

# Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as Potent Tool to Prevent Conflict in the Lake Chad Region

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## ABSTRACT

Conflicts and conflicts resolutions are part and parcel of any region, empire or state and man's existential nature. But the Lake Chad Region question seems to defy most solutions. Either the parties are not sincere at getting the issues resolved because certain people are benefiting or the government lacks the will power to confront the problem politically with a view to bring an end. Dialogue as a means of conflict resolution through change of knowledge by the groups involved. In an attempt to discuss conflicts in the Lake Chad Region, its origin and current forms, one has to contextualize the historical evolution of the region, formation of empires and states; and it's political and economic developments. The Lake Chad region comprising Nigeria to the northeast; Niger to the southeast; Chad to its western part and Cameroun to the northern part is both historically and today, a culturally contiguous region. Series of factors have contributed to the rise of conflicts across the region. These are political and economic marginalization, poor governance. Insurgency has presently plunged the region into a devastating security and humanitarian conflicts. This has escalated and may lead to unproductive results. Learning to resolve conflict through dialogue is significant aspect of high-performance team. This article examined the prospects and support for Alternative Resolution Dispute Mechanisms (ADR) specifically dialogue as a broader strategy in weakening and ending the conflict. Dialogue as a means can resolve conflict by satisfying the interest of all parties and based on mutual interest. The article will also attempt to draw attention to the issue of lingering crises and dialogue at resolving the conflict permanently.

**Keynotes:** Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Conflict, Lake Chad Region, Environment Degradation.

## INTRODUCTION

In analyzing conflicts in the Lake Chad region, one has to go through the different periods to know the strategic conception of the Lake Chad region and identify conflicts within the different periods. Conflict may mean being in opposition or disagreement. The resolution of such disagreements naturally brings peace. Conflict exists, across the globe, on varying scales and orders of magnitude. Though each case of conflict may have a unique character, they essentially share a commonality all come at a cost. Generating fear and uncertainty, conflicts disrupt the normalcy and quality of life; affecting livelihoods, destroying homes, causing displacements, inflicting injuries and taking lives. These unwelcome outcomes are a pressing concern for all, including government, civil society actors and development institutions. There is a great need to be able to find ways to address these concerns and issues.

The Lake Chad region was characterized by the emergence of state formation, political as well as economic developments. Powerful states like the Kanem Borno Empire existed and various states were formed paying allegiance to the government. German, France and Britain are the colonial powers and one important attraction of the pre-colonial period was introduction of the colonial rule. This brought in conflicting processes that created enabling environment in the manifestation of the various conflicts that were intensified because

different political actors and groups were involved. These local tensions can neither be understood nor solved unless it is located within regional dynamics.<sup>1</sup> Raymond Gilpin,<sup>2</sup> stated that, most African countries gained independence in the 1960s and as, the fragile governance, the cold war geopolitics as well as oil shocks in the late 1970s combined to trigger a resurgence of conflicts during that period.<sup>3</sup> The changing nature of the conflicts reflects a combination of cultural, economic, governance, regional and transnational factors which explain the nature of the conflict in the Lake Chad region. The Lake Chad Basin region is one of the enviable endowments Africans have been bequeathed with and it falls within the West African sub-region. It is of strategic and economic benefits to its inhabitants. It is reported thus:<sup>4</sup> “the region is characterized by a web of economic, trade, historical, political, cultural, ethnic and religious ties, which makes its countries linked and interdependent across borders.”<sup>5</sup> Lake Chad Basin Region, within the scope of this article refers to governments and sovereign states of Cameroun, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Report of 2018 which stated that, the conflicts in the Lake Chad region are characterized by a number of factors;<sup>7</sup> these are climatic change, poor governance, underdevelopment, environmental pressures enhanced by the receding waters of Lake Chad, desertification and a deep history of Islamic conservatism combined with deepening poverty as well as population explosion that eclipses almost everywhere else on earth and that forms the background of this discourse.<sup>8</sup> The Boko Haram Insurgency in this region was able to thrive, taking advantage of a number of common issues that affect all four states, albeit with some variations.<sup>9</sup> As one manifestation of this dynamic, the limited state presence has in turn over the years enabled conflicts and criminal networks to operate in the border regions, prior to the emergence of Boko Haram.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the Lake Chad region was previously known for conflicts, with a weak state presence leading to de facto havens for violent criminal organisations and conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

There is conflict of ideas; political, economic and social and so on. This requires the combine effect by the countries involved in serious agreements to approach the conflict. However, despite the military force embarked upon for long to address and manage the conflict: the need arises as a matter of urgency to consider other alternative means. Dialogue and negotiation as one of the mechanisms of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), if resorted to may bring a positive change in the original situation within the Lake Chad Region, and may bring lasting peace. If the conflict situations in the Lake Chad Region is not properly handled, it may further degenerate into increased violence and crises, kidnapping, rape and youth restiveness which is currently witness within the Region. There is need for peace to ensure a better tomorrow for the people of the region. This article examines dialogue and negotiation are the potent tools or mechanism of ADR that may assist for prospect and provide crucial information about the perpetrators of the conflict and exposed them to options beyond violence. Trying to address armed conflicts through dialogue and negotiation is achievable than military force. Dialogue and negotiation are gradually being recognized as an effective means of resolving conflicts between warring parties. More and more state and non-state actors are exploring and engaging in dialogue and negotiation activities in an effort to attain peaceful solutions to conflicts. This will contribute to advancing dialogue and negotiation further by continuing to engage as ADR processes around the globe and promoting the process as a viable conflict resolution tool which can be used by individuals and communities affected by conflict who will find it useful and even necessary. Dialogue and negotiation may be used for more

<sup>1</sup> Mandami. M., “Saviour and Survivors”, : Impremerie Graphic plus, Dakar, Senegal, (2010), also available at <https://publication.codesria.org>, accessed on 26/11/2024.

<sup>2</sup> Gilpin. R., “Understanding the Nature and Origins of *Violent Conflict in Africa*,” available at <https://www.researchgate.net>, accessed on 26/11/2024.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees’ (UNHCR) report (2016), available at <https://www.unhcr.org>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>5</sup> Global Report UNHCR 2016, available at <https://reporting.unhcr.org>, accessed on the 26/11/2024.

<sup>6</sup> Although, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) has Cameroun, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Algeria, the Central African Republic, Libya and Sudan, as its members.

<sup>7</sup> Omar. S.M and Ndubusi. C. A, Report Produced by Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Response to Boko Haram in Lake Chad Region: Policies Cooperation and Livelihoods, available at <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com>, accessed on 26/11/2024.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

efficient means of gaining humanitarian access, protection of civilians or finally agreeing to resolve the conflict.

## Historical Evolution of the Region

Humans have lived in the inner Chad Basin from at least eight thousand years ago, and were engaging in agriculture and livestock management by 1000 BC.<sup>12</sup> By the 5th century AD, camels were being used for Trans-Saharan trade via the Fezzan, or to the east via Darfur.<sup>13</sup> Slaves and ivories were exchanged for salt, horses, glass beads, and, later firearms.<sup>14</sup> After the Arabs took over North Africa in the 7th and 8th centuries, Chad Basin became increasingly linked to the Muslim world.<sup>15</sup>

History of the Lake Chad region is intrinsically linked to Kanem Borno empire, which was acknowledged as the most powerful Central Sudanic polity.<sup>16</sup> It is the longest-lived pre-colonial states in Sub-Saharan Africa from the 8<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century AD located at the central trans-Saharan route.<sup>17</sup> The region is known for its role in the Arab driven commerce that linked Islamic North Africa with the Bilad-al-Sudan.<sup>18</sup> This enabled the state to gain and maintain regional monopoly over the export of slaves and perhaps ivory toward North Africa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>19</sup>

The major problem of the central route remains the Fezzan region at its northern tip-end, while its southern section from the Kavar oases to Lake Chad was almost continuously under Kanem-Borno control from at least 10<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Its northern terminus was repeatedly threatened by the political instability in North Africa, especially in view of its thriving economy.<sup>21</sup> Whilst the impacts of those political upheavals on trans-saharan commerce remain uncertain, because Kanem Borno was not indifferent to the political events in North Africa.<sup>22</sup> The rulers at Lake-Chad seldom missed opportunities of maintaining healthy diplomatic and economic relations with North African monarchs over the centuries.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, the perception that Kanem-Borno may have been significantly more influential in the northern part of Africa before the 15<sup>th</sup> century than hitherto thought is not restricted to external sources.<sup>24</sup> On the alleged expansion of its power, the Chief Imam of the capital, Birnin Ngazargamu reported that:<sup>25</sup>

*“we have heard from learned scheikhs that the utmost extent of their power (i.e. of the rulers before Daud ibn Nikale alias Daud ibn Ibrahim (ca 1366-1375 CE) in the east was to the land of Daw and to the Nile in the region called Rif, in the west their boundary reached the river called Baramusa”.*<sup>26</sup>

Kanem-Borno Empire had always mistrusted the Lake basin, basing its economic power on trans-Saharan trade route control.<sup>27</sup> This may not be unconnected to the fact that the geo-strategically important Lake Chad and its surroundings fell into the sphere of interest of Britain, France and Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These countries

<sup>12</sup> Rijiya. S. M, “The Potentials and Challenges of the Lake Chad River Basin”, International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Development, Volume 4, Issue 3, May-June (2021), P, 878.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Magnivita. C, Dangbet. Z and Bouimon. T, “The Lake Chad Region as a Crossroads: An Archaeological and Oral Historical Research Project on Early Kanem-Borno and its Intra-African Connections”, *Afrique Archeologie et Arts*, Volume 15(15), December, (2019), P, 99-100.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Lange. D and Barkindo. B. W, “The Chad Region as a Crossroad”, available at <http://dierklange.com>, accessed on 27/11/2024.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph. K-Z and Tamsir. N. D, “Africa from 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century” available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>, accessed on 27/11/2024.

<sup>24</sup> Magnivita. C, Dangbet. Z and Bouimon. T, Op:Cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

were aware of the existence of Muslim states in the north and assumed that without inclusion of their power spheres no effective control would be possible.<sup>28</sup>

While giving an account of the Budumas,<sup>29</sup> it is stated that “due to their cattle rearing nature they resent all labour which could have improved their fate through farm work or the execution of a handicraft.”<sup>30</sup> Frequent wars and cattle pests, internal quarrels between tribes and tribes or island and island, acquisition of slaves and theft of cattle were in the end the determinants for one’s existence.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the Rabih’s invasion of Borno in 1893, had a devastating effect on the south-west of Lake Chad.<sup>32</sup> It was a clear manifestation of a rebel taking up arm against the state, and then the Maitatsine insurrection in the 1970s–1980s, the Kala Kato unorthodox approach to Islamic worldview in the 1990s and now the Boko Haram Insurgence.<sup>33</sup>

Migration is widespread in the region for economic and religious reasons, as is the seasonal transhumance of livestock. Generations of men from Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and beyond, have traveled to centers of Islamic learning in Northern Nigeria. Sometimes clash of interests, wants, needs and strife for fame arises due to the thirst to satisfy overriding interests of various groups within a given territory.

Pre-colonial polities, such as Kanem Borno Empire, stood aloof from it and no capital-city is located less than 1.000 km from the Lake banks, except N’Djamena, which is located about 100 km from the mouth.<sup>34</sup> The Lake identity is strongly influenced by its peripheral location: tension and various boundaries related conflicts, trade, agro-pastoral and possibilities, oil perspective, rebellion and smuggling abound.<sup>35</sup> By 16<sup>th</sup> century Borno Empire had expanded and recaptured the parts of Kanem that had been conquered by Bulala.<sup>36</sup> Satellite states of Bornu included Damagaram in the west and Baghirmi to the southeast of Lake Chad, while by 15<sup>th</sup> century the Kingdom of Kano was the most powerful of the Hausa Kingdom, with the Kingdom of Katsina to the north and were absorbed into the Sokoto Caliphate 1805.<sup>37</sup> During the Berlin Conference in 1884-85, Africa was carved up between the European colonial powers, defining boundaries that are largely intact with today’s post-colonial states.<sup>38</sup>

Clive Thomas stated thus:<sup>39</sup> “we do not produce what we consume, and do not consume what we produce”.<sup>40</sup> The colonialists perpetually took advantage of Africa, denying them the opportunity to nurture and develop their respective needs in line with their aspirations *vis-à-vis* their peculiarities.<sup>41</sup> Thus, as soon as the colonial authorities departed African shores, the struggle between and among African national groups for dominance, for control over resources and for control over distribution of amenities as well as the wealth of each state intensified, a struggle that predated colonial rule started afresh.<sup>42</sup> This clearly illustrates the several maneuvers

<sup>28</sup> Abdulkadir. M. S, “Islam in the Non-Muslim Areas of Northern Nigeria, c.1600-1960”, *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies, (IJOURELS)* Vol.1 No.1, (2011), Pp. 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Part of the Inhabitants of the Lake Chad Region.

<sup>30</sup> Baroin. C. Seidensticker. G, and Tijani. K., “What Do We Know About the Buduma? A Brief Survey”, *Proceedings of the XIIth Mega-Chad Symposium, Maiduguri 2-9 December 2003,, Maiduguri (Nigeria): Centre for Trans-Saharan Studies, pp.199-217, (2005), available at <https://hal.science/hal-00748610/document>, accessed on 29/11/2024.*

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Magrin. G, “The Lake Chad Region and Boko Haram”, (2018), available at <https://horizon.documentation.ird>, accessed on 29/11/2024.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1890 the British and French concluded an agreement to clarify the boundary between French West Africa and what would become Nigeria. See Kanya-Forstner. A. S, “**French African Policy and the Anglo-French Agreement of 5 August 1890**”, *The Historical Journal* Vol. 12, No. 4 (Dec., 1969), pp. 628-629.

<sup>39</sup> Eleanor. G and Hannah. J, *Adolescent Girls in the Lake Chad Basin Complex Emergency and Compound Threats* September, (2018), available at <https://www.monash.edu>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Austin. G, “African Economic Development and Colonial Legacies”, available at <https://journals.openedition.org>, accessed on 03/12/2024.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



that had occurred in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and even Nigeria,<sup>43</sup> which led to political instability and given birth to several movements and rebel groups agitating for authority to suit their claims.<sup>44</sup>

As the colonial power, France had clearly defined interests in Chad which had been focused on cotton, grown in south and traded by metropolitan French commercial interests.<sup>45</sup> The north, became an object of great interest following reports of possible uranium reserves in the Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti (BET) and of oil elsewhere”.<sup>46</sup>

Mamdani asserted that, Qaddafi’s impact on Chad began a few months after he came to power. Qaddafi began with a double initiative, inviting FROLINAT (originally known as National Liberation Front (NLF) of Chad) to open its first permanent base in Tripoli in November, 1969 and supporting Toubou in the BET with light machine guns and mortars.<sup>47</sup> Darfur soon became the base for training of Chadian militias, formed and trained under FROLINAT command.<sup>48</sup>

The Lake Chad Basin faces numerous environmental, socio-economic, climate change, drought, poverty and security challenges.<sup>49</sup>

The prevailing situation across Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger has attracted the spread of international terrorism and the growing vulnerability of local communities in the region as a whole. The region is facing severe protection crisis with armed violence that has affected large parts of the Lake Chad Basin stretching to its thirteenth year.

After colonial period it is observed that the Lake Chad represents a particularly difficult paradox for policy makers.<sup>50</sup> The area is highly integrated locally with official language of Francophone and Anglophone. Niger and Nigeria are part of ECOWAS,<sup>51</sup> while Cameroon and Chad in the ECCAS,<sup>52</sup> the region as a whole is fragmented because historically the Lake Chad is far more integrated from a bottom-up perspective than it is from a top down”, adding to its diplomatic difficulties, the threat of terrorism in the region, from Boko Haram and others, has led to over militarization at the expense of holistic, regional approaches. Especially with the beginning of the Mali crisis in 2011.<sup>53</sup> The west and regional states have met the terrorist threat with a military approach to conflict resolution typical of our post September 11 world yet, flooding the region with weapons, and arming groups against the jihadi threat, has predictably led to militarized inter communal conflict, separate from the fight against extremism.

The Lake Chad region is currently facing multiple security risks, including livelihood insecurity, climate change and violent conflicts.<sup>54</sup> The current conflict in the Lake Chad region was triggered by violence linked to armed groups such as *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunnah Lida’awati Wal Jihad*,<sup>55</sup> and *Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah*,<sup>56</sup> the crisis has deep roots in longstanding developmental challenges.<sup>57</sup> They also stated that widespread inequality and decades of political marginalization have instilled an entrenched sense of exclusion and a lack of trust between communities and leaders in the region.

<sup>43</sup> i.e. Nations of the Lake Chad Basin region.

<sup>44</sup> Austin. G, “African Economic Development and Colonial Legacies”, Op: Cit, P, 234.

<sup>45</sup> Through a state company, renamed Societe Cotonniere du Tchad (COTONTCHAD) and granted a semi-autonomous status at independence, available at <https://societegenerale.africa/cn/societe-generale-africa/press-release/news-details/news/chad-how-cotontchad-secures-agricultural-jobs/>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>46</sup> It was the regions of the Toubou (the black nomads, also known as Goranes), available at <https://joshuaproject.net>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>47</sup> Austin. G, “African Economic Development and Colonial Legacies”, Op: Cit. P, 123.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> UNFPA Regional Office for West and Central Africa., available at <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/en>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>50</sup> Esseissah. K, “The State of Lake Chad”, available at <https://africasacountry.com>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Vivekananda, Janani and Camilla. B, Lake Chad Region, Climate-related Security Risk Assessment”, available at <https://adelphi.de/en/publications/lake-chad-region>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>55</sup> People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad, known as Boko Haram (JAZ).

<sup>56</sup> Islamic State West Africa (ISWAF).

<sup>57</sup> Jan. D, “Armed Conflict and Conflict Management, (2019), Armed conflict and peace processes in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region”, available at <https://www.sipri.org>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

Over the past 60 years, some of the factors that contributed to the manifestation of conflicts across the Lake Chad Basin, include political and economic marginalization; political and security and poor governance, which resulted to struggle in terms of socio-economic progress, inequality and rule of law as well as corruption.<sup>58</sup>

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have lived in displacement sites and refugee camps for years, grappling with extreme hardship, deprivation, suffered abuse and rights violations and are deeply traumatized by the violence.

The crisis affecting the Lake Chad Basin is one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies in the world, having displaced more than 2.5 million people, half of whom are children.<sup>59</sup> The population of the conflict-hit region needs humanitarian assistance as the decade-long conflict drags on, hunger and malnutrition remain high.<sup>60</sup> Abduction, killings and human rights violations are also widespread.<sup>61</sup> The regions are marked by poverty, low levels of education and weak socio-economic development. Over 7 million people suffered food insecurity in the past years.<sup>62</sup>

Boko Haram took advantage of the situation of widespread poverty and state absence in most of the Lake Chad Basin communities to attract people into its ranks with a discourse that combined religious ideology, denunciation of the State, and the proposal of a new order based on the group's interpretation of Islam. Following a series of attacks on police stations and government buildings, enshrined the use of indiscriminate violence, targeting communities, schools, security services, as well as other symbols of the State.<sup>63</sup> The group's abduction of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria, in April 2014 increased its international visibility. Starting in 2013, the group extended its actions in Cameroon, then in Niger and Chad and by 2015, the group has conducting attacks in each country, including in the heart of the Chadian capital. At its height in 2014, Boko Haram was the deadliest terrorist group globally, responsible for over 6,000 deaths that year alone.<sup>64</sup>

After more than a decade, it is clear that military efforts alone against Boko Haram are no panacea. Indeed, military campaigns against terrorist groups rarely bring about the desired outcome – a strategic defeat of the group in question. Yet, engagement with these groups may be a necessary step in resolving conflict through a number of means, including, ultimately, working towards a negotiated settlement. Dialogue where conflicting parties share their positions and views, although without necessarily making concessions precedes negotiations. The threshold for establishing contact for dialogue is lower than the commitments needed to enter into negotiations and may take various forms, including one-way strategic communications campaigns to broader talks with all conflicting parties. Dialogue is an important engagement strategy to identify key intermediaries and decision-makers with parties to conflict and establish relationships, and even trust, that could be built upon for future negotiations. Dialogue may also serve to clarify the views, grievances, and priorities of the group beyond those laid out in their public messaging and propaganda and thus identify entry points to engagement.<sup>65</sup>

### **Environmental Degradation:**

In the Lake Chad region, climatic change is exacerbating smoldering conflicts and at the same time, the conflicts are preventing people from responding sensibly to the climate change. Climate change even though

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<sup>58</sup> UNDP, Conflict Analysis of the Lake Chad Region, Trends Developments and implications for Peace and Stability, available at <https://www.undp.org>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>59</sup> Sabastine. W, Lake Basin Regional Crises, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, available at <https://www.care.org>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., also according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

<sup>63</sup> UNIDIR Institute For Security Studies (ISS) Prospects for Dialogue and Negotiation to Address the Conflict in the Lake Chad Region (2024), available at [UNIDIR ISS Prospects Dialogue Negotiation Address Conflict Lake Chad Basin.pdf](#), accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>64</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace, Global Terrorism Index (2015).

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Biersteker and Zuzana Hudáková, "UN Sanctions and Peace Negotiations: Possibilities for Complementarity," Oslo Forum Papers. no.004 (Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2015). P, 45.

not the direct cause of the conflicts in the Lake Chad region, but it is adding to existing tensions and hampering sustainable development and peace-building processes.

Environmental changes, may deprive communities' livelihoods and essential resources, and potentially lead the latter to join radicalised groups. The desiccation of the lake has had great impact on local population, which has been to certain extent economically dependent on fishing and cattle herding. Therefore, climatic change has inflicted serious human security issues causing the change of livelihood of people living in the region and are vulnerable due to the environmental changes.

The emergence of Boko Haram is linked with the broader issues of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism in Africa. The Boko Haram is a rigid Islamic movement; its emergence may not be seen only in condition with religious revivalism and religious ideology, but it also has to be analysed in connection with the deprivation of living standards of local population caused to a certain extent by environmental factors.<sup>66</sup> It is stated that religion serves solely as unifying and mobilizing identity and it is not itself a source of conflicts.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, we may understand the origin of Boko Haram in connection to deeply rooted economic, religious and environmental factors.

Political attention must remain focused on the ongoing crisis in the Lake Chad Basin. 10.7 million people continue to be in urgent need of life saving assistance across.<sup>68</sup> Nearly 2.4 million people are displaced with fresh waves of violence and human rights abuses.<sup>69</sup> This led to destruction of infrastructure, limited access to basic services, no access to food, shelter, health, education and protection leaving them dependent on aid to provide for their families.<sup>70</sup> The level of acute emergency needs continues to exceed available resources, renewed support is needed to empower and resolve this conflict.<sup>71</sup>

Since early 2017, military improved security in parts of northeastern Nigeria and at the international level, key donors set up the Oslo Consultative Group on the Prevention and Stabilization in the Lake Chad Region, while the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union Commission have adopted a regional stabilization strategy.<sup>72</sup>

Even before the onset of conflict, citizen trust in formal security forces had eroded due to corruption, inefficiency, and weak accountability.<sup>73</sup> Insufficient coordination between security actors often resulted in delayed and heavy-handed responses to local security threats a problem not unique to the northeast, but prevalent across Nigeria. The insurgency dramatically exacerbated these challenges. The military's inability to protect civilians in the early years of the conflict generated widespread resentment. Communities accused security forces of targeting the population, collaborating with the insurgents, and prolonging the fighting for financial gain.

At the same time, the conflict has weakened the authority of traditional and religious leaders, who have historically played central dispute resolution roles. Many left their communities during the conflict and others were deliberately targeted by the insurgents for refusing to collaborate. Some community elders have also seen

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<sup>66</sup> Mamman. E. B, "2020 Public Policy Response to Violence: Case Study of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria". Final Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Public Policy and Administration Walden University September 2020, P, 191.

<sup>67</sup> Thurston. A, "'The disease is unbelief': Boko Haram's Religious and Political Worldview", <https://www.brookings.edu>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>68</sup> Asfura-Heim and Julia McQuaid, "Diagnosing the Boko Haram Conflict: Grievances, Motivations, and Institutional Resilience in Northeast Nigeria Patricio", available at <https://www.cna.org>, accessed on 04/12/2024.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> (LCB-Declaration-Paper-Berlin-Conference-2018).

<sup>71</sup> According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), food insecurity and malnutrition have reached critical levels across the four countries of the Lake Chad Basin. Over seven million food insecure people are classified as being at crisis and emergency levels, of whom 5.2 million are in Nigeria's northeast, 1.5 million in Cameroon, 340,000 in Niger and 123,000 in Chad. See Insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin - Regional Impact, Situation Report #29, 31 August 2017, available at <https://reliefweb.int>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

their authority challenged by youth militia formed during the conflict. Together, these developments have created a local leadership vacuum at a time when the risk of land and property-related conflict is particularly high.

Basically, Boko Haram Insurgency (BHI) has remained the major security threat in the region, owing to lack of government's presence in virtually all the villages around the Lake Chad islands, coupled with lack of access roads, illiteracy, abject poverty and serious inequality between the immediate inhabitants of the lake and city-dwellers, which the insurgents exploited in recruiting members.<sup>74</sup> Boko Haram gained international notoriety after kidnapping school girls at Chibok, Borno state in 2014 and that they began launching military operations in 2009.<sup>75</sup> Tayo revealed that the group split in 2012 and spread throughout the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region in 2013.<sup>76</sup> The involvement of the rival ISWAP faction only shifted the course of the insurgency.<sup>77</sup> With the infiltration of militia men, then came small arms and ammunitions in the hands of locals, coupled with the escalation of conflicts across the globe, the Lake Chad was not unexpectedly left in isolation. Insurgents were recruited and trained by fellow insurgents that look like alliance club.<sup>78</sup> Insurgency is explained as a paramilitary, guerrilla, or non-violent uprisings directed against a nation-state or apparatus from within in order to achieve political objectives.<sup>79</sup>

### Current Form of the Conflict:

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP),<sup>80</sup> stated that, Lake Chad Basin (LCB) countries have grappled with various forms of insecurity including banditry, abduction, highway robbery, cattle rustling and the most significant security challenges confronting the LCB remain the Boko Haram crisis.

### Dialogue and Negotiation as Effective Means of Preventing Conflict in the Lake Chad Region

The conflict in Lake Chad Region features multiple armed insurgencies with overlapping local grievances and transnational violent extremism. Dialogue and negotiation are useful in the pre-determination phase, the ADR processes act as an appropriate and robust means to solve the BH and ISWAF conflicts and provide the choice and options needed as the basis for resolution.<sup>81</sup> Security responses have contributed to alienate local populations, with the result of a progressive escalation and geographic expansion of violence, where non-state armed groups take advantage of porous borders.<sup>82</sup> Dialogue and negotiation makes most aspects more concrete and will raise awareness, creates environment where governments, JAZ and ISWAF groups can see the difference and make decisions based on clear choice and options.<sup>83</sup> Despite the glaring sophistication of weaponry at the disposal of insurgents, resulting from the proliferation of small arms and light weapons within and among insurgents of the Lake Chad Region, ECOWAS has had little or no involvement in the military response to Boko Haram.<sup>84</sup> The processes of dialogue and negotiation will bring all the relevant actors, the

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Amnesty International, Nigeria: Nine years after Chibok girls' abducted, authorities failing to protect children, 14t April 2023, available at <https://www.amnesty.org>, accessed on 01/12/2024. See also Preventing Boko Haram Abductions of Schoolchildren in Nigeria, available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org>, accessed on 01/12/2024.

<sup>76</sup> Taiyo. T, "No easy answers to Lake Chad Basin's security dilemmas", available at <https://issafrica.org>, accessed on 01/12/2024.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Miller, C.E. and King, M.E. (2005) A Glossary of Terms and Concepts in Peace and Conflict Studies. End Edition, University for Peace in Africa, Geneva, available at <https://www.scirp.org>, accessed on 01/12/2024.

<sup>80</sup> in its conflict analysis report prepared by the Secretariat of the Lake Chad Basin Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (2022) designed to help inform programming aimed at the resilience and recovery of the Lake Chad Basin region with key recommendations targeted at LCB countries, regional and international actors, civil society organizations and the private sector.

<sup>81</sup> Pelesiah. O, "Importance of Dialogue in Conflict Resolution for Organization Effectiveness", International Journal of Social Science and Information Technology, Vol VIII Issue VI, June (2022) P, 52.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Pelesiah. O, Op:Cit.

<sup>84</sup> Thus, Tejpar and Lins de Albuquerque, (2015) opined that the main reason for this was that Nigeria has not requested any military support from ECOWAS. This was partly due to Nigeria being by far the most powerful ECOWAS member state militarily, something that makes ECOWAS military assistance less vital. Somewhat, the reason is linked to Nigeria's national pride and preponderant role in the region and reluctance to accept help from smaller member states. Another reason why ECOWAS is not involved in the fight against Boko Haram is that the violence has spread to neighbouring countries (Cameroon and Niger), partly



countries at the region to intervene, however, not as an individual, but as a highly valuable integration that bridges the temporal, contextual and social situation of each group and situation. This development made clear that the response needed to be trans-regional. Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, needed to reactivate the Multi-National Joint Task Force of the Lake Chad Basin Commission in October 2014 to defeat Boko Haram.<sup>85</sup>

Military responses to the crisis have further undermined local livelihoods which rely on access to natural resources such as water and land for grazing and farming. To aid the military effort, governments in the region closed their borders and prohibited access to certain places. This cut off important trade routes and banned local communities from essential fishing areas and pastures. This will not bring an end to the conflict, dialogue and negotiation as the required option, creates mobility of perspective, and creates agility in understanding between government with JAZ and ISWAF motivations, actions, intention, context and experiences. The military and police forces have also restricted small scale agriculture and fishing to cut off armed opposition groups' income and food supply; tall crops have been banned in some areas as they could offer hiding places for insurgents, this will never be a solution to the conflict. The nature of armed conflict has changed greatly with the presence of children as the new rule of standard behaviour in war. In this situation and circumstances involve dialogue and negotiation is the most effective and fair exchange of information that allows government and the JAZ/ISWAF to talk and hear each other to reach consensus.<sup>86</sup> War in the twenty-first century is not only more tragic but more dangerous, with children's involvement, generals, warlords, terrorists, and rebel leaders alike are finding that conflicts are easier to start and harder to end.<sup>87</sup> Females and underage children were used in detonating bombs in places of worship, parks and schools.<sup>88</sup> Boko Haram has resorted to using natural resources as a weapon and part of their strategy of violence, by poisoned water sources such as wells and streams.<sup>8990</sup> Dialogue and negotiation as the effective means will serve as a bridge to build understanding between government and JAZ/ISWAF groups, the process will effectively reduce the misunderstanding that created the conflict. As an ADR mechanism this is the most effective means of enhancing the difference by making something that exist not.

### **Dialogue and Negotiation As Potential ADR Tool for Conflict Resolution in The Lake Chad Region:**

Military efforts alone against Boko Haram are no panacea for resolving the conflict in the Lake Chad Region. This will rarely bring the desired outcome of resolving the conflict. The effectiveness of military force against terrorist groups suggests a poor record.<sup>91</sup> Dialogue and negotiation processes are the most common way terrorist groups have historically come to an end.<sup>92</sup> States have traditionally been reluctant to engage armed groups particularly listed terrorist groups in dialogue and negotiations, for fear of legitimizing their violence, and the possibility of these groups exploiting ceasefire arrangements for military gains.<sup>93</sup> Following the 'Global War on Terror,' this approach has become entrenched in international policy and practice where engagement with proscribed groups is de facto forbidden through a complex system of sanctions regimes which places significant obstacles to their participation in negotiations.<sup>94</sup> Yet, engagement with these groups

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outside of ECOWAS. See Challenges to Peace and Security in West Africa: The Role of ECOWAS, available at <https://www.foi.se>, accessed on 09/12/2024.

<sup>85</sup> In January 2015, the AU authorized the initial 12-month deployment of the MNJTF, consisting of up to 7,500 military and civilian staff.

<sup>86</sup> Pelesiah. O, Op:Cit, P. 53.

<sup>87</sup> Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria", African Studies Centre, Publication, Leiden, (2014), P, 135.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Seth G Jones and Martin C Libicki, How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2008), p. 19. And see also 42 MEAC, Key Informant Interviews with former Boko Haram associates, (Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria, 25 May 2023).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Harmonie Toros, "We Don't Negotiate with Terrorists!": Legitimacy and Complexity in Terrorist Conflicts," Security Dialogue, Vol 39, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Biersteker and Zuzana Hudáková, "UN sanctions and peace negotiations: possibilities for complementarity," Oslo Forum Papers. no.004 (Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2015).

may be a necessary step in resolving conflict through a number of means, including, ultimately, working towards a negotiated settlement. Dialogue is where conflicting parties share their positions and views, although without necessarily making concessions precedes negotiations. The threshold for establishing contact for dialogue is lower than the commitments needed to enter into negotiations and may take various forms, including one-way strategic communications campaigns to broader talks with all conflicting parties. Dialogue is an important engagement strategy to identify key intermediaries and decision makers with parties to conflict and establish relationships, and even trust, that could be built upon for future negotiations. Dialogue may also serve to clarify the views, grievances, and priorities of the Boko Haram group beyond those laid out in their public messaging and propaganda and thus identify entry points to engagement.<sup>95</sup> Not all members may share an equal commitment to the group's publicized goals or their commitment to violence: identifying such variations within the group speaks to engagement and disengagement dynamics and may allow for an opening to be identified for formalized negotiations.<sup>96</sup> Moving beyond dialogue, negotiation is a dynamic process aimed at resolving disagreements and differences between the conflicting Boko Haram and the governments in the Lake Chad Region by finding common ground and reaching some form of mutually acceptable solution. Negotiations with Boko Haram groups can be thought of as existing in two categories: tactical or strategic. Tactical negotiations are those whereby a specific issue or set of limited demands are being discussed. For example, in situations of armed conflict, armed groups often exercise some level of territorial control and in many cases, perform some form of governance in these territories,<sup>97</sup> including determining access to the territory and its population.<sup>98</sup> In such cases, it may therefore be necessary for humanitarian actors to negotiate with these groups to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection for vulnerable populations.<sup>99</sup> Closely linked, tactical negotiations may also occur following kidnappings or hostage taking situations, where the limited goal of the negotiations is the timely and safe release of those who have been abducted. While tactical negotiation may have limited ambitions that are closely related to a singular issue, they can nevertheless serve to establish trust and the communication structures upon which strategic negotiations can later be built. Strategic negotiations are those negotiations geared towards bringing about an end of hostilities as part of a broader peace agreement, whereby a state seeks to address some of the group's overarching demands. Such negotiations can be a catalyst to the decline, end, or transformation of the Boko Haram group. This will see Boko Haram members disarm and transition to civilian life. While strategic negotiations with terrorist groups are possible, they are challenging and often are impervious to the lessons derived from interstate negotiations. Unlike state counterparts, armed, including terrorist, groups are not necessarily rational, monolithic actors with clear command and control structures and easily identifiable leaders who could enter into negotiations on behalf of a clearly identifiable constituency.<sup>100</sup> Difficulties can arise in identifying the right gatekeepers to negotiations while decentralized membership may mean that individual cells act independently of one another, and do not abide by centrally made decisions, thereby potentially derailing negotiations. Such is the case with JAS, which has, since the death of Shekau seen independent cells operate throughout the region and beyond. These nodes of power, led by influential commanders such as the likes of Aliyu Ngulde in the Mandara Mountains or Adamu Sadiqu in the North Central and North West of Nigeria, each operate with significant autonomy in their operations, and often compete amongst themselves for influence, resources and territory.<sup>101</sup> Closely linked is the issue of the ideology of terrorist groups, who are often dismissed as potential negotiating partners because the goals or ideology they promote publicly is seen as too broad or maximalist for finding common ground.<sup>102</sup> Between 50-60 million individuals globally live under the full control of armed groups, while an additional 100 million live in an area where this control is contested.<sup>103</sup> Amongst self-proclaimed Islamist groups, those with religious

<sup>95</sup> Audrey Kurith Cronin, "When Should we Talk to Terrorists?" Special Report (United States Institute of Peace, 2010), P, 12.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> 55 Lisa Blaydes, and Jennifer de Maio, "Spoiling the Peace? Peace Process Exclusivity and Political Violence in North-Central Africa." *Civil Wars*, Vol 12, No. 3 (2010), P 111.

<sup>103</sup> See: Irene Herbet and Jerome Drevon, "Engaging armed groups at the International Committee of the Red Cross: Challenges, opportunities and COVID 19," *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol 102, no. 915 (2020) 50 IASC, *Humanitarian Negotiations With Armed Groups A Manual for Practitioners* (2005)

ambitions of a transnational nature were less likely to be involved in negotiations than those groups that had “separatist or revolutionary Islamist claims.”<sup>104</sup> The issue of commitment to the group’s professed ideologies and ambitions also varies within groups, with some extreme hardliners unwilling to negotiate or seeking to spoil potential agreements. As negotiated settlements rarely find compromised solutions that address the demands of all individuals involved, assessing the influence, position and goals of potential spoilers must occur during preliminary preparations for negotiations. Identifying potential spoilers is likely to be of particular relevance when considering which actors should be included in peace processes. A broader approach that includes a range of actors and interests in society may serve to prevent excluded parties from emerging as spoilers later on.<sup>105</sup> Terrorist groups are not generally perceived to be credible negotiation partners, a reputation that is not helped by their opaque nature. This is a central obstacle to negotiations, where governments generally distrust the terrorist group’s willingness and capacity to keep its promises. Unlike in inter-state negotiations, there are no enforcement mechanisms that exist to punish these groups for reneging on their commitments, and this may exacerbate the group’s incapacity to keep to negotiated settlements.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, past tactical negotiations with Boko Haram have shown the group does not always abide by agreements, which makes a strong impression on governments.<sup>107</sup> Beyond a terrorist group’s capacity to negotiate, contextual factors will influence the prospects of successful negotiations with these groups. Negotiations are best initiated when both sides sense they have reached a mutually hurting stalemate or a situation where further violence is painful to both parties. This mutually hurting stalemate is a key opportunity, or moment of 18 ripeness, when both parties find themselves locked in a conflict which they cannot win, and this deadlock is painful to both.<sup>108</sup> It is in this situation when an alternative policy or ‘way out’, which has oftentimes been aired before, begins to look increasingly attractive compared to the deadlock in which they presently find themselves. Moments of ripeness may both be about objective and subjective considerations. Objective evidence of such a stalemate may include increasing casualties or battlefield losses, while subjective perceptions may include calculations that further violence may not advance the group’s cause or result in diminished popular support.<sup>109</sup> Ultimately, understanding the conditions and motivations that have given rise to this moment of ripeness is important in determining whether negotiations are likely to lead to a resolution of the conflict.

Such moments of ripeness occur infrequently and can only bring about positive negotiations if seized and built into momentum. Indeed, while dialogues, and to a certain extent, tactical negotiations, need to be encouraged to resolve Boko Haram conflict. This may appear to contribute to a sustained push for strategic negotiations. With these mechanisms fully put in place the Lake Chad Region and the surrounding countries will experience a ripe moment for resolving the conflict within a reasonable time. This may also demonstrate and result in a mass achievement in the amicable resolution of the conflict. With dialogue and negotiation properly adopted there shall be prospect by mass exits of the insurgents from the groups. If the within the region unanimously support dialogue and negotiation with the Boko Haram factions, the process may effectively ensure improved security.

## CONCLUSION

The people living around Lake Chad are currently suffering from an intertwined humanitarian and security crisis. Clashes between military forces and Boko Haram over territory, attacks on civilians, and heavy-handed counter-insurgency measures are worsening displacement, food insecurity and eroding of trust in political authorities. The government’s approach, which often centred on military operations, has often undermined efficiency and effectiveness of dialogue and negotiation. Reliance on military operation only with no resort to

<sup>104</sup> Audrey Kurith Cronin, “When Should we Talk to Terrorists?” Special Report (United States Institute of Peace, 2010).

<sup>105</sup> Seth G Jones and Martin C Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa’ida* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008).

<sup>106</sup> Malik Samuel, “Boko Haram teams up with bandits in Nigeria,” ISS Today, 03 March 2021.

<sup>107</sup> 54 Desiree Nilsson and Isak Svensson, “Resisting Resolution: Islamist Claims and Negotiations in Intrastate Armed Conflicts,” *International Negotiation*, Vol 25, no.3 (2020).

<sup>108</sup> Navin Bapat, “State Bargaining with Transnational Terrorist Groups.” *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, no. 1 (2006) see also Daily Trust, “Exclusive: families paid N800 million to secure release of 7 Kaduna train captives”, 11 July 2022.

<sup>109</sup> 57 Ahmad Sahabi, “Train attack: FG did what kidnappers asked... we expected all captives freed, says Garba Shehu”, *The Cable*, 12 August 2022.

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the alternative means of dialogue and negotiation created a nexus resulting in the growth of Boko Haram. Through dialogue and negotiation other insurgencies like the movement for the emancipation of the Niger delta (MEND) with large numbers of fighters have accepted to end their conflicts. There is the need to reaffirmed cross border cooperation, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to persecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (PRR) of fighters of the Boko Haram fighters in the region. This is may be achieved by diverting attention and funding from military solution and focus on the alternative means of dialogue and negotiation with regional integration. Government of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria most be able to cooperate to tackle problems, free from outside interference. This means decentralization and greater autonomy from Lake Chad. Decentralization, however, can only be achieved with greater regional unity by dialogue and negotiating the possibility in an amicable manner.