Africa. It is named after Lake Chad, a shallow endorheic lake in the Sahel. Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon are the core countries that share the borders of their peripheries with the lake. Hence, they compose the LCBR. As shown in Table 1, over 45 million people out of the 271 million inhabitants of the LCBR states reside in the area.

Table 1: Basic information of LCBR states with regard to LCBR territory¹

| S/N | Country | Population of LCBR states ² | Landmass of LCBR states in the LCBR territory (%) | Population of LCBR states inhabiting LCA (Million) |
|-----|----------|--|---|--|
| 1 | Cameroon | 25,686,002 | 9 | 6 |
| 2 | Chad | 16,176,792 | 42 | 10 |
| 3 | Niger | 23,835,900 | 28 | 6 |
| 4 | Nigeria | 205,323,520 | 21 | 26 |
| 5 | Total | 271,022,214 | - | 48 |

LCBR is characterised by cross-border mobility, trade and heterogeneous ethnic identities. This makes it difficult to distinguish which communities belong to which country within the LCBR. Moreover, these marked features of the LCBR account for why the area, in spite of the fact that it does not have its own government, is regarded as a system or an organised entity rather than detachments from the LCBR countries. The LCBR itself is, like the individual countries composing the region, highly unstable. It is considered as one of the most fragile and unstable regions in the world due largely to terrorism and insurgency as well as cross-border crimes like human, arms and drug trafficking³ that take place in the territory. For a deeply fragile region like Lake Chad, the outbreak of COVID-19 will significantly impact on the security landscape of the area. This policy brief discusses the nature of the spread of COVID-19 in LCBR and how it impacts on the peace and security landscape of the region.

COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Spread to LCBR

COVID-19 was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. By January 2020, it was declared a public health emergency of international concern. As the spread of the virus continued rapidly, World Health Organisation (WHO), in March 2020, declared the virus a pandemic. So far, 218 countries of the world have been affected by the pandemic⁴. Updates as of 18 December 2020 show that over 75.5 million people have contracted the virus while over 1.67 million people have died; about 42.6 million people have recovered⁵. Index case of COVID-19 in Africa was recorded in Egypt in February 2020. Available data as of 18 December 2020 shows that over 2.4 million people in the continent have contacted the virus. Over 2.1 million people have recovered while total death stands at over 57 thousand; there still are over 300 thousand active cases⁶.

Index case of COVID-19 in the states of Lake Chad Region was reported in Nigeria on 27 February 2020⁷. Since then there has been rapid rise in records of cases. Official data from the LCBR countries as of 18 December 2020 reveals that 106,884 people, out of over 1.6 million tested for COVID-19, have been found positive. While 1,844 have died, 94,342 have recovered; there are 10,701 active cases. Unfortunately, however, official data may be short of accuracy⁸.

Table II: National-level data of LCBR countries on COVID-19 as of 18 December 2020⁹

| Country | Total case of COVID-19 | Total death | Total recovery | Active case | Total tested |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Nigeria | 77,013 | 1,212 | 67,484 | 8,317 | 869,362 |
| Cameroon | 25,472 | 445 | 23,851 | 1,179 | 659,314 |
| Chad | 1,839 | 102 | 1,630 | 107 | 62,429 |
| Niger | 2,560 | 85 | 1,377 | 1,098 | 55,724 |
| Lake Chad | 106,884 | 1,844 | 94,342 | 10,701 | 1,646,829 |

Index case of COVID-19 in LCBR territories was recorded in Borno State on 18 April 2020. Since then, the spread of the virus has been rapid, at least in some sections of the region. As Table III shows, the Nigerian axis of the LCBR has over 80% of the cases followed by Cameroon with over 17% of the cases. Chad and Niger have the least cases. There are, at least, three reasons for a higher case of COVID-19 in the Nigerian axis of LCBR than in any other place in Lake Chad. One reason that may explain this is that the population of Nigeria is much higher than that of any other LCBR state.¹⁰ Further, cities in the Nigerian axis of Lake Chad are attractive to inhabitants from across LCBR. Nigerian cities in Lake Chad—Maiduguri, Yola,

Mubi, Damaturu, Potiskum and others are closer to the inhabitants of LCBR than the political capital of the other LCBR states, especially Niger and Cameroon¹¹. Therefore, people who desire to have a feel of city usually prefer the Nigerian side of Lake Chad. Apart from this, Nigerian cities of LCBR are trade and commercial hubs in the region. They attract buyers and sellers from across LCBR states. On average, however, the cases of COVID-19 recorded in the LCBR territory may not be high compared to the national average in the respective LCBR state. However, the impact of the pandemic on the fragile peace and security landscape is massive.

Table III: Cases of COVID-19 in LCBR as of December 18

| Country | LCBR territory | Confirmed case | Case in LCBR territories as % of Total case | Death | Recovery | Active case |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|---|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Cameroon ¹² | Far North Region | 89 | | 5 | 55 | - |
| | North | 122 | 17.2 | 11 | 71 | - |
| | Adamaoua | 57 | | 3 | 20 | - |
| Chad ¹³ | HadjaLamis | 0 | 0.15 | - | - | - |
| | Lac | 5 | | - | - | - |
| Niger ¹⁴ | Diffa | 6 | 0.15 | - | - | - |
| Nigeria ¹⁵ | Borno | 774 | | 36 | 705 | 33 |
| | Adamawa | 355 | 82.1 | 19 | 274 | 6 |
| | Yobe | 150 | | 8 | 100 | 42 |
| | Total | 1,558 | | 63 | 1157 | 29 |

How COVID-19 Pandemic Affects Peace and Security in LCBR

There are a number of ways in which COVID-19 is impacting on peace and security architecture of LCBR. First, governments' responses to COVID-19 in the region have weakened their capacity to consistently maintain military counter-terrorism operations against terrorist groups in the region. LCBR is a military-security zone. In other words, the stability of the region is heavily dependent on deployment of military to maintain security.

However, prioritisation of COVID-19 pandemic and the stress resulting from containment measures taken by governments composing the region have reduced the ability of the governments to maintain military counter-terrorism activities. Expenses incurred in the maintenance of military and its counter-terrorism operations have been seriously affected. Between 2009 and 2018, Nigeria spent a total of \$19,176bn on its military outfit basically to maintain security in its Lake Chad border and other parts of the country¹⁶. This represents an average of \$1,917.6bn per year. Within these same years, combined military spending of Chad,

Cameroon and Niger was \$8,526.5bn, representing an average of \$852.65bn¹⁷. The military spending has enabled the riparian states to carry out a lot of military counter-terrorism operations in the region, including funding the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). With the outbreak of COVID-19 and prioritisation of its containment, it may be difficult for the LCBR states to spend this much to maintain their military in 2021¹⁸ and beyond, at least, until the virus is no longer a significant threat. Further, we have witnessed a situation where already insufficient¹⁹ military personnel were deployed but to address COVID-19 related emergencies rather than security of the region. Early in March 2020, the Nigerian Army announced that its personnel should be prepared for non-military activities and “shield the country from the coronavirus”²⁰, including enforcing COVID-19 lockdown within the country. The implication, therefore, is that the efforts against terrorist groups operating in LCBR are relaxed and the groups are taking adequate advantage of the situation.

The terrorist organisations are aware of the opportunities that they have against their opponents during the period of COVID-19. On 19 March 2020, the Islamic State (IS) issued an editorial in its Arabic weekly newsletter— Al-Naba— in which it called for intensification of attacks by affiliate groups against “infidels”

during the period of COVID-19.²¹ This is already playing out in the region. On Sunday, 22 March 2020, Boko Haram targeted and attacked a Chadian military base in an overnight raid in Boma Peninsula of Chad’s Lac Province. The attack resulted in the death of over 92 Chadian soldiers and destruction of 24 military vehicles. President Derby commented, “it is the first time we have lost so many men.”²² The attack against Chadian troops was calculated and very strategic. Chadian Soldiers remain the most experienced in counter-terrorism in LCBR. Therefore, degrading them during the period of COVID-19 was essential to further weaken the regional military coalition and make it difficult for them to effectively wage counter-terrorism operations in the region. After the March attack, sometime between April and May 2020, Boko Haram carried out several other attacks in Nigeria such as those in Gaidam and Dapchi (Yobe State) and Chibok (Borno State). In response to Boko Haram’s attack against Chad, the country’s military launched a serious onslaught against Boko Haram. This resulted in the killing of about 1,000 members of the group²³. Similarly, Nigeria also stepped up its military campaign under Operation Lafiya Dole commanded by the Chief of Army Staff²⁴. In Niger’s Diffa region, Nigerien security forces in cooperation with the MNJTF launched a new military offensive to uproot Boko Haram from Lake Chad²⁵.

These measures led to temporary lull in Boko Haram's operations. However, actions against the insurgents could not be sustained by the states as a result of the stress associated with the pressing need to contain the spread of COVID-19. In June 2020 Boko Haram resumed its activities and up to 19 December of the same year, it carried out several devastating attacks which resulted in the death of over 300 people on the Nigerian side of Lake Chad alone²⁶. Further, Boko Haram's increasing onslaught, especially against the Nigerian soldiers, and allegation of neglect by the government during the period of COVID-19 led to the resignation in July of over 350 Nigerian military personnel deployed to fight Boko Haram in North East Nigeria²⁷. The corollary is that the outbreak of COVID-19 has stressed the LCBR states. The inconsistency in military counter-terrorism operations during the time brought to the front burner of public discourse the question of effectiveness of over-reliance on the military for the stability of LCBR. Uncertain times thrown up by COVID-19 and the imbalance it brought to the military formation of states of the region have shown that, in a fragile security landscape, military security cannot guarantee stability all the time.

Table IV: Boko Haram's attacks on the Nigerian side of Lake Chad Region²⁸

| S/N | Date | Description of attack | Number of people killed |
|-----|--------------------|--|---|
| 1 | June 8, 2020 | Boko Haram attacked a convoy of Nigerian soldiers on the Maiduguri-Damboia road. | Over 20 Nigerian soldiers were killed. This happened four months after a similar incident killed about 70 soldiers. |
| 2 | June 9, 2020 | ISWAP attacked Gubio town. | 81 civilians were killed while 7 others and over 1,200 cattle were abducted/rustled. |
| 3 | June 13, 2020 | ISWAP attacked Monguno and Nganzai. | At least 20 soldiers and over 40 civilians were killed. |
| 4 | July 18, 2020 | Boko Haram attacked several villages in Chibok. | Three farmers were killed. |
| 5 | August 8, 2020 | Boko Haram attacked troop location in Kukawa town. | Two soldiers were killed. |
| 6 | September 25, 2020 | Governor Zulum's Convoy was attacked in Baga. | At least 30 people were killed. |

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 7 | November 30, 2020 | Boko Haram attacked Zabarmari farmers in Borno. | About 78 farmers were killed. |
| 8 | December 19, 2020 | Boko Haram attacked motorists along Maiduguri-Da-maturu road. | Many killed and others abducted. |

LCBR states are not only poor in basic social services but are also low-income economies dominated by informal sectors. Most people earn livelihoods from daily earnings. In order to curb the spiral spread of COVID-19, governments of LCBR states imposed containment measures such as lockdown and curfew; restriction on inter-state/province movements; closure of all borders; shutting down of markets, shops and other economic spaces; closure of worship centres and aggressive imposition of social distancing protocols. Immediate impact of these measures on the population was that it led to a massive loss of livelihoods which aggravated poverty and hunger among the inhabitants of the LCBR territories. Table IV shows that the number of people living in extreme poverty in LCBR states has increased in the last one year, largely due to COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the 2020 Hunger Index of the countries of the region shows that Nigeria and Niger were classified under countries with “serious” level of hunger. Chad was classified under “alarming” level. Only Cameroon was rated as having “moderate” level of hunger. Added to the entrenched poverty and hunger in the LCBR states, the condition of people

living in the territories has become more intense because of long years of neglect of the region by governments of the states and the adverse effect of COVID-19 containment measures. In some of the countries, poverty rate is as high as between 70 and 80 percent of the population²⁹. Although, palliatives were distributed by governments to cushion the effect of poverty and hunger that resulted from the containment measures, they were largely inadequate and in some cases, marred by accountability issues. For instance, in Adamawa State, the government was alleged to have hoarded COVID-19 palliative foodstuffs that should have been distributed during the April 2020 lockdown. This prompted public discontent that resulted in youths invading the warehouse and looting the foodstuff in October 2020³⁰. This coincided with the EndSARS protest that engulfed the Nigerian state in October 2020. Poverty and hunger is getting to the worst in the region because non-governmental organisations working in this sphere have now shifted focus to mitigating the spread of COVID-19 pandemic by distributing protective materials rather than meeting the feeding needs of the people³¹.

Table V: Change in the number of people living in extreme poverty since October 2019³²

| LCBR state | Population | | People living in extreme poverty | | People living in extreme poverty as % of population | |
|------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---|----------------|
| | As of Oct 2019 | As of Nov. 2020 | As of Oct. 2019 | As of Oct 2020 | As of Oct 2019 | As of Oct 2020 |
| Cameroon | 23,385,959 | 25,686,002 | 4,856,271 | 6,089,593 | 20.8% | 24.0% |
| Chad | 14,299,697 | 16,176,792 | 5,414,842 | 7,024,029 | 37.9% | 43.0% |
| Niger | 21,349,169 | 23,835,900 | 13,661,070 | 17,243,031 | 64.0% | 72.0% |
| Nigeria | 198,370,189 | 205,323,520 | 94,583,286 | 105,097,856 | 47.7% | 51.0% |

Increasing poverty resulting largely from shrinking Lake Chad and loss of livelihood by inhabitants of the area have always been at the base of the instability of the region³³. They trigger the indulgence of the locals in cross-border crimes, being easy recruits for terrorist groups and emigration from the Lake Chad area to the hinterlands of the LCBR states. This has further triggered inter-group clashes especially between herdsman and farmers. All of these contributed largely to the instability of the region even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.³⁴ With increase in the number of people struck in extreme poverty since the outbreak of COVID-19, a number of situations that worsen the peace and security landscape of the region may stem in the near future. Firstly, cross-border crimes such as cattle rustling, banditry and trafficking (human, arms and drugs) could surge. Similarly, resource conflict and

various other crimes that have direct relation with deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the context of COVID-19 pandemic may emerge. Petty theft and Juvenile delinquency is already rising significantly in the rural parts of Lac, Hadjer Lamis and Kanem regions in Chad³⁵. There is also a rising armed robbery of traders along the Gamboru-Ngala border³⁶. In Adamawa State, sexual and gender-based violence, especially rape, has increased since the outbreak of COVID-19. Between March and July 2020 over 300 cases of rape were recorded in the state³⁷. Similarly, in May 2020, farmer-pastoralist clashes led to the death of about 73 people and the wounding and displacement of many others in the Lamurde Local Government Area of Adamawa State.

Secondly, the imposition of COVID-19 containment measures across the LCBR states

and territories led to a rise in arbitrary use of power by state security agencies. In some cases, locals suspected of flouting COVID-19 containment measures, i.e., not wearing face masks, attending large gatherings, and making unauthorised movements were arbitrarily arrested and detained. At times, security agents used the opportunity of COVID-19 to extort people and infringe on their human rights. For instance, in Cameroon, the police detained hundreds of people for unauthorised movement and/or failure to wear face masks; seized 250 motorcycles and impounded hundreds of taxis³⁸. In far north region of Cameroon, especially in towns like Garoua, Maroua and Ngaoundere, people who refused to accept restrictions on mobility and religious gatherings were severely clamped down on by the government security agents. This generated tensions between community/religious leaders, youths and government security agencies³⁹. Similarly, in Mubi, people alleged that security agents used the opportunity of the enforcement of COVID-19 lockdown to extort people and unleash brutality on them⁴⁰. In Nigeria, police brutality is a regular occurrence. It spurred a major popular protest called ENDSARS⁴¹ in October.

Further, Boko Haram may take advantage of the widespread poverty caused by COVID-19 and containment measures taken in the region to enhance its campaign against the state. The group

has always taken advantage of the socio-economic conditions of the people to recruit adherents. This is one of the reasons why the group has remained resilient. In doing so, Boko Haram has always deployed many approaches including utilising Salafist Jihadist ideology framed around issues that appealed to the grievance of the people using the Holy Book as support.⁴² With COVID-19 worsening the socio-economic conditions of the people in the area, it is very likely that Boko Haram will take advantage to recruit more people into its folds or incite people against the government. Already, reports have begun to emerge that Boko Haram and ISWAP are recruiting and proselytising people during the period of COVID-19⁴³. Boko Haram has also dispatched an audio message online to attack public health schemes put in place to curtail the spread of COVID-19 in LCBR as it considers them an open declaration of war against Islam in the region and globally⁴⁴. The sentiments expressed in the audio message by the leader of Boko Haram—Shekau—on COVID-19 measures taken by the governments of LCBR may resonate with feelings of the people who are affected significantly by the measures. This may incite the people against the states in the region, and that is not impossible given the fact that public health measures put in place did not only prevent them from doing their daily routines but also state security agencies put pressure on them

to enforce the measures. Arbitrary use of brute force on the locals often results in clashes between the community and state security agencies. This kind of state-citizen relation in uncertain period will definitely stimulate hatred against the state and encourage people to pitch their tent with insurgent groups rather than with the state⁴⁵.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The LCBR is one of the most unstable regions in sub-Saharan Africa; rising violent extremism and cross-border crimes largely define the insecurity of the area. The socio-political and economic milieu of the area plays a significant role in the fragility of the region. COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken to address the spread of the virus in turn impact on the socio-political and economic conditions and exacerbate the fragile peace and security of the region. With the fear of second wave of outbreak of COVID-19 looming, measures taken to curb the spread of the virus may be reintroduced in LCBR. Even if the second wave does not surface, the socio-economic conditions already thrown up by the virus may linger for long in the territory because the areas are peripheries of the LCBR states and are usually overlooked in development plans. If this drags for long, it may cause public discontent that may trigger

massive protest or revolution.⁴⁶ If this happens, it may further worsen the already fragile peace, security and stability of the LCBR. The following recommendations are thus made to ameliorate the situation:

- The use of brute force by government security agencies to enforce COVID-19 public safety measures put in place by governments of the LCBR should be discontinued. Rather, governments of the area should use advocacy carried out by community and religious leaders to get the message to the people and encourage their compliance.
- There is a need for multi-government and multi-stakeholder approach to mitigating the effect of COVID-19 in LCBR. In this regard, governments of the region, through the Lake Chad Governors' Forum, Lake Chad Basin Commission, United Nations and other relevant stakeholders should formulate a collective approach to COVID-19 in the region so that a uniform approach that takes into cognisance the peculiarity of the area is adopted.
- Human security and development of the inhabitants of the LCBR should be given priority by the governments of the region as the only reliable way to ensure the stability, peace and security of the area.

- One of the best ways to address increasing poverty arising from COVID-19 and its containment measures is to resuscitate the Lake Chad. This will aid livelihoods and improve local earnings.
- The outbreak of COVID-19 and the challenges it brings to fighting Boko Haram in terms of serving as force multiplier for the group and force de-multiplier for the governments of LCBR and other stakeholders have shown that Boko Haram's insurgency must be ended as quickly as possible before it gets out of control.
- Lastly, rather than focusing on mitigating the spread of COVID-19 alone, which is almost becoming the trend in LCBR, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations and donor agencies working in LCBR should deploy Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus as a new model for their activities in the region and make efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 and at the same time contribute to the humanitarian and development needs of the people of the areas and also promote peace.

Endnotes

- 1 Data on landmass and population of LCBR states and territory are extracted from Owonikoko, S.B. and Momodu, J.A., *Environmental Degradation, Livelihood and Stability of Chad Basin Region, Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 31(6): 1295-1322, 2020, pp. 1302
- 2 Data extracted from <https://worldpoverty.io/map>.
- 3 Owonikoko, S.B. and Momodu, J.A., *Environmental Degradation, Livelihood and Stability of Chad Basin Region, Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 31(6): 1295-1322, 2020.
- 4 See the list of the countries at https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/?utm_campaign=homeAdUOA?Si.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 See <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>. Accessed on 20th December, 2020.
- 7 Ugboodaga Kazeem, *Deadly Coronavirus confirmed in Lagos, Nigeria*. PM News, February 28, 2020. Available at <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/02/28/breaking-deadly-coronavirus-confirmed-in-lagos-nigeria-at-last/>. Accessed on November 1, 2020.
- 8 All the LCBR states lack adequate capacity for regular testing. This has been shown in the number of covid-19 tests carried out as shown in Table II. Furthermore, in the early stage of Covid-19 outbreak in Adamawa State, one of the Nigerian states located in Lake Chad, there were reports that the government of the state deliberately increased the number of Covid-19 patients in the isolation centres of the state to attract Covid-19 funds from donors. Although, there is no evidence of this, it puts the credibility of Covid-19 data from the state in contention. This largely contributed to the reason why people considered Covid-19 a hoax.
- 9 Data obtained from <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>.
- 10 See Table I.
- 11 For instance, Diffa Region of Niger to Niamey, the state Capital is 1,364.8km while Diffa to Maiduguri is just 427.5km. Far North Region of Cameroon to Yaoundé, the Cameroonian capital is 1,365.8km but Far North region to Mubi is just 253.7km and to Yola is 422.8km. Ndjamena, the capital of Chad, is closer to Lac, Kanem and HadjaLamis regions than is Maiduguri.
- 12 Data gotten from https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/cmr_covid-19_sitre36.pdf. Accessed on November 1, 2020. Came
- 13 Data gotten from <https://www.covid-19-tchad.org/>. Accessed on November 1, 2020
- 14 Data gotten from <https://coronavirus.ne/carte-interactive/>. Accessed on November 1, 2020.
- 15 <https://covid-19.ncdc.gov.ng/>. Accessed on November 1, 2020.
- 16 Onuoha, F.C., Chikodiri Nwangwu and Micheal, I.U., *counter-insurgency operations of the Nigerian military and Boko Haram insurgency: expounding the viscid manacle*. Security Journal, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-020-00234-6>.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Iweze Daniel Olisa, *Covid-19 and Nigeria's Counter-insurgency Operation in the Northeast*, SSRIC Kujenga Amani, June 4. Available at <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/06/04/covid-19-and-nigerias-counterinsurgency-operations-in-the-northeast/>. Accessed December 1, 2020.
- 19 All the four countries making up the region, despite the vast landmass and population, do not have up to 170,000 combined active military personnel. Global Firepower Nations Index 2020 shows that Nigeria, with a population of over 200 million has 120,000 active personnel while Chad has 30,500. Cameroon has 14,500 whereas Niger has only 5300. This is small considering the fact that the countries of the region face internal threats that constantly need deployment of military. Pakistan, a country with almost the same population as Nigeria, has active military personnel of 1,204,000 and over 550,000 reserve army.
- 20 Carsten Paul, *Nigerian Army Prepares for Coronavirus Lockdown, Mass Burial*. Reuters, March 25, 2020. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-nigeria-security/nigerian-army-prepares-for-coronavirus-lockdown-mass-burials-idUSKBN21C2B2>.
- 21 Al-Naba vol. 226, P. 3.
- 22 The Guardian, *Boko Haram Kills 92 Chadian Soldiers in a Seven-hour Attack*, 24 March, 2020. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/boko-haram-kills-92-chadian-soldiers-in-seven-hour-attack>. Nov. 2, 2020.
- 23 VOA News, *"1,000 Boko Haram Fighters Killed in Raid, Chad Army Reports"*, 10 April 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/1000-bokoharam-fighters-killed-raid-chad-army-reports>.
- 24 See Owonikoko Babajide Saheed. *Is Boko Haram's End in Sight?* Available at <https://spoorafrika.org/blog/4/is-the-end-of-boko-haram-in-sight>, August 24, 2020.
- 25 International Crisis Group, *"Niger: Overview"*, April 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch>.
- 26 These are only documented cases of Boko Haram's attacks. The unreported attacks and killings are likely to be much more than the reported.
- 27 Asadu Chinedu, *Report: 356 soldiers fighting Boko Haram resign citing loss of interest*. The Cable New, July 12, 2020. Available at <https://www.thecable.ng/report-356-soldiers-fighting-boko-haram-resign-citing-loss-of-interest>.
- 28 The data used here were sources from newspaper reports in Nigeria.

- 29 Owonikoko, B.S., “Multinational Joint Task Force: A Critical Reflection on Regional Coalition for Counter-terrorism against Boko Haram in Lake Chad Basin” in Danjibo, N.D and Adeola Adams (eds.) *Inter-Agency Cooperation for Peace and Security in Nigeria*. Abuja: Society for Peace Studies and Practice. See also Happi Cynthia, *Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad: Evolution and Impact of Boko Haram*. IPSS Policy Brief, Vol. 1, ISS 1: p. 3
- 30 Kabiru Anwar, *Youths Loot Government Warehouse in Yola*, Daily Trust, October 25, 2020. Available at <https://dailytrust.com/youths-loot-government-warehouse-in-yola>.
- 31 A journalist from N’djamena, Chadian Capital, revealed this trend to the author during a symposium attended by the Author in December, 2020. He explained that once these are distributed to the people, they are taken to the market where they are sold and the money obtained thereof is used for feeding.
- 32 Data for 2019 is adapted from Owonikoko Babajide Saheed, *Beyond Boko Haram’s Insurgency: Rethinking Regional Response to Security Stability in Lake Chad Region*. Paper presented at the regional conference on Security Crises in Lake Chad organised by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Cameroon and Central Africa held in Yaounde, Cameroon between Nov. 11 and 13, 2019. Meanwhile, 2020 data are obtained from <https://worldpoverty.io/map>
- 33 See Owonikoko, S.B and Momodu, J.A., *Op. cit.*
- 34 Ibid
- 35 Online interview with Dr Bouyou Isabelle, Lecturer University of Pala, Chad on November 2, 2020
- 36 Gamboru-Ngala is a major crossing point that connects and facilitates socio-economic exchanges between Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria. Closure of the borders by these states as a part of Covid-19 containment measures meant that traders had to explore unofficial crossing points thereby exposing themselves to the risk of robberies. See African Union and United Nations Development Programme, *Covid-19 and Stabilisation: Governance Implication for Lake Chad Basin Region*. Situation Brief, July 2020. p. 24.
- 37 Interview with Dr Saxena, Coordinator of Hope Centre, Jimeta, Adamawa State. Hope Centre is a medical facility provided for victims of rape in Adamawa State.
- 38 “Cameroon Arrests People without Masks as COVID-19 Cases Increase”, VOA News 14 May 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/cameroon-arrests-people-without-masks-covid-19-casesincrease>.
- 39 Online interview with Dr Henri Mbarkoutou, University of Maroua, October 29, 2020.
- 40 Interview with local people done on 14 October 2020.
- 41 Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is a tactical unit in the Nigeria Police Force. It was created to fight rising robbery in the 1990s. Although, northern Nigeria did not join in the protest to end SARS, in fact, in Borno State, vote of confidence was rather passed on the tactical unit to remain because of the role they played in fighting terrorism in the state. However, it spurred other unrests in northern Nigeria, especially looting of warehouses in Adamawa and Plateau States.
- 42 See Jennifer Boutz, Hannah Benninger and Alia Lancaster, *Exploiting the Prophet’s Authority: How Islamic State Propaganda Uses Hadith Quotation to Assert Legitimacy*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1431363, 2018; see also Onuoha Freedom, *Boko Haram and the Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria* in Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos (ed.) “Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria”, Chapter 8, 158-191. *West African Politics and Society Series*, Vol. 2.
- 43 Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, *How extremist groups are responding to Covid-19*. Available at <https://institute.global/policy/snapshot-how-extremist-groups-are-responding-covid-19-9-april-2020>. See also Kajjo Sirwan and Kaina Hassan Maina, *Experts: Boko Haram Recruiting Children as Soldiers, Suicide Bombers*. Available at www.extremism-watch/experts-boko-haram-recruiting-children-soldiers-suicide-bombers.
- 44 Yusuf Anka, *Abubakar Shekau mocks world leaders and derides social distancing in new audio message*, April 11, 2020. Available at <https://humangle.ng/abubakar-shekau-mocks-world-leaders-and-derides-social-distancing-in-new-audio-message/>.
- 45 United Nations Development Programme, *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment*, 2017. <https://journey-to-extremist.org>.
- 46 There are already signs that this may happen. For instance, there was a massive protest including road blockages, burning of tires and private and government properties in Niamey, Niger Republic against Covid-19 curfew and ban on religious gathering. See GARDA World, “Niger: Residents in Niamey protest COVID-19 measures April 17-19 /update 3”, 22 April 2020, <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/334861/niger-residents-in-niamey-protest-covid-19-measures-april-17-19-update-3>. In Nigeria, Post-Covid-19 lockdown led to a massive protest against police brutality. The protest which began as #ENDSARS protest snowballed into #ENDBADGOVERNANCEINNIGERIA. In Adamawa State, the protest was used to perpetrate massive looting of government and private properties including hoarded Covid-19 palliatives in the capital, Yola.

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Dr Saheed Babajide Owonikoko is currently a lecturer and researcher at the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Adamawa State. Prior to joining the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, he worked briefly with Academic Associate PeaceWorks (AA PeaceWorks) in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, first as an intern and then later as a consultant. He holds a Doctorate Degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His areas of research interest are: management of non-state armed groups, violent extremism, gender and violence as well as security studies. He has published widely in revered journals both within and outside Nigeria. Dr Owonikoko is currently the Post-Graduate Programmes Coordinator for the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola.

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