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Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

A quest to win the hearts and minds

Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force

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EPON Report

A quest to win the hearts and minds: Assessing the Effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Task Force

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Executive Summary

In January 2015, the African Union (AU) authorised the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a regional security arrangement of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to deal with the threat of Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate includes the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the BH insurgency, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad region, facilitating humanitarian operations, and the provision of assistance to affected populations. To achieve its mandate, the MNJTF undertakes both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Its mandate has been renewed annually since 2015, and in December 2022, the AU renewed its mandate for another 12 months. This report assesses the effectiveness of the MNJTF in delivering on its three mandate priorities to generate recommendations. It is important to note that the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) renewed the mandate of the MNJTF earlier than expected, and as a result, this report offers reflections on how to enhance the effectiveness of the mission going forward.

Despite longstanding constraints, such as insufficient funding, gaps in operational command and control, inadequate equipment and an intelligence-sharing cell, the MNJTF has recorded appreciable successes. Its efforts and successes have counteracted BH and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists, resulting in a significant decline in attack incidents in the region. In addition, they have created a conducive environment for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their communities and the resumption of trade between the northeast of Nigeria and neighbouring markets in Cameroon and Chad. The recent acquisition of assets, growing coordination among the sectors, and shift from a defensive to an offensive posture brought about by the current Force Commander (FC) are some factors contributing to the recent successes of the MNJTF.

Nevertheless, the lack of policing capability, intelligence gaps, evolving terrorist-organised crime dynamics,[1] and resource-capacity mismatch are some of the current impediments to the efforts of the MNJTF to end the menace posed by terror groups in the Lake Chad region. The partnership between the AU and the MNJTF is considered vital not only for the mission's credibility but also for the critical role the AU can play in appropriately resourcing the MNJTF. While the general conclusion drawn from respondents was that the AU was doing its best to improve the situation, there was still a need for it to do more in certain important areas.

This situation calls for the prioritisation of current challenges and for appropriate deployment of available resources to address them. To enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the force in combating terrorism in the Lake Chad region, the report recommends prioritising developing police capacity across member states, strengthening the MNJTF intelligence capacity, aligning training with core priority areas to close capacity gaps, and institutionalising a due diligence framework for funds utilisation. The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns.

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1   UNDP. (2022). "Crime and Terror Nexus: The Intersections Between Terror and Criminal
     Groups in the Lake Chad Basin". New York: UNDP. https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/
     crime-and-terror-nexus-intersections-between-terror-and-criminal-groups-lake-chad-basin

Introduction

The MNJTF (2015 – ongoing)[2] against the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency in the Lake Chad region is a subregional organisation of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC).[3] The MNJTF comprises the armed forces of five nations: Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin and is designed to cooperate and manage common threats. Nigeria initially established the Taskforce in 1994 to address transborder security challenges. However, it was reconfigured into a multinational force in 1998[4] and later into a more elaborate and robust regional force in 2015 to fight the expansion of BH.[5]

BH terrorism emerged in northeastern Nigeria in 2002[6] and started spreading across other LCBC states – recruiting members and conducting terrorist attacks outside Nigeria's borders. In 2009, the BH grew into one of the greatest threats to security and stability in the Lake Chad region, with mounting attacks on Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Although the group evolved from Nigeria's northeast under a different name, like the *Yusuffiya* Sect, it later transformed into a major regional security threat following the intensification of cross-border attacks in Cameroon, Chad and Niger and the seizure of several territories in Nigeria's northeast.[7]

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2   See the Multinational Joint Task Force website at https://mnjtffmm.org

3   Brubacher, M., Kimball Damman, E. and Day, C. (2017). "The AU Task Forces: An African response to transnational armed groups". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55(2): 275-299, doi: 10.1017/S0022278X17000040.

4   In 1998, the force became the Multinational Joint Security Force (MNJSF) with an additional boost of Chadian and Nigerien troops and with an extended mandate that included a focus on cross-border insecurity challenges. Cameroon did not initially join the force due to political and territorial tensions with Nigeria over the Bakassi Peninsula at the time.

5   De Coning, C., Gelot, L. and Karlsrud, J. (2016). *The future of African peace operations: From Janjaweed to Boko Haram*. London: Zed Books, p. 8.

6   This period is contested by many scholars, but the authors use the date acknowledged by the MNJTF.

7   Onuoha, F.C. (2014). "A Danger not to Nigeria alone: Boko Haram's Transnational Reach and Regional Responses". Abuja: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Regional Office.

A major turning point in the force's evolution was the spike in violent activities of terror-ists in all four riparian countries of the Lake Chad region, coupled with the worsening of regional socioeconomic problems in 2013 and 2014, and the attacks on military locations, which included the raid on the Headquarters (HQ) of the MNJTF in Baga, Nigeria. At the height of its terrorist attacks in 2014, BH controlled about 20 000 square miles of territory in Nigeria.[8] The rise of BH has equally been characterised by substantial infighting over the years, with fac-tions sometimes splitting, such as the *Ansaru al-Musulmina fi Bilad al-Sudan* (Ansaru) in 2012 and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in 2016.[9] The transnational threat posed by BH necessitated that the joint taskforce structure and mandate be refocused on countering terrorism in the region.

> In late 2014, the ministers of defence and chiefs of staff of LCBC states re-activated and re-operationalised the MNJTF as a counterterrorism force, with an increased capacity of about 10 000 troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

As a result, in late 2014, the ministers of defence and chiefs of staff of LCBC states re-activated and re-operationalised the MNJTF as a counterterrorism force, with an increased capacity of about 10 000 troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon as Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs), with HQ in N´Djamena, Chad. Although not in combat capacity, Benin also pledged to contribute about 150 troops as of 2016.[10] In November 2014, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) fully endorsed the re-acti-vation of the MNJTF, and later authorised its formal deployment in January 2015, for a 12-month mandate.[11] In addition, the UN Security Council (UNSC) also recognised the deployment of the force through a presidential statement.[12]

The mission is tasked with the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by BH, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad Basin region, facilitating humanitarian operations, and pro-vision of assistance to affected populations. To achieve its mandate, the MNJTF undertakes military operations; conducts patrols, interdicts and disrupts the cross-border movement of weapons, fighters and logistics to the group; searches for and frees abductees; and disrupts

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8   The Soufan Center. (2018). "IntelBrief: Boko Haram Evolves but Remains a Substantial Threat in Nigeria". https://the-soufancenter.org/intelbrief-boko-haram-evolves-but-remains-a-substantial-threat-in-nigeria

9   Mahmood, O. (2016). "Faction Friction: Rebranded Boko Haram threatens West Africa". *HIS Jane's Intelligence Review*, 28(1): 29.

10   *Daily Post*. (2016). "Benin fully joins war against Boko haram, deploys 150 soldiers to MNJTF", 16 March. https://daily-post.ng/2016/03/16/benin-fully-joins-war-against-boko-haram-deploys-150-soldiers-to-mnjtf

11   Communiqué of the 484th meeting of the AU PSC on the Boko Haram terrorist group, 29 January 2015.

12   UNSC. (2015). "Statement by the President of the Security Council", 28 July. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_prst_2015_14.pdf

terrorist infrastructure in the region.[13] Consequently, the AU has renewed its mandate every year since 2015.

On 14 January 2022, the AU welcomed the significant progress made in the fight against BH in the region and consequently renewed the mandate of the MNJTF for another 12 months, effective from 1 February 2022. With the renewed mandate, the MNJTF operations are expected to facilitate further the implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience (RS-SRR) of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region[14] developed by the LCBC with the support of the AU in 2018.[15]

This joint Effectiveness of Peace Operation Network (EPON) and Training for Peace (TfP) report, therefore, assesses the effectiveness of the MNJTF in delivering on its three mandate priorities to generate recommendations to enhance its overall effectiveness in furtherance of its recently renewed mandate.[16] The report is guided by the overarching question: How can the MNJTF, in line with Pillar Two of the RS-SRR on Security and Human Rights, address the current risks and challenges facing the Lake Chad Basin region? This report employs the methodology developed by EPON.[17] The EPON research team conducted interviews with officials of international organisations, and those of local civil society, as well as researchers in Nigeria and Chad, and officers of the MNJTF officials at HQ in August 2022. Similarly, interviews were conducted with some officers of the MNJTF Sector Four HQ in Diffa, Niger, and MNJTF Sector Three HQ in Monguno, Nigeria. The data collected includes in-depth interviews with specialists, AU staff and civil society organisations (CSOs) from March to September 2022. Data generated from the fieldwork was complemented by information obtained through desk research.

The report is organised into seven sections. Following this background, the second section provides a brief overview of the MNJTF's mandate and role since 2015. The third section assesses the MNJTF's capabilities and performance of its mandate, while the fourth section examines the constraints and challenges to the MNJTF in achieving its mandate. The fifth section looks at the MNJTF's partnership with the AU. The sixth section highlights the implications of the study's findings and provides recommendations for the enhancement of the MNJTF´s overall effectiveness. . The last section provides concluding thoughts.

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13   Ismail O. and Kifle, A.A. (2021). *Ad-Hoc Regional Security Arrangements and APSA: A Case Study of ACL-GLR, MNJTF, and G5 Sahel Force*. Addis Ababa: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security.

14   Lake Chad Basin Commission and AU PSC. (2018). "Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region", August. https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/regional-stabilisation-recovery-and-resilience-strategy-rss-.pdf

15   Lake Chad Basin Commission. (2021). "Regional Stabilization Strategy". https://cblt.org/regional-strategy-stabilization

16   Contrary to the AU's past practice, the mandate was renewed earlier than expected.

17   EPON. (2022). "About". https://effectivepeaceops.net/#about

Overview of the Multinational Joint Task Force's Mandate and Configuration

The evolution and consequent establishment of the current format of the MNJTF is in line with the transformation of BH. As the group grew and spread its terrorist activity across the region, the MNJTF, which was earlier an anti-cross-border criminality force, was restructured around a Concept Operations (CONOPS) in 2014, with 10 000 troops from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin.[18] By 2015, the AU authorised its deployment and operationalisation.

The MNJTF conduct both kinetic and non-kinetic operations with the following mandated tasks:

1. To create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of BH and other terrorist groups in order to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

2. To facilitate the implementation of overall stabilisation programmes by the LCBC member states and Benin in the affected areas, including the complete restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees.

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18   This number has grown to about 13 000, as of 2022.

3.   To facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.

The execution of MNJTF's mandate involves a two-phase process. The first involves military action to eliminate the terrorist group. The mandate extends to conducting military operations to prevent the spread of BH´s activities, including clearance operations, fighting patrols, raids, ambushes, preventing all transfers of weapons or logistics to the group, actively searching for and freeing abductees, and conducting psychological activities to encourage surrender from among BH ranks.[19] However, the drivers of insecurity in the LCB region are not restricted to the terror perpetrated by BH. Therefore, the MNJTF is also expected to support the alleviation of root causes of conflict in the region. Thus, the second phase of the mandate involves undertaking stabilisation measures in line with the provisions of the RS-SRR, which offers an overarching regional approach that aims to address the deep-rooted causes of conflict and under-development in the LCB. In this context, the LCBC serves as a facilitating platform for the relevant governors and stakeholders of the region to discuss and collate the methods and strategies to implement the RS-SRR. In addition, the Executive Secretary of the LCBC acts as the Head of Mission (HoM) of the MNJTF, providing political support and guidance to both the military contingent and the RS-SRR actors.

> The RS-SRR offers an overarching regional approach that aims to address the deep-rooted causes of conflict and under-development in the LCB.

The RS-SRR is structured around nine pillars of intervention: a) political cooperation; b) security and human rights; c) disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation, reinsertion and reintegration of persons associated with Boko Haram; d) humanitarian assistance; e) governance and the social contract; f) socioeconomic recovery and environmental sustainability; g) education; h) prevention of violent extremism and building peace; and i) empowerment and inclusion of women and youth.[20]

The MNJTF is strategically structured around its operational HQ and four sectors to attain its mandate. The HQ is organised in staff branches – headed by senior officers from the four LCB member countries and Benin – into J1 (Administration, currently led by Chad), J2 (Intelligence Cell, currently led by Nigeria), J3 (Operations, currently led by Cameroon), J4 (Logistics Cell, currently led by Nigeria), J5 (Training Cell, currently led by Niger), J6 (Communications Cell, currently led by Cameroon), and J9 (Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC),[21] currently led by

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19   Assanvo, W., Abatan, J.W.A and Sawadogo, W.A. (2016). "Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram". Institute for Security Studies (ISS), West African Report, Issue 19.

20   Lake Chad Basin Commission. (2021). op. cit.

21   The CIMIC Unit was established in 2020.

Benin). HQ also has a Force Medical Section, Military Public Information Office (MPIO), Air Liaison Office, and the AU-Mission Support Team (AU-MST). The MNJTF's Areas of Responsibility (AORs) are divided into four sectors led by brigade-status officers. They are:

- Sector One comprises troops of Cameroon covering Northern Cameroon with HQ at Mora.

- Sector Two comprises Chadian troops operating in Western Chad with HQ at Baga Sola and sub-sectors at Kaiga Ngouboua, Litri, Bargaram, and Koulfoua.

- Sector Three comprises Nigerian troops covering the northeastern corner of Nigeria with HQ at Monguno. Its AOR stretches from Baga, Kukawa, and Mallam Fatori up to Damasak.

- Sector Four is the Nigerien troop's deployment covering from East to West of Niger along River Komadougou-Yobe. The Sector HQ is at Diffa, with deployments at Bosso, Baroua, Toumour, and Gueskerou.

Figure 1: Map Showing the Four Sectors of the MNJTF in the Lake Chad Region[22]
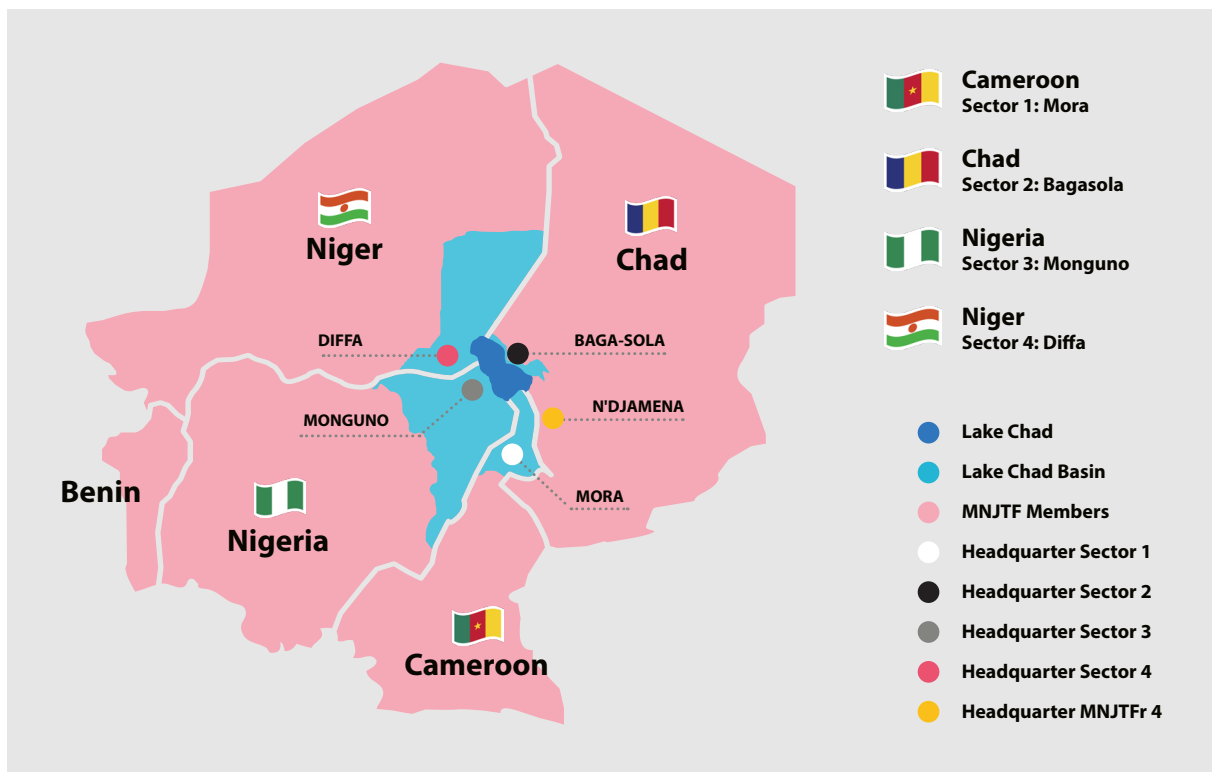
As established in the MNJTF's Rules of Engagement (RoE), each TCC positions its contingent troops within its own territorial space without spreading its operations into neighbouring

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22   See the Multinational Joint Task Force website at https://mnjtffmm.org/sectors

counties unless it is deemed imperative. In such a situation where it is deemed necessary, forces enter in hot pursuit of terrorists. However, they cannot exceed a 25km perimeter.[23] In terms of its command and control, the MNJTF operates under the direct political authority of the LCBC and direct military command of the Force Commander (FC), who is responsible for coordinating commands across the four countries based on operational convenience. The appointment of the FC falls with Nigeria for the entire mission duration. This decision was approved by all force members, given that the fight against BH mainly takes place in Nigerian territory, and they are the major contributor to the force. The Deputy FC and other chiefs of staff posts are rotational per mandate and can be taken up by any of the TCCs.

23   Assanvo et al. (2016). op. cit.

The Mission's Capabilities and Performance Concerning the Subsisting Mandate

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Creating a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by Boko Haram[24]

The overall insights gleaned from field visits by the team, interviews with respondents, and reviews of relevant reports and documents demonstrate that the MNJTF has made significant progress in delivering on the first task of its mandate. This included ensuring that areas were safe for civilians to return in their numbers to their homes. Returnees were often able to rebuild and restart life without fear. This includes rebuilding schools, hospitals, community centres, markets etc., and re-establishing businesses that had been destroyed during large sways of fighting or at locations that had been strategic bases for the terrorists.

Since 2015, the MNJTF has conducted six significant operations.[25] However, many have been short and not always sustained or long enough to root out the terrorists or disperse them as a group. The longest operation was over nine months. For example, Operation Gama Aiki, conducted from June to October 2016, stretched from Damasak and Mallam Fatori to the Lake Chad Islands. The MNJTF cleared Damasak, Mallam Fatori, Abadam, Metele, Dogon Chuku, Kangarwa, Tumbun Madayi, Doro Naira, and Alargano in Nigeria, as well as Kirta-Wulgo,

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24   MNJTF Mandate task one: Create a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the activities of BH and other terrorist groups to significantly reduce violence against civilians and other abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

25   The six operations include Operation Gama-Aiki, Operation Rawan-Kada, Operation Amni-Fakat, Operation Yancin Tafki I and II, Operation Sharan-Fagge, and Operation Lake Sanity.

Sagmé, and Blangafé in Cameroon. However, the operation was not sustained and led to the embedding of BH forces. From January to June 2017, the MNJTF carried out operation Rawan Kada geared towards consolidating on the gains of Operation Gama Aiki; however, forces could not advance to clear the BH's still-held areas, including the Lake Chad Islands, leading to a retreat of the force.

> Since 2015, the MNJTF has conducted six significant operations. However, many have been short and not always sustained or long enough to root out the terrorists or disperse them as a group.

From March to July 2018, Operation Amni Fakat was launched and planned to clear areas held by BH up to the Lake Chad Islands. This included Kangarwa, Metele, Douma, Gashigar, Jabullam, Abadam, Malamfatori, Daya, Ngarwa Yau, and Mainuri. These areas were cleared during the operation with the rescue of about 4 000 civilians. Still, the offensive was sustained for two months and was ultimately unable to clear the Lake Chad Islands completely. This was followed by Operation Yancin Tafki, which started in January 2019 and was sustained for nine months (thus appearing to be the longest operation). This operation involved combined troops of Chad and Nigeria, operating along the Monguno-Baga-Lake Chad Islands axis, while troops from Niger and Cameroon conducted operations along the River Komadougou-Yobe and Wulgo areas. The challenge, according to several respondents, was "the tempo of the offensive operations stalled due to inconsistencies in funding", forcing the MNJTF to resort to smaller-scale operations to contain the activities of BH to the Lake Chad Islands. This led Operation Yancin Tafki to be formally ended in March 2021.

From 2 to 24 December 2021, the MNJTF coordinated and conducted a three-phase joint operation along River Kamadougou in the Yobe axis of its AOR. The operation, codenamed Operation Sharan Fage, was conducted with MNJTF troops drawn from Sectors Three and Four, along with support from Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) in Nigeria. The operation aimed at denying BH/ISWAP terrorists' freedom of action around the area of operations, while creating favourable conditions for the safe return of IDPs and refugees to Mallam Fatori. It was also meant to facilitate the smooth conduct of festivities marking the 63rd anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Niger, which was eventually held in Diffa Region on 18 December 2021. The operation led to the killing of 22 BH/ISWAP terrorists, the arrest of several suspects, and the destruction of five terrorist gun trucks, five motorcycles and several logistic bunkers, while eight AK47 rifles were recovered. Over 20 towns were cleared during the operation, including Mallam Fatori, Bulagana, Arege, Gashigar, Kamagunma, Asagar and Kainowa.

In late March 2022, the MNJTF launched the sixth operation, codenamed Operation Lake Sanity, to clear the Lake Chad Islands and settlements known as 'Tumbuns' of terrorists. Lake

Sanity was a joint and combined operation involving the MNJTF troops from Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon, troops from OPHK in Nigeria, the Air Task Forces of the MNJTF and OPHK, other security agencies, and the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF).[26] The synergy between the troops of the MNJTF and OPHK (Nigeria) during Operation Lake Sanity contributed to clearing some BH/ISWAP strongholds, like Greda, Daban Gajere, Daban Masara, Tudun Fulani, and Fedondiya, among others. The troops from Nigeria and Chad, alongside OPHK, stormed the general area of Tumbun Rago, Tumbun Dilla, and Jamina settlements, deep within the Lake Chad Islands. These are areas that have never been penetrated before by the MNJTF. In addition, some top commanders of BH/ISWAP terrorists, such as Abubakar Dan Buduma, Abubakar Shuwa, Abu Ali, Abu Ibrahim, and Abu Jubrilla, among others, were eliminated. Weapons of different calibres belonging to the terrorists were either destroyed or captured, including a 105 mm artillery piece, several canoes or boats, motorcycles, bicycles, other terrorists' equipment, and several Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs) factories and bunkers were destroyed. The operation's success encouraged about 500 civilians to return to Mallam Fatori, and for the first time in about eight years, Eid (Sallah) prayers were celebrated in their ancestral homes. Over 4 000 civilians were freed, and more than 800 terrorists were killed during the operation. Five soldiers and a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) supporting MNJTF operations in the Tumbuns were killed during the operation.

The successes of these operations led to an initial decline in BH attacks between 2016 and 2018, as can be seen from the data in Table 1. Attacks by BH/ISWAP increased again in 2019, with a total of 6 777 incidents across the four affected states. The highest incident numbers occurred in 2020, when the terrorists conducted 1 063 attacks across the four states. Notwithstanding the relatively high number of terrorist attacks in the area between 2019 and 2021 (Table 1), the level of fatalities has significantly dropped. In 2015, BH terrorists conducted 371 attacks resulting in 8 119 fatalities, compared to 711 attacks in 2021 that resulted in 1 894 fatalities (see Figure 2). In Nigeria, for instance, 213 terrorist attacks in 2015 resulted in 5 607 fatalities compared to 286 attacks in 2021 that caused 1 309 fatalities. This indicates that attacks by the terrorists have become less successful, partly due to the counterterrorism efforts of the MNJTF. Also, military operations have equally resulted in a growing number of terrorists who are surrendering in the region. Some 1 711 terrorists surrendered to the MNJTF in 2021, while 2 225 surrendered in 2022.

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26   Nmodu, D. (2022). "MNJTF Operation Lake Sanity makes in road into terrorist enclaves". *News Diary*, 17 April. https://newsdiaryonline.com/mnjtf-operation-lake-sanity-makes-in-road-into-terrorist-enclaves

Table 1: Number of Boko Haram Attacks in the Lake Chad Region[27]

Year	Chad	Cameroon	Niger	Nigeria
2014	1	69	1	235
2015	21	92	45	213
2016	4	192	42	64
2017	4	206	10	143
2018	7	156	29	161
2019	35	290	138	214
2020	28	478	179	378
2021	12	313	100	286

Figure 2: Fatalities from Boko Haram's Attacks in the Lake Chad Region[28]

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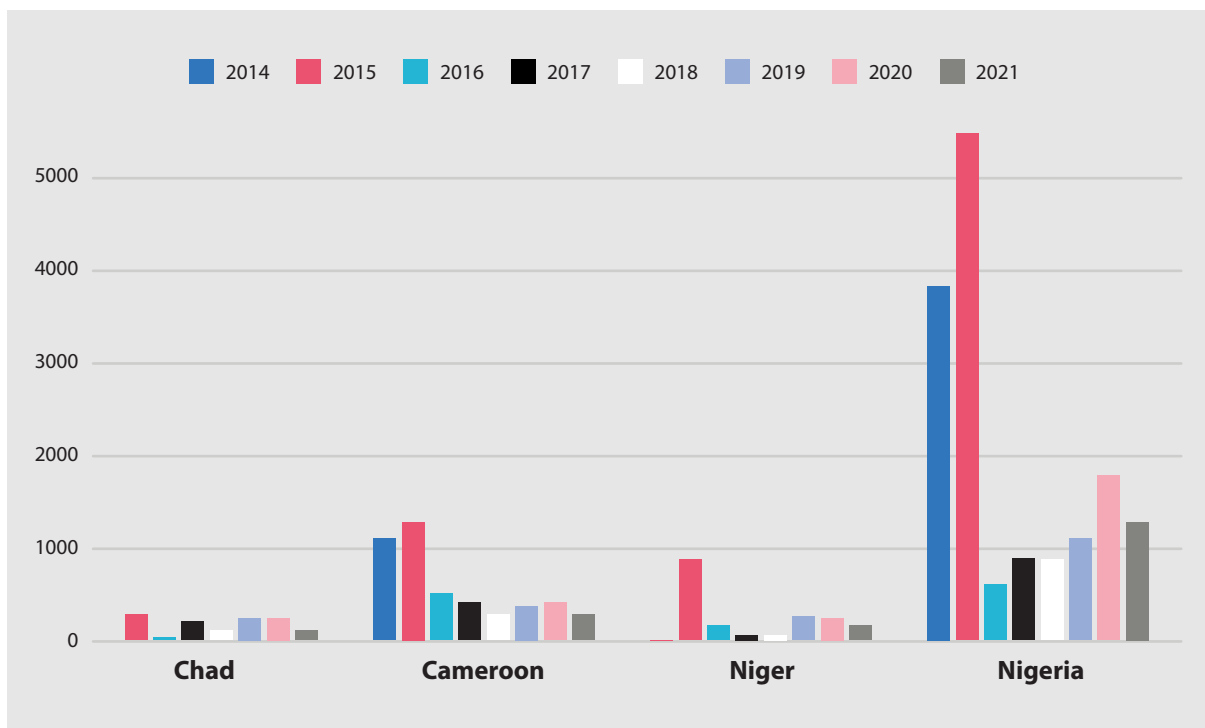
27   Data extracted from ACLED.

28   Ibid.

In addition, the operations created a conducive environment for refugees and IDPs to return to their communities and the resumption of trade between northeast Nigeria and neighbouring markets in Cameroon and Chad. According to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) regional Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) dashboard on the Lake Chad Basin crisis, in November 2021, 3 014 634 persons continued to be displaced internally by the conflict while 2 140 140 persons had returned to their areas of origin, including 1 914 497 returnees following internal displacement and 225 643 returnees from abroad.[29] The pattern of return by IDPs to their areas of origin has continued. A respondent from the MNJTF stated that its operations have facilitated the return of 200 000 refugees and IDPs to their ancestral homes across the four Lake Chad countries from September 2021 to April 2022, as shown in Table 2.[30]

Table 2: Number of IDPs and Refugees returned to their Ancestral Homes: 2021[31]

Sector	Country	Total Number of Villages/Locality	Number of Returned IDPs
1	Cameroon	18	117 193
2	Chad	20	22 112
3	Nigeria	5	47 126
4	Niger	22	30 735
Total		**65**	**217 166**

Although troops advanced into the Lake Chad Islands for the first time during operation Lake Sanity, the advancement was not sustained for long enough to effectively clear the terrorists' strongholds for Pillars Two and Three of the RS-SRR to commence with the right partners. This would have allowed the MNJTF and national forces to ensure terrorists did not regroup in another area. However, the challenge noted by the research team was that while these operations were designed to clear or disperse terrorists, and to allow civilians to return to their homes, there is a lack of aftercare interaction between the states once the MNJTF has moved in and the terrorists are dispersed. So, while the terrorists had been dispersed, they are able to regroup into smaller factions, resulting in the MNJTF having to restart its efforts again. The BH/ISWAP fighters, who operate from remote islets of the Lake Chad (Tumbuns), have been carrying out

29   IOM. (2022). "Lake Chad Basin Crisis Response Plan 2022". Crisis Response, 22 February. https://crisisresponse.iom. int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1481/files/appeal/pdf/Lake_Chad_Basin_Crisis_Response_Plan_2022_summary.pdf

30   MNJTF. (2022). "MNJTF Humanitarian Achievement: Internally Displaced Persons/Refugees Return to their Ancestral Homes". https://mnjtffmm.org/mnjtf-humanitarian-achievement

31   Ibid.

attacks to target weak military locations. These groups employ a combination of IED attacks with ambushes against military convoys.

Respondents spoken to noted that ISWAP engages in attacks against "troops and criminal activities such as cattle rustling, smuggling and abductions".[32] The group is believed to maintain "logistics bases and sleeper cells in Nigeria and Chad", which suggests that while the MNJTF has been good at clearing the area and restoring forms of stability, it has largely struggled to sustain this stability because once it scales down its efforts and returns to its base, the terrorists regroup and return to the area. We found this to be mainly because there were small armed police forces who would take over the security of liberated areas and provide law enforcement. In some states, the people organise local armed security groups to secure their areas and sustain the efforts of the MNJTF. Non-state actors, particularly Community-Based Armed Groups (CBAGs) in northeastern Nigeria, such as the CJTF, or Yan Gora (Hausa, meaning "youth with sticks"), have been credited with successes in helping to turn the tide against BH. However, local militias' deployment and active role(s) pose some form of threat to overall stability, since the federal government relinquishes its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence to this category of non-state actor. This risk undermines the state's role even further and can be seen as contributing to or a part of a symptom of state weakness.

Troops in the Nigerian military are recruited from all parts of Nigeria. When deployed to the northeast to fight BH, these troops often lack knowledge of the local terrain and languages. In addition, this challenge is seen among other sectors where military doctrine and language differences exist. Because of this, it can be difficult for those troops to gather intelligence promptly, allowing insurgents to remain steps ahead of the soldiers and police who are pursuing them. This local intelligence gap was the challenge that the Nigerian military and MNJTF in the Lake Chad Basin region constantly faced. At the onset of the insurgency, most of the deployed security personnel did not know the local terrain in northeastern Nigeria and could not speak Kanuri and other regional languages, resulting in significant challenges in distinguishing civilians and enemy combatants. The CJTF, comprised of mainly youths drawn from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in Borno, thus filled the terrain knowledge and language gap for the military. In Cameroon, the role of local security initiatives in gathering information and preventing suicide bombings was useful in responding to the terrorist threat and was highly appreciated by locals. Despite the support of the CJTF and local security initiatives, the MNJTF has not succeeded in defeating the terrorists.

The agility and adaptability of the terrorist groups to move in-between and across the various spaces, embedding themselves amongst the people, was a challenge for the MNJTF and delivery of its first mandated task. Respondents noted that "despite the counterinsurgency efforts, current insecurity can be attributed to the terrorists' ability to effectively exploit ungoverned spaces both within the region and across the Sahel"[33]. Their ability to move within and beyond

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32   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

33   Ibid.

the region, coupled with embedding ties with the people and criminal exploitation of local economies of the region, has enabled their resilience in the face of counterterrorism operations. Hence, some respondents argued these realities had allowed terrorists the opportunity to create a "quasi-economic ecosystem through which they control agricultural activities, including fishing and cattle rearing, [and] heavy tax regimes they impose on fishermen, farmers and herders".[34] The system is locally driven and governed so that local populations have no choice but to play a role or be forced into accepting "private forms of local security and assurance from these groups".

We also found that due to the need to secure equipment, capabilities and resources, groups use "old smuggling and trading routes" across the Sahel to import arms and mercenaries to sustain their activities.[35] This, coupled with a lack of government presence and limited, sustained and continuous large-scale operations, partial capacity and challenges with national forces conducting operations alongside the MNJTF, impacts the force's effectiveness. These challenges further undermine the efforts of the MNJTF since it has minimal capacity and is overstretched. Finally, one challenge noted by respondents on the ground and military experts was that the TCCs are only available to the MNJTF and FC for specific MNJTF operations and, after that, they revert to their respective national operations, limiting the continuous capacity of the mission and its ability to deploy flexibly and rapidly.
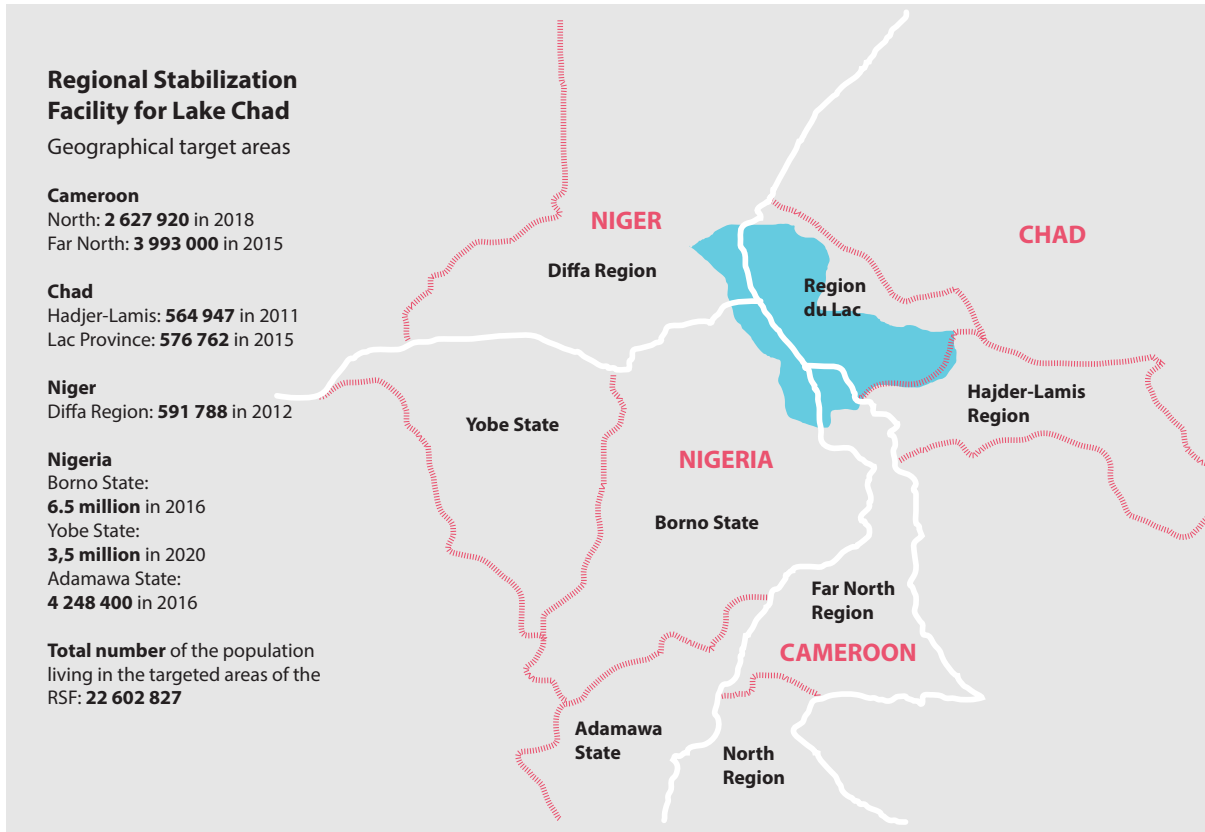
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34   Most respondents noted that this was one of the emerging challenges for the MNJTF.

35   ISS. (2021). "Islamic states' determined expansion into the Lake Chad Basin". https://issafrica.org/iss-today/islamic-states-determined-expansion-into-lake-chad-basin

Facilitating the implementation of overall stabilisation programmes of LCBC states[36]

Figure 3: Map of the Eight Conflict-Affected Regions of the Lake Chad Region[37]

Regional Stabilization Facility for Lake Chad
Geographical target areas

Cameroon
North: **2 627 920** in 2018
Far North: **3 993 000** in 2015

Chad
Hadjer-Lamis: **564 947** in 2011
Lac Province: **576 762** in 2015

Niger
Diffa Region: **591 788** in 2012

Nigeria
Borno State:
6.5 million in 2016
Yobe State:
3,5 million in 2020
Adamawa State:
4 248 400 in 2016

Total number of the population living in the targeted areas of the RSF: **22 602 827**

The second task of the MNJTF's mandate focuses on facilitating the implementation of overall stabilisation activities in the designated target areas of the four LCBC states (see Figure 3). The team finds evidence that the MNJTF is meeting expectations in this area. Beyond facilitating the return of IDPs and delivering some Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), it equally provides assistance to national, foreign and international actors critical to overall stabilisation in the region. For instance, the MNJTF has been very helpful in facilitating the safe movement of political heads and leaders to address challenges of the affected regions, such as airlifting them for strategic meetings like the LCBC Governors' Forum. According to a respondent, this is very important as political leaders are at the forefront of addressing and resourcing stabilisation initiatives.[38] The Forum, for instance, is central to promoting dialogue and cross-border cooperation,

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36   MNJTF Mandate task two: Facilitate the implementation of overall stabilisation programmes by the LCBC member states and Benin in the affected areas, including the complete restoration of state authority and the return of IDPs and refugees.

37   Lake Chad Basin Commission. (2021). op. cit.

38   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

enhancing cross-border security cooperation, and facilitating cross-border trade and economic recovery to boost livelihoods amongst affected territories in the Lake Chad region.

> Beyond facilitating the return of IDPs and delivering some Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), it equally provides assistance to national, foreign and international actors critical to overall stabilisation in the region.

However, while the force has made efforts to support these activities in line with the RS-SRR, the analysis shows that these "light projects" are not always sustained or regularly implemented by actors that support the MNJTF. Furthermore, while the MNJTF helps to create environments for its partners to implement activities and initiatives, these activities were often short-lived and limited in scope. In addition, the clearance of these areas and the capacity to advance to new territories remain a concern since sustained policing capacity and law enforcement are limited in these areas. This in no way suggests that the MNJTF is not meeting its mandate. However, it does mean that initiatives or activities carried out with support from the MNJTF are not consistently and regularly implemented.[39] This creates or leaves gaps that could be exploited by terrorists in regrouping or relocating to another safe enclave. In addition, it means not much capacity is being built or transferred to local communities. For example, the MNJTF has adopted a multipronged approach supported by the LCBC and other partners, which involves using flyers, press releases, and radio broadcasts (such as Radio Dandal Kura, Radiou Bouclier, and Radio Ndarason) in local languages across the TCCs, to counter BH narratives and other disinformation operations. The force has equally designed a Strategic Communication Strategy for the eradication of violent extremism. These efforts need to be driven by locals and sustained to counter their narratives quickly. This is an area where institutional strengthening, in line with the RS-SRR, is needed so that local civilian institutions can deliver services that complement the non-kinetic operations of the MNJTF towards the holding and rebuilding of recovered territories.

> The MNJTF has done well in engaging and cooperating with the local communities, although some of the engagements remain mostly top-down.

Despite this, from evidence observation during the period of study, the MNJTF has done well in engaging and cooperating with the local communities, although some of the engagements remain mostly top-down. In addition, the inadequacy of funding to sustain these initiatives

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39   Ibid.

means that they sometimes lose the battle for the people's hearts and minds to the terrorists. As noted by one respondent, "at times, the Boko Haram terrorists pay these informants too, if not even paying higher amount[s]. The result is that there is the challenge of these local people acting as double agents".[40] Notwithstanding, some of the Civil-Military Relations (CMR) activities, such as medical outreach, QIPs and community-building activities aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the local communities and fostering greater cooperation with the MNJTF, are working. In the Diffa region, for instance, Sector Four of the MNJTF has leveraged Radiou Bouclier to continuously interface with the local communities, especially in responding to the concerns of IDPs and refugees. An IDP in Adjimiri camp remarked that the military has remained steadfast in protecting, and sometimes providing for them, including responding to some of their challenges amidst the departure of many NGOs.[41] Elsewhere, another respondent noted, "we trust the MNJTF because they are professional and uphold international standards".[42]

As noted by a senior official, the MNJTF has also been strategically involved in supporting more local efforts. "When it comes to bilateral support, the MNJTF, in partnership with the UK Government, carried out medical outreach in local communities within the four sectors".[43] The outreach involved free medical treatment and distribution of drugs as well as medical and dental equipment and wheelchairs to the local communities. This type of support was crucial to winning the hearts and minds of locals, but we also note these types of support could cripple and support inapt local systems (developed due to gaps in governance and support) that do not meet the need of the people. For example, funding-specific activities were welcomed by communities on the ground. However, in a world where states are withdrawing international aid, and we are facing COVID-19, the Ukraine crisis, food insecurity and climate change, to name a few, at any point, if funding is pulled, gaps will emerge.

Moreover, since the state is not present, the situation could indirectly amplify the same challenges – creating a vicious cycle. As a result, better synergy between local, national, and international institutions must occur among these entities. Finally, we find that more efforts need to be made to support the transfer of activities and the RS-SRR among local communities to help ensure they are organically grown and sustained once development partners leave.

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40   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Niger.

41   Ibid.

42   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

43   Ibid.

Facilitating, within the limit of its capabilities, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected populations[44]

Most respondents noted that the MNJTF was doing well despite its limited capacity and capabilities to interact with local communities frequently and support humanitarian actors delivering assistance. This interaction included frequent "interactions with local authorities such as the governor(s) or district officer(s) or sub-divisional leaders". One respondent noted the MNJTF may not directly support school support activities but will support the United States Embassy effort(s), which is designed to finance these activities in the Fâcha neighbourhood but are often "one-off activities". While the respondent noted there were permanent activities, these were limited and often included "building a dispensary". Although the MNJTF is mandated to support the tasks of the RS-SRR and does its best to help, the support is minimal. For example, the EU provides, through the AU, roughly "$500 000 per year, which only covers about 15 small projects, $120 000 per sector, per year," which is insufficient for the needs and the type of work we need to do on the ground once the MNJTF clears areas. [45]

The MNJTF has been able to "provide a platform for mobilising the necessary force for the stabilisation process to begin".[46] Nevertheless, this means that part of the MNJTF's success lies in its ability to secure and partially facilitate activities that are not necessarily focused on the delivery of services by making it easier for "NGOs or humanitarian agencies to move", since the force has some helicopters available for these purposes.[47] A respondent noted that the role of the MNJTF in supporting and often providing humanitarian assistance is crucial to the work of the force and is part of its "hearts and minds strategy and a way of receiving additional information" from locals. This includes the MNJTF doing its best to ensure that the "civilians, the women and the children are protected" and extending humanitarian help to these groups to ensure success in the "fight and war against terrorists".[48] This support also includes assisting IDP camps and providing protection to civilians and NGOs who take humanitarian materials to the populations. However, the challenge comes with sustaining this effort once it is transferred to local police forces. As one respondent noted, while the impacted areas have, in some cases, many police officials, "they are not up to the capacity".[49] This means the MNJTF has to either remain in the area with limited capacity or risk being thin on the ground for extended periods to provide support. According to one respondent, the flip side is that this "has made these areas

44 MNJTF Mandate task three: Facilitate, within the limit of its capabilities, humanitarian operations and the delivery of assistance to the affected populations.

45 Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

46 Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

47 Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

48 Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

49 Ibid.

more accessible for human and civilian presence and allowed for humanitarian actors to carry out their activities", but "it is still a work in progress". The respondent noted that this was not always as smooth as one would hope for and is often not always sustained. For example, once the "military clears the area, other aspects should follow as part of a chain".[50]

Despite this bond, some respondents noted several challenges between the MNJTF and humanitarian actors, such as humanitarian organisations wanting to be left alone to act freely, hindering joint efforts because "humanitarian actors are blind, and they do not have any intel or protection which the military often has".[51] While the MNJTF provides support to humanitarian actors, this support is not always replicated by humanitarian actors who refuse to help the military because "they are independent or say the military [is] interfering in the work they are conducting".[52] One respondent from an NGO noted that while the MNJTF supported several humanitarian actions, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) "rarely demanded [an] escort",[53] due to wanting to be seen as impartial. The challenge here is that there must be a level of peace before the humanitarians can come in, meaning that the military has to do its work to a certain extent – in conjunction with humanitarian actors – so the humanitarians can go in and conduct their activities in peace instead of ending up with situations where BH kidnaps "humanitarian actors because they refused to be escorted by the military".[54]

> The MNJTF needs to focus on connecting better with the humanitarian actors.

The humanitarian, peace and development nexus has seen more engagement, and the force has done more to improve turnaround times for aid convoys and provide corridors for assistance etc. since humanitarian agencies started liaising with the force. Nevertheless, the MNJTF needs to focus on connecting better with the humanitarian actors. The challenges between the MNJTF and humanitarian actors appear to be linked to a lack of understanding of the role of stabilisation entities and trying to get communities on their side. Furthermore, while the evidence suggests that the MNJTF is doing much to sustain engagement with humanitarian actors, more strategic engagement with local authorities is needed, especially given that ISWAP has retained control over some pockets of territory around the Lake Chad islands, aiming at winning hearts and minds and gathering information vital to its existence and violent operations. This is an area that requires greater involvement and coordination among the MNJTF, local governments and CSOs in determining and prioritising initiatives that build community resilience to terrorist overtures. Indeed, local governments are crucial in providing, coordinating and supporting

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50   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.
51   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.
52   Ibid.
53   Ibid.
54   Ibid.

initiatives that are vital to economic recovery and long-term stabilisation. In addition, local governments are vital in creating and sustaining a framework that supports synergy between MNJTF and humanitarian actors in delivering assistance to affected populations.

While applause was given to the current FC due to his "personalised approach",[55] concerns by humanitarian actors were raised over the limited time the FC is in office (an average of one year), which does not allow for the continuation of efforts and support for humanitarian activities – if the incoming FC changes strategies. Thus, the MNJTF will need a more adaptive stabilisation and holistic approach to responding to and understanding humanitarian needs and challenges. An adaptive approach would allow the outgoing and incoming FC to be better plugged in and part of a broader framework that pivots away from focusing on BH and is centred on the people that need the most help.

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55   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

The Mission's Constraints and Challenges to Achieving its Mandate

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While the operations carried out by the MNJTF have generally curbed the level of violence and brought a relative level of security in some areas,[56], [57] terrorism and its implications continue to shape the everyday dynamics of the LCB region. The threat posed by BH and its splinter groups presents challenges and constraints for the MNJTF during its operations. In addition, one of the challenges facing the implementation of the RS-SRR in the eight key terrorism-affected areas of the Lake Chad region, namely the Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in Nigeria; Diffa Region in Niger; Region du Lac and Hajder-Lamis Region in Chad; and the Far North and North Region of Cameroon, is the destabilising influence of cross-border trafficking flows, such as weapons and illicit fund that sustain the terrorist groups. The BH/ISWAP terrorists adapt their strategy and operational tactics, which then calls for a more adaptive and fluid approach by the affected member states and the MNJTF. The MNJTF is mandated to create a safe environment in the affected areas, facilitating the implementation of the stabilisation tools and, sometimes, providing support for humanitarian assistance. Thus, the MNJTF consequently plays an implementing role in creating the foundation for the RS-SRR to be implemented and also plays a central role in supporting the actual implementation when relevant. In this next section, we touch on some of these challenges.

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56 Since 2015, 220 000 IDPs and refugees have returned to their homes in the entire region. Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted in Chad.

57 Fatalities have dropped 92% from 2 131 in 2015 to 178 in 2021. See Relief Web. (2022). "Global Terrorism Index". https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2022

Limited policing capability

One of the main constraints to the force's effectiveness identified by the authors is the lack of police capability within the mission. Although there is provision made for the establishment of a police component within the force's CONOPS,[58] the MNJTF is yet to develop and deploy one, despite the pressing need for it. The MNJTF is a military security force that counts on the support of civilian staff to meet its mandate, centred around a two-phase process. The first phase deals with degrading or neutralising BH´s capacity and clearing the areas affected by the group's activities. This is done by the military forces deployed by the MNJTF to create a safe and secure environment for those affected by the violence of BH and other groups. The second phase is about providing stability through implementing overall stabilisation programmes and delivering humanitarian assistance to affected populations. This is carried out by civilian and humanitarian actors supported by the MNJTF troops that provide them protection and a safe corridor for such stabilisation and humanitarian activities.[59] While this has occurred on numerous occasions and has led to achievements of the joint force, the ever-evolving strategies of the terrorist groups have shed light on a significant gap between phase one and phase two of the mandate: the inability to hold and protect areas once the military has cleared them so stabilisation activities can be plugged in a safe, coherent, and sustainable way.

BH/ISWAP terrorists have proved to be very dynamic and mobile; however, the MNJTF has not been able to fully adapt its operations to the high mobility of the terrorist groups, which has directly impacted the effectiveness of its overall efforts. The groups can "hit-and-run" and then hide in remote areas; therefore, when the military declares an area as liberated and safe and begins to advance to another area, the terrorist groups have already regrouped to reclaim the liberated territories. In addition to this, not only are these groups able to go back to the communities, but they are also able to become invisible and embedded within the local populace, setting up their forms of governance structures, and replacing the already existing state-based governance structures that seem to be weak and not fully connected to the population and its needs. For instance, one respondent noted that groups like ISWAP had developed innovative ways of providing governance and protection, causing local populations to feel inclined to look up to and support them.[60] Thus, due to the lack of an intermediary police force that can hold the cleared areas and allow the safe return of civil authorities, this type of instance has often forced the military to remain present in some areas once security has been restored to conduct policing tasks and ensure the safe entry and performance of stabilisation and humanitarian activities. However, the military does not have sufficient capacity to operate at this level as it causes the exhaustion of its already limited resources that could be used in further offensive operations elsewhere.

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58   Assanvo et al. (2016). op. cit.

59   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

60   Interview with subject-matter expert. The interview was conducted online.

Without a mobile and highly adaptable armed police component, neither can the military conduct its offensive operations sustainably and continuously, nor can stabilisation and humanitarian actors safely operate in the cleared areas to rebuild communities. According to the force's CONOPS, the police force of the MNJTF would:

> … support the re-establishment of public order and Rule of Law in the mission zones; contribute to the freedom of all the people abducted or detained by BH and support their return, reintegration and re-adaptation; protect the witnesses, the unarmed civilians and vulnerable groups; combat criminality; recover stolen property; and identify and destroy the funding sources, weaponry and all logistical support to BH.[61]

This provision has yet to materialise, given that the creation and deployment of an armed police component would depend on the willingness of national authorities to re-hat their police forces to the MNJTF and guarantee an improvement of security conditions for them to operate. However, as of today, national police forces in the LCB region are holding off such a re-arrangement of resources because they feel it is unsafe to operate given the number of areas needing demining.

Inadequate, inconsistent and insufficient funding

The issue of inadequate funding is another pressing constraint the MNJTF has continued to face since its inception in 2015. The MNJTF has three different funding sources: from the African Peace Facility (APF) – now the European Peace Fund (EPF) – that goes through the AU as a pre-financing body, from its TCCs themselves, and from bilateral partners to the MNJTF.

In an EU-AU partnership agreement, the EU committed in 2016 to provide funds to the MNJTF through the AU acting as a pre-financing body. This way, the AUC was given the power and responsibility to manage and disburse these funds to the force. However, due to some capacity challenges within the AUC, the procurement of these funds has not been carried out in a timely manner or according to contractual timelines.[62] Despite these challenges that existed during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AU has since expanded its resourcing for the mission to include 14 staff members. [63] In addition, the AU Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security has a Strategic Support Cell dedicated solely to MNJTF. At the last count, there are four permanent officers in that Cell. Where needed, they have co-opted other officers from other units of the PSOD.

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61   Assanvo et al. (2016). op cit.

62   International Crisis Group. (2020). "What Role for the Multinational Joint Task Force in Fighting Boko Haram?" Report no. 291, 7 July. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/291-what-role-multinational-joint-task-force-fighting-boko-haram

63   Amani Africa. (2022). "Insights on the PSC. Consideration of the mandate of the MNJTF", 12 December. https://amaniafrica-et.org/consideration-of-the-mandate-of-the-mnjtf

Additional to this, there is a finance office attached to the Department and a dedicated finance officer for PSOD activities.[64] One respondent stated that the funding that the MNJTF gets through the AU is not enough and that the AU should be doing more to ensure these transfers are mobilised more consistently and sufficiently.[65] In addition, the recent shift in 2021 from the EU's APF to the EPF will have two direct implications for the funding of the MNJTF. First, the AU has less say over how European funds are disbursed and spent, leaving the AU in a difficult position to secure funds for the force. This shift has allowed flexible funding for regional military initiatives like the MNJTF or the G5 Sahel – where the EU may choose to fund the TCCs directly through the mission or operations. While this may seem like a positive alternative, it means there is no oversight on how these funds will be spent and whether they will be diverted for purposes other than the MNJTF, considering the overstretched socioeconomic situation in the LCB countries.

Second, the shift has enabled the EU to divert its defence package funds to the war in Ukraine, which has left the MNJTF with less predictable funding this year and constraining its operational capability. This funding is crucial for medical installations, including hospitals for the force, communications equipment, vehicles, and infrastructure for the HQ in N'djamena and the four sectoral HQ. Without this, the force's effectiveness is heavily affected. The delays caused by the war in Ukraine have also slowed down the sustenance allowance of the military officers at the HQ in N'Djamena. European states such as France and the United Kingdom have also committed to complementing funds and equipment to the MNJTF bilaterally. However, this has also slowed down after the Russian invasion in February 2022.[66]

> In the face of funding constraints, the MNJTF has been unable to adequately plan, execute and sustain large-scale joint offensive operations that will decimate the terrorists.

The MNJTF differs from other traditional peace operations because the designated troops from its TCCs conduct joint operations under the MNJTF but mainly operate within national territory. [67] This means that each member state is responsible for funding its troops 'allowances. However, when it comes to joint operations funding, each TCC is expected to contribute an amount of financial assistance for the force's operational capacities, but this amount depends on how much they are willing or able to provide. Most funding comes from Nigeria – the major contributor and most prominent actor.[68] The LCB countries are already overstretched with their internal socioeconomic issues and domestic security threats, so it is challenging to maintain

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64   Interview with a stakeholder. The interview was conducted online.

65   Ibid.

66   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

67   However, as mentioned earlier, they might cross borders when in hot pursuit during joint operations.

68   So far, Nigeria has contributed over US$200 million to the MNJTF, whereas contributions from other TCCs have been minimal.

predictable funding from the TCCs. In the face of funding constraints, the MNJTF has been unable to adequately plan, execute and sustain large-scale joint offensive operations that will decimate the terrorists.

The issue of equipment

Another related challenge is the lack of appropriate equipment and operational material to conduct operations safely and effectively, given the complexity of the environment and tactical shift by the terrorists. A respondent remarked that the force should have at least 70 per cent – ideally 90 per cent – of the operational equipment to be combat-ready; however, it has access to about 65 per cent of its requirement.[69] The shortage of the right quantity and mix of equipment is a function of the paucity of funds.

Regarding equipment deficit, the lack of appropriate counter-IED equipment, such as Husky Vehicle Mounted Mine Detectors, is a challenge mentioned repeatedly by most respondents. The movement of military and civilian personnel in the affected areas is primarily compromised by IEDs planted on the main supply routes by the BH. The threat posed by IEDs caused 60 per cent of the force's casualties and 50 per cent of civilian casualties in 2021.[70] For example, a respondent revealed that the casualties MNJTF troops suffered during operation Lake Sanity were due to IED incidents. He further noted that the casualty level would have been higher if mine detectors and Mine-Resistant and Ambush-Protected (MRAP) had not been deployed.[71]

Linked to the high mobility issue of terrorist groups is the absence of adequate surveillance equipment. Although the EU, through a Swiss-based contractor, has recently provided the force with an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) device and other surveillance drones (two per sector, eight in total),[72] this is still not enough. These devices are provided under limited project contracts, not allowing their sustainable and long-term use. In addition, the force lacks the necessary IT equipment to process the data and imagery collected by these devices and transform them into military objectives. This insufficiency of surveillance equipment is preventing the joint force from detecting the terrorists, which has allowed the latter freedom of movement as well as latitude to conduct surprise attacks on both military and civilian targets and to infiltrate civilian communities unprotected.

Insufficient and permanent amphibious platforms and equipment add to the challenge. Amphibious capabilities are crucial for the force to operate in the Lake Chad Islands, where BH has its significant strongholds. After the MNJTF operations conducted between 2015 and

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69   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

70   Ibid.

71   Ibid.

72   Interview with EU contractor. Interview conducted in Chad.

2019, the group withdrew to the islands;[73] thus, it is necessary that the MNJTF procures and secures the correct quantity and mix of amphibious equipment to be able to dislodge BH from its strongholds in the islands. While the EU has also recently provided for the construction of four main outposts (one per sector) and 60 boats (15 per sector),[74] this is bound to the contractor's project contract, which does not guarantee its continuity after the project concludes and, therefore, the sustainability of its use. If the project ends and the provisions are taken back while the enemy has not yet been defeated, all operational gains using this equipment would be spoiled, and a new process of it procuring further equipment would start, which would be time-costly. Of course, this does not speak only to the issue of funding but also to how effectively the equipment is used. One would expect that by the time the contractor´s project ends, all equipment would have been used efficiently and effectively, BH would have been defeated in the Lake Chad Islands, and the MNJTF would be able to withdraw.

Finally, the force has reiterated that the lack of communication devices has hampered the effectiveness of its operations.[75] The lack of suitable communication equipment, such as high-frequency radios that can function from long distances, poor networks and bad weather conditions, has significantly hindered coordination across the four sectors.

Training gaps

Associated with the equipment issue, the MNJTF needs more training on how to use the provided equipment. Although limited, the MNJTF has received sophisticated equipment such as the ISR device and drones, but there is a significant gap between this relative availability and efficient utilisation. For instance, transforming the imagery captured by the ISR service into valuable intelligence requires the correct IT equipment, which also needs to be improved, and the correct analytical skills and expertise. France and the UK have already begun their training in intelligence analysis; however, there are two significant issues with this. First, the experts responsible for the training are only hired on a short-term basis, so training needs to be longer and more substantive. Second, the recipients of such training at both the HQ level and sectoral level are often rotated so that they are quickly posted out of the MNJTF. There needs to be a reliable rostering of beneficiaries of this specialised training to enable the MNJTF to tap into from them when eventually posted out. Therefore, in order to make training sustainable, there needs to be a way to ensure that "trained" individuals become the "trainers". Thus, a rostering system that registers when the training has been conducted would be key to achieving this sustainability. Many respondents also agreed that training on properly using counter-IED devices was lacking once the equipment was acquired, which meant that, in some cases, the equipment

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73   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

74   Interview with EU contractor. Interview conducted in Chad.

75   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

was not being used as intended.[76] Disinformation and unreliable online content related to the use of counter-IED devices are very common in the region, putting the young personnel of the MNJTF at a higher risk if they do not receive adequate training on how to use them.[77]

> Training at the HQ level should include training on sensitising troops to the situation and the job, lessons learned from past operations, operational planning, combat training, equipment manning, and HR and IHL compliance workshops.

Two additional areas in which many respondents felt the MNJTF is lacking are training at the HQ level and training on human rights (HR) and international humanitarian law (IHL) compliance, although the EU facilitated training on the latter for troops in Sectors Three and Four in May 2022. Despite the great potential, the HQ is not ready to use its full potential and is not internally structured to function effectively.[78] Training at the HQ level should occur before being deployed to the MNJTF to ensure all personnel are ready to operate once their postings begin. This should include training on sensitising troops to the situation and the job, lessons learned from past operations, operational planning, combat training, equipment manning, and HR and IHL compliance workshops. This would enable the MNJTF to become more sustainable as a force and acquire legitimacy, further allowing the force to receive more funding.

Interoperability

While the establishment of the MNJTF already marks an excellent achievement for grouping together four countries to fight a shared security threat, when it comes to the operational level, the force faces difficulties in managing and coordinating the four TCCs. Differences between Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) among the TCCs pose a significant challenge and sometimes make operational planning and operations on the field difficult.[79] For instance, on the one side, Nigerian forces' military doctrine is similar to that of the UK, whereas Niger and, to some extent, Cameroon[80] have a more French-oriented military doctrine. In the case of Chad, it is different, as their TTPs are not as clearly defined and are usually shaped by their commanders. This issue is aggravated by the language barrier among the force's troops. For example, Chadian troops speak mostly Arabic, and not all are French-speaking or speak little English.

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76   Ibid.

77   Interview with EU contractor. Interview conducted in Chad.

78   Ibid.

79   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

80   With emerging Israeli influence on the counterterrorism approach in Cameroon, there is a gradual doctrinal shift to a hybrid approach officially referred to in Cameroon as "Popular defence".

Nigeriens speak primarily French, and Nigerians are English-speaking and do not speak much French. What this means on the ground is that it becomes difficult to achieve full effective command and control during joint operations. As mentioned above, training at the HQ level would help harmonise these differences. A dedicated team of liaison officers could conduct the training to ensure coordination for a more conducive and effective way to operate on the ground. Differences in TTPs and language partly reinforce divisions and prejudices.

This partly feeds into the lack of adequate cooperation between the MNJTF and the TCCs' national forces. In some instances, national forces have conducted their operations without carrying the MNJTF along or where a TCC pulls out its troops on the eve of a major joint operation of the MNJTF. This lack of communication and cooperation gives terrorist groups freedom of movement and causes the MNJTF to lose track of these movements and therefore affecting the ability of the force to meet its mandate to create a safe and secure environment. A respondent remarked, "I would like to see the rivalries removed and see all TCCs become more cooperative and amicable and understand that we all have the same enemy."[81]

The issue of sustainability

All of the challenges mentioned above directly impact the sustainability of the MNJTF's operations and, therefore, its overall effectiveness. However, one major constraint identified by the authors is the change of the force's leadership and command, which occurs depending on the rotations and dynamics within the Nigerian military. The MNJTF has had eight FCs since its establishment in 2015. Every FC has different tactics and approaches. Hence, the frequent rotation of leadership poses a significant challenge to the continuity and sustainability of the force, as there is no space for long-term planning and action. For example, the previous FC was only posted from March 2021 to August 2021, meaning that by the time he had become embedded within the force and had begun planning operations, he already had to be re-posted elsewhere, and new procedures had to be put in place. Thus, there is a need for Nigeria's political and military leadership to consider an extended period for redeploying the FC, possibly to allow them to spend about two years. This would enable the FC to have enough time to appreciate the dynamics of the operational environment and effectively plan, conduct and conclude significant operations against the terrorists. They may even leverage lessons learned from previous operations to enhance the planning and conduct of future ones. The regular rotation of chief officers and troops also alters the sustainability of the force because once they revert to their national force positions, the MNJTF loses the competency and ground knowledge gained during training and operations conducted for the MNJTF. Thus, newly posted troops have to be trained again. These rotations slow down the capability to deploy on a more recurrent basis creating extensive periods between operations, allowing terrorists to regroup, re-strategies and relocate. In addition, although the troop strength is

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81   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

much higher than initially planned, 13 000 troops – added to the lack of a police component – is a relatively low number considering the region's size and the high mobility of the terrorists. This number is at risk of being reduced, considering the volatility of security conditions in the region. The TCCs face internal security challenges for which they might decide to remove their forces from the MNJTF to deploy them at home. In 2019, Chad already pulled 1 000 troops to deal with its internal security threats. [82]

82   Adebajo, K. (2020). "Discord, Nigeria's Low Commitment Crippling Multinational JTF's Anti-Terrorism Efforts". Human Angle Media. https://humanglemedia.com/discord-nigerias-low-commitment-crippling-multinational-jtfs-anti-terrorism-efforts-%E3%85%A1-report; International Crisis Group. (2020). op. cit.

Partnership between the MNJTF, LCBC and AU

In 2015, the AU PSC authorised the MNJTF, which was designed to give the force three mandated tasks. These are the bedrock of the MNJTF's existence but are also critical to the partnership between the two entities. This section examines the efforts to date to support these mandated tasks and asks how effective the partnership with the AU has been in ensuring that the MNJTF meets its mandate and what efforts have been made to deliver on the RS-SRR.

Equipment

Many of the respondents we spoke to remarked that the partnership between the AU and the MNJTF was vital because it not only gave validity to the mission but also helped with funding, political support, and other aspects that the AU can advocate for on behalf of the MNJTF. For example, "the AU's ability to be in partnership has allowed us as a force to be able to communicate to our AU colleagues what we need, and they speak with the relevant partners to get these resources".[83] Here, the respondent states that the AU relationship provides them with necessary equipment through its partnerships. In addition, another respondent remarked, "the good thing about AU support is that it doesn't shift as much as European Union support, which has now shifted to Ukraine".[84] This suggests that the AU's support to the MNJTF is focused on delivering on the requests and ensuring that the mission meets its mandate.

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83   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.
84   Ibid.

It is important to note that most of the equipment that is used and deployed by the MNJTF appears to be from member states through their national armies and some bilateral support from partners. Some of the equipment is also given through the AU, as mentioned earlier. Notwithstanding, the dearth of military hardware and equipment remains. As noted by a respondent, "we cannot give the numbers but we need more hardware of all types".[85] This means that, in most cases, resources given to the mission are limited and should be significantly improved. Through the AU, the MNJTF gets field and office material, and vehicles, support from other partners goes through the AU. As one respondent noted, "everything centres on funding and the opportunity to have this is key to success on the field."[86]

> The AU's ability to be in partnership has allowed us as a force to be able to communicate to our AU colleagues what we need, and they speak with the relevant partners to get these resources.

For one respondent, the lack of equipment between the forces and the levels of support between the sectors (Sector Three being the better-funded sector) means that the forces lack similar abilities to be as effective as had been hoped. In this case, while the AU advocates for the necessary equipment for the missions, it seems that the forces are disproportionality ill-equipped, which impacts their overall ability to reach full effectiveness. According to one respondent, this is more apparent when the terrorist groups move from "one sector to another or to a sector that could be seen as weaker."[87]

One of the unique connections between the AU and the MNJTF is that the AU has embedded a liaison team which works within the force's HQ, meaning that the mission should be liaising its needs on a daily, weekly or bi-weekly basis. The liaison team or Mission Support Team (MST), consisting of 14 staff, supports the planning, prioritising of tasks and coordinating the AU and partners' support for the MNJTF, as required for the achievement of MNJTF mandate.

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This proximity allowed the AU to witness first-hand what was happening and communicate this to the PSC. However, the analysis found that the team making up this support was "small

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85   Ibid.

86   Ibid.

87   Ibid.

and could be scaled up."[88] to provide broader holistic support, but it is important to note that their work to date has been very welcomed from all levels of the mission. In addition, we found no joint implementation and intelligence cell or evidence that the latter would be established. Adding to this challenge, for some respondents we spoke to, it was unclear from outside what "forms of support the AU gives".[89] In essence, it was unclear whether the partnership was purely designed for the AU to advocate for the mission's needs or, more broadly, to provide training, technical advice, operational capacity etc. to the mission.

For example, several respondents noted that the MNJTF has been able to make significant strives and deliver on many of the tasks this year. As a result,

> The MNJTF has become efficient and effective in the LCB region and been able to move terrorists from one area and cleared these groups. This year we see the efficiency of the force because they have also changed their strategy, which is offensive and not defensive.

And while these changes in force posture have been witnessed, the team could not ascertain whether this was partly due to the AU's support to the MNJTF or the mission's change in posture, which has been one of offensive posture. In essence, it was difficult to ascertain whether the AU's support of the MNJTF has contributed to the recent success of the regional forces.

> According to one senior military official political support is essential but operational support on the ground is where the force needs the most support.

Resources

One of the critical central roles of the AU support to the MNJTF is its ability to not only supply resources but advocate on behalf of the mission to partners about the needs of the mission. While the general conclusion drawn from respondents was that the AU was trying, there was still a need for the AU to do more in this core area. For example, according to one senior military official political support is essential but operational support on the ground is where the force needs the most support. Drones, planes, weapons etc. are needed, and the AU could play more of a role here.[90] It was also noted that while the AU had made some effort, there was nothing from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) "we have not seen their

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88   Ibid.

89   Ibid.

90   Ibid.

effort", and they seem to be missing in discussions with the AU on this matter.[91] Beyond the military efforts, some respondents also felt that the AU needed to do more to help Mission Support (MS) plug in the gaps in terms of policing by providing MS with support in this area. This was also noted by AU officials, who pointed out that the effectiveness of the MNJTF was second to none. Still, the resource gap remained in policing, where the forces were also expected to police areas post-liberation, which was not sustainable. Another AU official confirmed this, saying that regarding "our engagement, as the AU, it seems that the force is not doing badly and [has] been very engaging."[92]

Funding gaps

As noted earlier, funding is one of the challenges impeding the effectiveness of the MNJTF. It is one of the areas in which the AU needed to do more, and to some extent, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs). As noted by a respondent: "the AU give us legal authority, and beyond this, there is also funding, but it is remarkable that we don't have contact with ECOWAS". The same could be said of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) as well. Adding that the "EU pays the money to the AU, and the AU pays us. Sadly, since January [2022], we haven't got anything because of Ukraine.[93] AU does pre-financing: they ask for money somewhere, and when the money comes, then they bring it to us", but this is not consistent. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that because the MNJTF is an Ad hoc Security Initiative (ASI), funding is received from the individual states, which means, as one respondent put it, "the commitment of the states and allocating funding to the right areas and ensuring the funds go to the right area they need to go to is a challenge because the political economy space is also not good."[94]

> That funding needed to be increased by the AU, especially because this was an AU-recognised mission and also because the AU was seen as a legitimate actor.

While it was acknowledged that the AU provided some funding, several respondents believed that funding needed to be increased by the AU, especially because this was an AU-recognised mission and also because the AU was seen as a legitimate actor. It was also noted that the vast area the MNJTF had to cover was difficult to achieve, given the limited funding assistance from the AU and other partners. Notwithstanding the limited funds available for its own Peace

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91   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

92   Ibid.

93   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

94   Ibid.

Support Operation (PSO), the AU needs to work more with its partners to "source additional support from other partners and manage that support." Most respondents acknowledge that the AU was "doing a very good job", but with competition from the Ukraine crisis, it was felt that the AU needed to do more in this area.

Finally, it was also noted that the measured approach of the AU meant while the AU had legal and political legitimacy to some degree, "it had been overridden by the LCBC",[95] and as a result, the AU needed to engage further with the LCBC to beef up the entity and its engagement in the funding area. It was also felt that the switch from the APF to EPF means less money for African peace missions and less influence for the AU over how the funds are spent.[96]. The move away from the APF and towards direct engagement with stakeholders will also significantly reduce EU funding to the AU, suggesting that funding went directly to the "LCBC and MNJTF",[97] leaving the AU in an odd position.

Regarding the issue of training challenges mentioned in the previous section, some respondents were of the view that the AU could play more of a role in ensuring that national forces are harmonised through AU-approved and African Training Centres. Funding in this area could include ensuring that before deployment, the AU could provide funding and support through African Training Centres to ensure forces are better on-boarded and TCCs are aware of AU policies or existing policies to ensure that forces are in sync with each other. As the same respondent noted, "we need to strengthen the force inside and outside".[98] The AU can play a role as a facilitator and coordinator in this respect.

Adaptability

Terrorists are known to be highly adaptable to their existence and operations, demanding that even a higher degree of adaptability and flexibility are required of a multinational force battling them to respond quickly to new challenges and to unexpected circumstances. While the MNJTF had made great strives to deliver on its mandate, its ability to adapt to changes in terrorist strategy or tactics quickly was often a challenge. For one respondent, the "mix of terrorism and organised crime by local groups in the forest areas in Sambisa means there are groups no longer affiliated to BH ideologically but have succeeded in being autonomous in their attacks and financing themselves." For the respondent, this is where the AU's support for the mission must be increased to avoid outbreaks of smaller-scale criminal gangs; in essence, the spread of

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95   Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

96   Woldemichael, S. (2022). "Africa should be better prepared for Europe's security funding shift". ISS Today, 12 April. https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-should-be-better-prepared-for-europes-security-funding-shift

97   Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

98   Ibid.

local criminal acts needs to be directly addressed by the AU through MS and the AU governance systems because this is connected to broader challenges that the MNJTF was facing. In other words, the challenge of adaptability implicates the issue of intelligence deficit and limited policing capability in areas liberated by the military. Overall, intelligence sharing is limited and often delayed or not shared at all, which means "terrorists can be pushed to one area without the state forces in that sector being made aware." For one military expert, this meant the MNJTF had a "sequencing challenge which limited the forces to achieve their goal and aspects of the mandate." This is an area that the AU needs to do more in to help the mission plug in the gaps in terms of intelligence infrastructure, promoting policing capability and encouraging the development of an inter-regional (the ECOWAS and ECCAS) framework for responding to the threats of organised crime through the LCBC. This is crucial in realising the strategic objective of promoting intelligence, border security and coordination with national forces, as encapsulated in the Security and Human Rights pillar for the action of the RS-SRR, to enable the MNJTF to fulfil its primary mandate predictably.

> The AU's support for the mission must be increased to avoid outbreaks of smaller-scale criminal gangs; in essence, the spread of local criminal acts needs to be directly addressed by the AU through MS and the AU governance systems because this is connected to broader challenges that the MNJTF was facing.

Finally, the AU adaptability in support should happen based on the expressed needs and requirements by the MNJTF TCCs. This includes the AU support to the MNJTF to add a significant robust policing capacity to be deployed alongside the military forces, enabling the hold side of the clear, hold, build strategy to be more effective as anticipated in the RS-SRR. The AU could also activate its civilian roster and deploy these into the newly liberated areas when the host nation is incapable of doing so. The MNJTF and the AU should expand and improve these tools to win the narrative and reduce the attraction of the insurgents through a robust deployment of the recently developed communication strategy of the MNJTF. Donors' support could be crucial in providing the tools to address these challenges effectively, but this support should not cripple the mission.

The AU should support the MNJTF on the ground by facilitating greater synergy between the ECOWAS and ECCAS in combating money laundering and dismantling BH's financial network. Better cross-border collaboration could deny terrorist groups access to Lake Chad, thereby undercutting the ability to extort fees from local fishermen. This is all the more important given that there is no military solution to the challenge posed by BH, but the MNJTF can, ideally, provide space for the other elements of the RS-SRR to be implemented, and more specifically Pillar Five of the RS-SRR (Governance and the Social Contract) towards addressing the wider grievances and legitimate needs of the people of the region through good governance

and rebuilding the social contract. This underscores the need for affected states to muster the right level of political will to address the marginalisation and neglect of the region, i.e. the root causes, of which one element is physical security provided by national security forces and the MNJTF, which the AU and other partners can support.

Notwithstanding, there is a need for the MNJTF to continually adapt its strategy and the operational tactics to the situation on the ground, which in this case, means greater attention to the impact of cross-border trafficking flows that sustain terrorist violence. The failure to recognise and respond to the shift in the landscape limits the scope and success of military operations to adapt to the changing environment. While the MNJTF had carried out six operations, these were often sporadic and not always fully equipped. Since such major operations are not sustained, they leave a big gap between them. A respondent acknowledged that there was a "lack of continuity of the operation, which poses a risk and a challenge to the efforts of the force."[99] This is one area respondents noted the AU should provide more funding support for sustained military operations. In addition, given the lack of air mobility and other equipment when the weather changes or the rainy season sets in, "BH knows it can attack."[100] In essence, flexibility and adaptability should be central words in future engagements. However, we believe that there is a need for firmer political commitment by the governments of the region based on a plan which the AU and others can then support. While the RS-SRR does try to deliver on this, there is a need to have a more politically focused commitment which aligns with the RS-SRR and the current efforts of the LCBC Secretariat. A political project designed to address the marginalisation and neglect of the region needs to be developed and implemented. This includes addressing the root causes, of which one element is physical security provided by national security forces and the MNJTF, which the AU and others can support.

> Coordination in action is needed, especially during operations, and the efforts need to be better put together, the work separately but very rarely done in synergy with one another, especially in their operations.

Coordination and cooperation

On coordination and cooperation, while it has been noted that ECOWAS (and possibly ECCAS) was missing, many whom we spoke to felt "the AU label was not very visible." And it was not clear how the AU played a coordinating role on the ground. As noted earlier, the AU

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99   Ibid.

100 Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

MST is primarily embedded within the MNJTF. Still, one respondent noted, "coordination in action is needed, especially during operations, and the efforts need to be better put together, the work separately but very rarely done in synergy with one another, especially in their operations." Here, the analysis showed that this was where the AU should and could be playing more of a role, not only at the political levels bringing together high-level personalities from the MS who are part of the MNJTF, but also ensuring the necessary resources and equipment are there to help improve coordination between the TCCs.

> The analysis also noted that the AU could bring TCCs and MS by sharing some of its lessons from its own PSOs.

The analysis also noted that the AU could bring TCCs and MS by sharing some of its lessons from its own PSOs. For the authors, this is one area where the AU could increase its support for the MNJTF. The civilian and national forces were noted by one respondent as an area where "the AU could help increase bilateral engagement between the states to help facilitate support which would allow the TCCs to work together in the area of more joint-border engagement between the states and organisation". One way of achieving this is for the AU to put more diplomatic pressure on member states to ensure they deploy dedicated Liaison Officers to the Centre for Coordination and Liaison (CCL) to enable holistic joint analysis and timely intelligence sharing by member states, especially in cross-border areas.

While several respondents admitted that civilians preferred to work with the MNJTF than national forces, the AU should help the MNJTF capitalise on this gain by providing them with more funding. This was because it was admitted that part of the reason why there was a preference for the force was that "civilians say it is easier to work with the MNJTF because they have included international standards in their working",[101] which is, in part, due to the close coordination and standards placed on the MNJTF by the AU. This level of success can also be attributed to the strategic thinking of the mission and its leadership. Nevertheless, the authors would state that it is also vital for the AU to take note of this to be able to share the experience and also to help its own PSOs and other African-led missions with lessons on how to gain community support, which also focuses on PoC measures but ensures better "community security and support communities in this area."[102]

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101 Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

102 Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

Support for broader stabilisation

Another area where the AU could increase its partnership was with the RS-SRR, while the AU did well in leading and supporting the development of the RS-SRR. One respondent remarked that the AU role in the RS-SRR seems to have diminished, adding, "I cannot see any visual presence of the AU on the MNJTF. I only saw the AU during the start or commencing of the RS-SRR, but now the AU is starting to widen the RS-SRR to other regions, but we do not see a clear indication from the AU." [103] However, the AU supported the RS-SRR with a focus towards Pillar Two, as part of subsidiarity with RECs/RMs. In this case, "subsidiarity" refers to support for the LCBC and HoM. Ultimately, subsidiarity for the AU entails constructivism and a focus on comparative advantage towards the new way of working. AU's continued validity needs to ensure it makes itself more visually present to safeguard the civilian populations and is also aware of what the organisation is doing on the ground.

> AU's continued validity needs to ensure it makes itself more visually present to safeguard the civilian populations and is also aware of what the organisation is doing on the ground.

Several respondents indicated that the pillars within the RS-SRR are not always supported by the AU. In some cases, like disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) in Cameroon, the national response has "barely got off the ground or even started". For one senior military personnel, there is a sense that "the emphasis has always been on the military side of things, the effectiveness and equipment of the coalition operations. This means that there is not a clear overall approach, but this is not always connected with the broader approach, and the AU could be doing more with the MNJTF in this area". Our overall observations are that while the AU has allowed for subsidiarity and has engaged frequently with the RS-SRR pillars and the LCBC, there is a political communication challenge to demonstrate the AU´s impact regarding the everyday people on the ground. In essence, this may partly account for why some respondents were not fully aware of what the AU is doing on the ground.

In essence, the military is doing its side of things from its arm but not from the broader civilian aspect under the RS-SRR. The same respondent added, "Where is the policing coalition? Where are the customs officers? Is the ungoverned area controlled by the leadership?"[104] Here is where the AU can also provide support via training to national forces to increase the overall impact of the MNJTF and its support to the RS-SRR. In addition, there is also the need to increase political commitment from states lacking in some states. Others add that while the AU supported the RS-SRR, the AU needed to provide more "political backing, and the AU should

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103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.

be looking at what to do to stop BH resources and finances and operational resources"[105] One way would be for the AU to collaborate with the Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) and the Task Force on Money Laundering in Central Africa (GABAC) to set up a framework that deals with how BH takes in finances.

Meanwhile, one respondent noted that "there is a lack of understanding in the role of the AU," and while the AU has done very well in implementing the programme, "these projects by the AU are in the process of being implemented."[106] Steps should be taken to expedite these projects in line with the current mandate and the realities on the ground. While we have urged the AU to do more with less, one crucial area that needs to be looked at is for the AU to speedily do more to connect not just within the mission but across missions. For example, one respondent noted:

> … there is a notion that securing the internal borders is enough, but many of the challenges are at the border areas and this is not being dealt with and these border areas connect with other regions… The G5S[107] and the MNTJF have no interaction between the two entities. Even the ECCAS and the ECOWAS zone do not interact with each other and help deal with the challenges.[108]

For the authors, here is where the AU can step in to play a more significant role in the coordination and discussion of the challenges at the strategic levels to have better oversight of the situation and also because it can convene these entities together. This is important because, as one respondent remarked, "there is a transfer of knowledge between criminal organisations and terrorist groups".[109] This transfer of knowledge between the different groups in the area means that the challenges and techniques of the groups are being passed down and perfected. Thus, the AU needs to understand the inter-regional dynamics at play and convene high-level discussions that connect these regions to help make states and forces aware and pass on some of the experiences captured from its own PSO experience.

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105 Ibid.

106 Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

107 The G5 Sahel (G5S) is a framework for coordinating regional cooperation in development policies and security. The five Sahel countries are Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

108 Interview with stakeholders. The interview was conducted online.

109 Interview with stakeholders. Interviews were conducted online and Interview with stakeholders working with the MNJTF. Interview conducted in Chad.

Recommendations for Enhancing Mission Effectiveness

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The successes recorded by the MNJTF are encouraging, but several challenges stand in the way of the forces achieving their mandate. To enhance the capacity and effectiveness of the Joint Force in combating terrorism in the Lake Chad region, the following recommendations are worth implementing:

1. Prioritise developing police capacity across member states

The several military operations carried out by the MNJTF against BH have recorded diverse degrees of success. One major success is the MNJTF's ability to dislodge the terrorist groups from some previously controlled communities, forcing them to relocate to the Tumbuns of Lake Chad. Thus, the MNJTF's military operations are paving the way for IDPs and refugees to return home. However, in some communities where relative peace and security have been achieved, the military is still largely present, performing police tasks such as providing protection for farmers and operating checkpoints within towns. This situation drains available military resources, limiting the number of troops available to conduct and sustain offensive operations deep into the Tumbuns to defeat the terrorists effectively. In addition, military forces are usually not configured or trained to deal effectively with police situations. To this end, member states of the LCBC, plus Benin and international partners, should prioritise the allocation of resources to build the police component of the MNJTF. This will ensure operational readiness and deployment capability of the police to be able to hold cleared territories over sustained

periods, allowing the military to continue to engage with the terrorists that they have fragmented before they regroup.

a. In this regard, the AU PSOD could provide technical assistance which could support national authorities in the development and operationalisation of the police component. This could help the MNJTF´s multidimensional approach in transitioning from solely deploying troops for sustained periods in affected areas to utilising national police forces. In addition, this could enable the MNJTF member countries to begin generating, training, resourcing and deploying the police component, either as a national force deployment or embedded force within the MNJTF structure.

b. African training institutions, such as the Martin Luther Agwai International Peacekeeping Centre in Nigeria and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana, among others, could serve as Centres of Excellence for training potential police officers. Moreover, the existing partnership between the AU and the EU would provide an opportunity to get support from the EU Training Mission (EUTM) for the training of the police component of the MNJTF.

> Member states of the LCBC, plus Benin and international partners, should prioritise the allocation of resources to build the police component of the MNJTF.

This is crucial in supporting an effective transition from counterinsurgency operations towards stabilisation in areas wrested from the terrorists. Building the police component through training, mentoring, rostering and experience-sharing for effective deployment will contribute to establishing a secure and stable environment toward sustainable peace.

2. Strengthen MNJTF intelligence posture

Efforts by the MNJTF to successfully defeat BH require the strengthening of intelligence gathering and intelligence-led operations against terrorists' sources of funds, access to funds internally and externally, and an ability to deal with its access to arms and logistics. Although violent attacks by BH/ISWAP terrorists are concentrated in the Lake Chad area, their access to instruments and enablers of violence (arms, funds and logistics) transcends the region. Much of the weapons used by them come from the Sahel. To more effectively address the transnational network that supports the resilience of terrorist organisations, serious attention should be paid to strengthening the information sharing and intelligence posture of the MNJTF. Priority interventions should focus on three crucial elements:

a. First, it is imperative to establish (or strengthen) an intelligence-sharing loop between the MNJTF, G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF), and the Accra Initiative (AI)[110] and Nouakchott Process.[111] This is expedient, given the speed, spread and scale with which terrorists are known to cross the borders of West and Central Africa and now towards coastal countries. The MNJTF, G5S-JF, AI/MNJTF and Nouakchott Process need a coordination mechanism to share information, build political support and will, and deliver joint operations across their borders. In this regard, the AU could provide the coordinating political framework for these ad-hoc security initiatives that are combating mobile, violent actors.

b. Second, the MNJTF member states should demonstrate a solid commitment to posting dedicated intelligence liaison officers to the CCL to enable the regional intelligence fusion unit to function optimally.

c. And third, ramp up capacity building of relevant officers on how to utilise the capabilities of newly acquired ISR platforms.

> Efforts by the MNJTF to successfully defeat BH require the strengthening of intelligence gathering and intelligence-led operations against terrorists' sources of funds, access to funds internally and externally, and an ability to deal with its access to arms and logistics.

3. Align training with core priority areas to close capacity gaps

The strategic shift in the operational environment occasioned by tactical shifts in the modus operandi of BH/ISWAP terrorists and the recent acquisition of ISR platforms by the MNJTF has created new challenges and revealed several capacity gaps within the MNJTF.

a. The acquisition of new equipment, coupled with recent changes in the operational area, demands that training be prioritised and aligned with critical needs areas, such as drone operations, imagery analysis, and counter-IED operations. In addition, the MNJTF needs

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110 The AI is a group of seven countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d´Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Mali and Niger as observers) focusing on partnership and mutual support among members in joint operations, training and intelligence sharing. They have agreed to operationalise an MNJTF by the end of December 2022 to tackle terrorism and other transnational organised crimes.

111 The Nouakchott Process is a mechanism created in 2013 with the objective of strengthening security cooperation and information sharing in the fight against terrorism in 11 countries in the Sahelo-Saharan region.

to develop a mechanism for harnessing and assessing how past training has impacted operational successes and effectiveness. This should include an expansion on lessons learned, which can be used to incorporate feedback into the MNJTF planning and coordinating elements, allowing the force to be more adaptive and responsive on the ground.

b. This equally demands that a comprehensive needs assessment is carried out to determine the most important or critical needs of the mission. The AU PSC can then undertake a field visit to the HQ and Sectors to verify the scope and criticality of these needs for mission success.

c. Also, the AU Chairperson can invite partners and undertake a visit with them to gain greater appreciation of these specific needs and mobilise support for addressing them. This will help in the prioritisation and streamlining of partners' support for more impactful reach.

> The acquisition of new equipment, coupled with recent changes in the operational area, demands that training be prioritised and aligned with critical needs areas, such as drone operations, imagery analysis, and counter-IED operations.

4. Explore alternative means of complementary funding

Since its establishment, the MNJTF has faced financial challenges which have impacted its achieving full effectiveness. Without the necessary financial means, the MNJTF has had to rely on funding from the AU, TCCs and external partners to implement mandated activities. Currently, its budget constraints have been exacerbated by the Ukraine crisis. It is imperative, therefore, to explore other means of complementing the funding of the MNJTF.

In this regard, the affected member states of the MNJTF should explore the possibility of generating a certain percentage of funds from the imposition of a Peace and Stability Tax (PST) on the goods destined for cross-border trade. This will help complement what they receive from the AU and minimise strategic vulnerability occasioned by unpredictable funding.

The HoM should also seek additional support from the AU by trying to tap into the AU's peace fund. The AU should activate the African Solidarity Initiative (ASI) to generate funds for implementing critical activities provided by the RS-SRR.

With the EPF replacing the APF, more bilateral agreements will occur between donors and TCCs. One way of ensuring that the available funding makes the most impact is for the AU to ensure that national forces are harmonised through AU-approved Training Centres before TCCs are deployed to the field.

5. Intensification of governance and developmental interventions

While the AU, LCBC, national governments and key partners continue to evaluate current successes recorded in the implementation of the RS-SRR Pillars Five and Six (allocation to support key livelihood initiatives in the LCBC´s territorial and regional action plans), there is a need for national governments of the region to prioritise and properly resource the provision of socioeconomic initiatives, such as youth empowerment programmes and development projects, and restore ties between citizens and government officials. In addition, more efforts should be placed on improved partnerships with CSOs to strengthen accountability mechanisms in the delivery of basic services.

Conclusion

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The MNJTF has recorded some notable achievements in stabilising the region. Following MNJTF operations, the number of terrorist attacks in the region has reduced, thousands of captives have been rescued, and humanitarian actors have been able to access many previously inaccessible remote areas. Despite the significant improvements recorded so far, the situation remains tenuous. The terrorists have adapted by moving deeper into the Tumbuns, resorting to more IED attacks, embedding within local economies, and leveraging organised crime networks to sustain their survival and operations. In addition, longstanding challenges still plague the MNJTF, such as restricted intelligence mechanisms, difficulties linked to its command and coordination, equipment shortages, and insufficient funding.

> The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns.

Current assets and capabilities acquired by the MNJTF can potentially boost future military operations against terrorists. However, defeating ideologically driven terrorist organisations in the Lake Chad region will require greater attention and resources towards understanding and dismantling infrastructure and networks that support terrorism-organised crime dynamics at the regional and inter-regional levels. Limited policing capability, intelligence gaps, evolving terrorism-organised crime dynamics, and resource-capacity mismatch are some of the current

impediments that define the operational environment of the MNJTF. In the face of longstanding funding constraints and disruptions, consideration of mandate renewal must explore how best to achieve much with the little available. This calls for an adaptive approach that prioritises current and emerging challenges and matches this with available "tactical" resources.

The prospects of the MNJTF achieving its core responsibilities in the months and years ahead will depend to some extent on how the mandate renewal recognises and allocates sufficient resources to address areas of priority concerns. But military action alone will unlikely continue to defeat the threat of terrorism in the region. Addressing the underlying conditions that enable terrorism to fester is as important as properly resourcing a multinational force that has proven useful in reversing the wave of violence in the region. A sustainable solution should focus on a people-centred approach which utilises development and governance structures to address the daily challenges communities face. If the countries are not committed to increasing development and governance deliverables in the affected areas, there is little that the MNJTF can sustainably achieve.

Annex 1: The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) Project Summary

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organizations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly under- take research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network produce a series of reports that are shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. All the EPON reports are available via https://effectivepeaceops.net. The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations project (UNPOP) and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.

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Annex 2: The Training for Peace (TfP) Programme Summary

What are the objectives of the TfP programme?

The Training for Peace (TfP) Programme works to generate knowledge, support the development of policy and builds the capacity of police and civilian peacekeepers.

The Programme also:

- Provides technical expertise, including for the African Standby Capacity;

- Supports the development of strategic policy and doctrine;

- Undertakes studies aimed at capturing lessons from AU missions; and

- Provides training and supports the development of training curriculum and material.

The programme's main objectives are to provide support to the AUC to enhance knowledge and understanding of the evolving conflict and security environment on the continent, and contribute to strengthening the AUC's comprehensive range of response capacities.

Overall, the goal is to contribute to strengthening the capacity of the AUC to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and insecurity on the continent through deploying the full spectrum of peacemaking tools.

Partnership and trust amid uncertainty and flux

The TfP programme is currently in its sixth phase. It started with a focus on peacekeeping training in southern Africa 26 years ago. Today it has developed and adapted to Africa's changing peace and security needs.

TfP helps the African Union (AU) to:

- Generate new knowledge derived from its own and related African peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding experiences and drawing on evidence-based research;

- Develop innovative and world-leading policies, doctrine and guidelines that will guide the next generation of AU mediation, observer and peace missions; and

- Build the capacity of the personnel that will undertake, support and direct AU and African mediation, observer and peace missions, and support the AU to maintain the African Standby Capacity and the African Standby Force.

What do we work on?

Themes covered by the TfP contribute to preventing conflicts, Silencing the Guns and sustaining peace. These include:

- Emerging security threats, such as violent extremism;

- AU peace support operations, with a particular focus on the role of police and civilian peacekeepers;

- In-depth support and research on Conflict prevention, PCRD and SSR;

- Ongoing research on UN/AU relations, including support to the AUPOM and A3; and

- Inclusivity, with a particular focus on youth, women and gender.

Our theory of change

Support to the AU Commission (AUC) and regional economic communities (RECs)/ regional mechanisms (RMs) contributes to increased knowledge and institutional capacity at the strategic levels. This enables the organisation and its RECs/RMs to effectively prevent and respond to conflicts and complex security challenges, thereby promoting and sustaining peace in Africa.

In January 2015, the African Union (AU) authorised the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a regional security arrangement of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to deal with the threat of Boko Haram (BH) in the Lake Chad region. Its mandate includes the responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure environment in the areas affected by the BH insurgency, reducing violent attacks against civilians, facilitating stabilisation programmes in the Lake Chad region, facilitating humanitarian operations and the provision of assistance to affected populations. To achieve its mandate, the MNJTF undertakes both kinetic and non-kinetic operations. Its mandate has been renewed yearly since 2015, and in December 2022, the AU renewed its mandate for another 12 months. This report assesses the effectiveness of the MNJTF in delivering on its three mandate priorities to generate recommendations for the enhancement of the MNJTF´s overall effectiveness.

EPON

Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

Training for Peace
1995 - 2020
25 years