State Weakness and Regional Security Instability:

Evidence from Africa's Lake Chad Region

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There is a considerable evidence showing that many states in the Global South are very weak, and therefore struggle to carry out basic responsibilities of statehood. While a handful of studies have examined problems associated with state weakness, there is a paucity of scholarly literature that thoroughly explores its empirical implications on regional security. It is on this note that this article draws on the contemporary developments in the Lake Chad region to elucidate the nodes that connect state weakness and regional security instability. It argues that any state that cannot efficaciously control its borders, promptly respond to security emergencies and demonstrate substantial institutional capacity in addressing citizens' needs is vulnerable to create regional insecurity, especially when the neighbouring states share similar attributes. The article concludes that an alternative approach to ensuring lasting regional security in such regions, especially in the present Lake Chad region, is deliberate commitment to state-building.

Keywords: state weakness; regions; security instability; Lake Chad region; Nigeria

Sovereign states are evidently the most important players in the politics of security stability (and instability), both at the global and regional levels (Gilpin 1981). In spite of the increasing proliferation of non-state actors, the importance of states as independent political entities in the international community cannot be overemphasised (Heywood 2011; Goldstein and Pevehouse 2014). In line with the Thomas Hobbes' metaphysical state of nature, it is the collective demand for preservation of shared interests that propelled the establishment of states. They bear vital responsibilities, both to the national polity and to their citizens. Inability to discharge the assigned tasks is therefore an aberration and a signal of gradual departure from statehood (Arthur 2010). Jackson and Sørensen (2013, 5) note that the fundamental values states are normally expected to safeguard include "security, freedom, order, justice, and welfare". This implies that state sovereignty, even

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over domestic affairs, goes hand in hand with some of these responsibilities that are very dear to the survival of human existence. Morgenthau (1948, 396) designates the state as a "compulsory organisation of society" with the basic roles of providing "legal continuity of the society" and "agencies for the enforcement of [internal] laws". This buttresses the idea that peaceful coexistence of citizens within a state depends largely on the efficacy of the state in discharging its indispensable roles. Viewing from a related vantage point, Rotberg (2003:3) asserts that states' pivotal purpose is the provision of the "public good of security" in the sense of the ability to ward off external attack and maintain internal order.

In a nutshell, the practical conception of sovereignty does not prevent any state from attending to the domestic needs and issues which are pertinent to human survival within its borders. Regrettably, despite the grasping of this imperative viewpoint, evidence in many parts of the Global South shows that some states are very weak in willingness and capacity to discharge basic responsibilities to their sub-national actors (if not failed or collapsed). While a handful of scholars have raised concerns about the security issues associated with state weakness in the modern time (see for instance, Adesoji 2011; Buzan 1983; Job 1992; Roehrs 2005; Tonwe and Eke 2013), they have not sufficiently explored the multifaceted empirical links between state weakness and regional insecurity using a specific region as a reference point. It is on this note that this article sets out to bridge the gap by drawing on the contemporary realities in the Lake Chad region to elucidate the nodes connecting state weakness and regional instability. It specifically seeks to advance the existing body of knowledge by investigating whether a state that is unable to efficaciously control its borders, promptly respond to security emergencies, persistently maintain internal monopoly of the use of force, and show considerable capacity in addressing citizens' needs is vulnerable to internal security crises which may further trigger regionalised insecurity dilemmas, especially when the neighbouring states have similar attributes. The article employs the analytical framework of state weakness, based on the experience in the Lake Chad region, to deconstruct the (likelihood of) instability at the regional level.

The contribution is located within the need to advance a domestic approach to regional stability which has not received due attention in mainstream regional security studies. Many key scholars who focus on security issues at the regional level tend to do so mainly from the theoretical perspective of inter-state policies, interactions and the pattern of interdependence thereof (see for instance, Lemke 2004; Buzan and Wæver 2003; Adler and Barnett 1998; Deutsch et al. 1957; Miller 2007). While such theoretical approaches are very relevant in some contexts, they proved less so in other regions, especially in Africa where regional security issues are less inter-state exchanges, more a direct consequence of shared internal issues within contiguous states and the corresponding campaigns of sub-national actors. As noted by Keller (1997, 296), "Africa is generally considered to be a region where the member states face no external threats from each other, and therefore a region without a security dilemma." However, what exists instead, in the words of Job (1992, 18), is an "insecurity dilemma" which is contingent on internal predicament within states.

The article is structured in four interrelated sections. The first section contextualises the nexus between state weakness and regional security instability. It draws attention, specifically, to how the inability of a state to exert empirical "stateness" within its borders by discharging some indispensable tasks could set the stage for internal security unrest that could even grow to regional proportions in the eventuality that neighbouring states share the attribute of weakness. The second section examines the state's frailty vis-à-vis the eventual security instability in the Lake Chad region. The essence of this segment is to draw on the analytical framework of state weakness to explain the rise and regionalisation of terrorism in the Lake Chad region. By extension, it is an attempt to place the discussion and analysis in the previous section in context. Section three articulates an argument on the primacy of state-building as a unique alternative for facilitating enduring regional security stability from below through inter-state interactions, mostly as related to potential solutions to the Lake Chad security question. The concluding section summarises the core argument of the article.

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1. State Weakness, National Insecurity, and the Regional Insecurity Dilemma

The post-Cold War realities have expanded the importance of regions as socially constructed loci for security interaction, management, policy-making and governance (Lake and Morgan 1997). Irrespective of the size or scope of any given region, stable security is required for it to function effectively, mainly in the areas of harnessing human and national resources for regional development, integration and peaceful co-existence. However, the level of security stability varies greatly across regions; while some are predictable and stable in terms of human survival and the prevailing socio-political and economic order, others are exactly the opposite. Solingen (1998, 3) categorises the variance into "zones of stable peace" and "war zones". Gaining a clear understanding of the reason some regional spaces are prone to security instability requires a closer look at two key issues: first, patterns of relations and reciprocity among the state actors within the region; and second, institutional capacity of the component states in managing diverse issues within their respective borders. The attention of many political analysts, scholars and regional security experts is mostly concentrated on the first subject, even at the expense of the second. Nonetheless, irrespective of the robustness of theoretical analyses in explicating complex regional security interdependence from the perspective of inter-state engagements, they cannot unpack the contribution of activities within states to growing spill-overs and regionalisation of violent conflicts that spring up without inter-state hostility or rivalry (Solingen 1998). It is pertinent that the heart of the second matter is state weakness; a germane factor for explaining and understanding why some regions are affected by intractable and complex security instability in the twenty-first century.

As used in this article, state weakness refers to a situation where a state lacks the institutional potency to provide essential *political, economic, social* and *security* services to its citizens, which are pivotal in constructing statehood legitimacy, exerting government hegemony, consolidating internal cohesion and securing human survival (Patrick 2006; Rice and Patrick 2008). It is not a function of a country's military arsenal or GDP, but instead based on the institutional capacity to ade-

quately supply the key components listed above. The indicators and description discussed by Patrick (2006) are quite applicable to the identification of weak states. In the security sphere, weak states can usually neither manage their borders very well nor harness the required will and capacity to protect their nationals from sub-national violent sub-groups. Often, such states strive to maintain a monopoly of the legitimate use of force and tend to unwittingly accommodate violent groups that have access to small arms, with these armed groups in some instances securing the support/sponsorship of influential leaders.

From the political angle, weak states normally have defective government institutions that are unable to properly guarantee protection of individual and minority rights, prevent political marginalisation of opponents, create an egalitarian society where the national leaders emerge based on the *true* will of the people, and encourage accountability of national authorities directly to the people. From the economic perspective, weak states lack effective micro-economic policies for attending to the economic needs of the masses, which in turn potentially creates a high proportion of unemployed youth, thus widening the gap between the rich and the poor. In terms of social welfare, states in this category are usually devoid of competent government institutions capable of delivering quality education for all and consequently lack the capacity to engage in human capital development. This means that weak states may lack indigenous human resources to convert natural resources they possess into finished products (Patrick 2006; Rice and Patrick 2008). State weakness is not the same as absence of sovereign recognition of a country or total internal breakdown of law and order; it is more a matter of poor enforcement of laws, inadequate monopoly the use of force, deficient delivery of economic/social services, and weak border control, among others (Fukuyama 2004a; Newman 2007).

State weakness may not necessarily be a problem, but it has a propensity to prepare the ground for and create internal security problems. Unlike strong states, weak states are possible nurturers of security threats/crises (Rice 2007), a position that reflects deficiencies in discharging fundamental functions attached to statehood. If a country gravely fails to fulfil eco-

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nomic needs, the legitimacy of its government begins to dwindle, and people begin to look for an alternative group formation – for survival, even if this is inimical to societal order. This, in turn, has a tendency to encourage the cumulation of grievances against government and defiance of laws. In addition, it could also make the youth susceptible to radicalisation, militancy, extremism, insurgency and other forms of modern political violence. At the same time, where borders are not adequately policed, people and arms may enter uncontrolled (Patrick 2006). The summation of these internal activities is likely to produce an unsafe atmosphere where sub-national armed group(s) may emerge, both to unleash terror on citizens and challenge the legitimacy of the conventional forces of the state. Such a weak state is then unable to exercise an uncompromising monopoly over deployment of force (Miller 2007).

In a nutshell, weak states rarely exert hegemony within their borders. More importantly, when a violent uprising breaks out, a typical weak state is unable to immediately bring it under control. Putting it differently, in the eventual orchestration of violent campaigns by sub-national actors, most especially with external affiliation, state weakness precludes exertion of effective control of internal order until it has perhaps degenerated into pervasive security unrest. This unconventional vulnerability to security perils strongly differentiates weak states from strong ones. As argued by Max Weber in the early twentieth century, supremacy over the utilisation of physical force within the geographical confines of a sovereign entity is a central characteristic of the state (Simpson 2008). Wendt (1999) maintains that state actors are fundamental players controlling internal systematic violence. Whenever a state fails in this capacity and lacks institutional efficacy in fulfilling the societal expectations of citizens, the formation of radical groups challenging the conventional and societal order is likely.

According to Snow (2012, 285), one pivotal contemporary problem confronting the international system is "unstable member states, especially states that may cease to function effectively as internal ... actors, or other states that are or might move in the direction of dysfunction". Similarly, Fukuyama (2004a, 120) argues that "weak states have posed threats to international order because they are the source of conflict[s]"

which in most instances spawn humanitarian crises and extensive human displacement. The direct linkage between fragile states and the conspicuous tendency towards security threats is a fundamental challenge that is eating deep into the fabric of security sectors in many regions in the Global South today. This tends to breed injustice, division, grievances, violence extremism, and conflicts, and serves as potential "incubator or conveyor belt" of security woes that are potent enough to ravage even national stability (Rice 2007, 33). In other words, weak states are at the forefront of the factors that compromise human and national security in contemporary times. Most, if not all, violent internal conflicts in sovereign states since the end of the Cold War have occurred in weak states located largely in the Global South.

This is one of the major problems that many countries in the Global South are facing today and explains, at least in part, why many weak states have been in deep security crises for a long time, without any obvious way out. It is particularly applicable to African countries like Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan. Because the institutions to effectively regulate internal order and promptly respond to fundamental needs in the polity are lacking, ensuring stable and secure environment would be a Herculean task. It must be recognised, however, that today's security challenges are not limited to weak states; even the strong Western countries are not without domestic security issues (Patrick 2006). However, while many of these strong states have the will and capacity to handle their specific problems, a substantial number of weak states lack the required wherewithal to do so, allowing these problems to degenerate into transnational humanitarian emergencies. In addition, notwithstanding the analysis presented above on the connection between state weakness and national security instability, note that not all weak states are subject to (persistent) internal violent conflicts. This is one of the reasons why some scholars argue that the correlation between state weakness and terrorism is more complex than is frequently presumed in the literature (Patrick 2006; Newman 2007). Although this article is not about terrorism, the underpinning of this variance is clear: it depends on the existence or absence of triggers and extent to which individual states in this category

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can manage their own weakness. Moreover, no two weak states are the same. Rice and Patrick (2008) categorise weak states broadly into critically weak states and "mere" weak states. The line between stable weak state and conflict-ridden weak state is very blurred.

Apart from its negative implications for the stabilisation of national polities, state weakness is not without links to regional security instability. The concept of regional instability, as construed in this article, is not limited to cases where a security issue or violent conflict affects every part of a region, but also includes situations when the need to address a security menace becomes a regional concern or can hardly be handled comprehensively without a regional approach. In order to comprehend the nodes connecting the two variables, one needs to understand that regions normally have states as their component parts. Even where a regional space is not defined by state borders, it may cut across a geographical area that is not located within a single state (Fawcett 2005). What transpires within the national political units of a regional space has direct or indirect consequences for the entire region. Although security woes caused by the weakness of a state within its borders do not always generate regionalised security unrest, negative security externalities and regional dimensions of instability become probable or unavoidable where at least three conditions apply: The first condition in this regard relates to presence of shared weakness among neighbouring states which may lead to a spontaneous spill-over of violent conflicts. This may even facilitate cross-border mobilisation of combatants and cross-border hideouts (reinforcement in one state, attack in another). It reinforces the argument proposed by Lake (1997, 50) that "internal state weakness may also create negative security externalities for neighbouring states if that weakness creates havens for insurgents".

Second, strong cultural and religious ties across national boundaries may also spread political violence and security unrest from a weak state to other states and thereby create regional insecurity. Few other factors, if any, create such suitable avenues for cross-border recruitment of combatants and spreading of conflict across a regional space. The third condition in this category is the issue of refugee flows and their regional implications. As Wyler (2008) correctly notes, security

instability within a weak state has a way of spilling over to contiguous states via large refugee flows. Individuals who escape unbearable political violence in a weak state are normally scattered across neighbouring states with the hope of seeking safety. In this case, the initial problem of one weak state not only turns out to be a concern for other states, but also complicates existing security stability throughout the regional space. A region where refugees are dispersed across component states is unlikely to experience security stabilisation until the source of refugee flows is resolved. In another scenario insurgents or terrorists may mingle with refugees in their camps to unleash violence, even in the receiving states (Loescher and Milner 2005).

The crux of the argument here is simple. Irrespective of the political cooperation and peaceful interdependence among state actors in a given region, the security structures in the region can hardly be stable when one, some or all of the component states are at a point of critical weakness. Uncontrollable fragility of contiguous states is one of the principal factors that can harm regions from below the level of inter-state interactions. This is by no way an attempt to downplay the impact of state-centricity on regional security (Fawn 2009). Government policies and patterns of inter-state interaction are still very relevant in describing a region either as a conflict zone or zone of peace. Nevertheless, just as the actions of states are important in determining how peaceful or conflicting a region is, other factors, especially state weakness also remain pivotal in explaining the extent of security stabilisation in regions. This is partly because many regions are so intertwined with respect to geographical proximity, security interdependence and strategic dealings (Iwilade and Agbo 2012; Miller 2007; Morgan 1997). Buzan and Wæver (2003) corroborate this line of argument when they assert that regional security concerns are normally clustered in such a way that the (in)security of one actor interacts with the (in)security of other actors. The peculiarities in a particular region in terms of cultural affinity, religious resemblance, common predicaments and porous borders are instrumental in stretching conflict and threats across borders, especially in a volatile region (Brown 1996). Not surprisingly, Patrick (2006) holds that a regional configuration

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with many contiguous debilitated states risks high tendency for regional instability.

2. State Weakness and Security Instability in the Lake Chad Region

The countries that have parts of their territories in the Lake Chad region are Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. It is no more an idle speculation that the regional space has become one of Africa's hotbeds of security instability, violence and humanitarian crisis (Oginni et al. 2018). The troubles affecting this region in the twenty-first century are not unconnected to the rise of the Boko Haram extremist group (Maiangwa 2013). As an extremist group formed around 2002 in Maiduguri, Nigeria, it metamorphosed into a terrorist group in 2009 and an insurgent organisation in 2014 (Walker 2012; Obamamoye 2016). It is one of the clandestine fanatic groups that combine the attributes of new terrorism and insurgency. Its objective has expanded over the years from correcting purported Islamic decadence to campaigning against "Western civilisation" to carving out an Islamic state (Pürçek 2014, 8). The strategies employed by Boko Haram's adherents in accomplishing the above goals range from proselytising to terrorism and insurgency (including suicide bombings, shootings, school raids, large-scale kidnapping and invasion of military bases). The violent nature of the uprising caused settlements to be abandoned, disrupted nearly the entire educational system in the northeast Nigeria at the time, rendered hundreds of thousands homeless, and triggered an unprecedented refugee and internal displacement crisis across the Lake Chad region (Mantzikos 2014; Akinola 2015).

What was initially considered by neighbouring states as a Nigerian domestic challenge eventually turned into a regional problem (Weeraratne 2015). Oyewole (2015, 428) aptly noted that the group has "emerged as one of the greatest threats to human security in Africa, and the Lake Chad region in particular". The effects of the threats and insecurity generated by Boko Haram ultimately transcended the confines of Nigeria's borders. Other states in the Lake Chad region – Cameroon, Chad and Niger – are also affected (although less severely than Nigeria) as the combatants have gradually expanded their geographical area of operations (Marc, Verjee

and Mogaka 2015). Persistent attacks have led to the kidnapping, displacement, and killing of Cameroonian nationals. Other effects include an alarming refugee influx into Cameroon as well as the attacks against the territorial integrity of Niger, chief of which was the Bosso attack where many Nigerian soldiers were killed. As a result of the regional dimension of the Boko Haram menace, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), with contributing troops from the four affected states (and Benin), is currently serving as the platform through which the states in the Lake Chad region respond to the uprising (Obamamoye 2016).

With the benefit of hindsight, one of the best ways to deconstruct the emergence of the security menace in Nigeria and the subsequent regional security crisis in the Lake Chad region is through the analytical framework of state weakness, as discussed earlier. It should be acknowledged at this juncture that a few previous studies (see for instance Adesoji 2011; Onapajo and Uzodike 2012; Maiangwa et al. 2012; Tonwe and Eke 2013) have in one or other way pointed out the role that state fragility played in the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. What is lacking is an analysis that explores its regional facets. This section sets out to build on the existing debate while elaborating its regional dynamics.

The weakness of the Nigerian state was central to the emergence and expansion of the Boko Haram terrorist group. This position can be explicated in different interconnected spheres. In the economic realm, the Nigerian state has, over the years, greatly underperformed in harnessing the human and natural resources at its disposal to alleviate the increasing economic hardship of the masses. There are alarmingly high levels of youth un(der)employment, poverty, income disparity and other deleterious economic indicators in the Nigerian socio-economic landscape. According to the 2015 National Human Development Report, Nigeria's economy is plagued by unabated poverty and unemployment despite its position as the largest economy in Africa (UNDP 2015). Similarly, based on the report from the National Bureau of Statistics (2015), the number of under-employed and unemployed individuals in Nigeria increased to 20.7 million in the third quarter of 2015. Nigerian Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo said that about "110 million Nigerians were living in poverty", with "two-tenth of that figure in

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extreme poverty" (*The Punch*, 16 July 2016). The situation is even more critical and complex in northeast Nigeria, the hotbed of the on-going terrorist crisis. The National Bureau of Statistics (2017) reported that northeast Nigeria had the highest rate of under-employment in the country at the end of 2017.

Therefore, despite the availability of natural resources, many Nigerians, especially in the northeast, find themselves struggling to subsist in a situation that can only be described as the survival of the fittest. The above indicators stem from the domestic governance crisis in Nigeria and its dysfunctional institutions which have subjected citizens to severe suffering and made them vulnerable to extremist dispositions. Pürçek (2014) maintains that "so long as the federal government do not [sic] eradicate the lingering poverty…, the terror in Nigeria look [sic] unlikely to end". While this article does not argue that prevailing economic conditions are the main trigger of the Boko Haram terrorist rebellion – despite the arguments of some scholars in that direction (Asuelime and David 2015; Khan and Cheri 2016) – it maintains that widespread poverty and youth unemployment in Nigeria's northeast facilitated initial recruitment of the terrorist group. At the outset Boko Haram usurped the welfare responsibility of the state by providing food, financial support and other incentives for impoverished young individuals as a strategic technique of proselytisation and luring people into their extremist ideology. Some of captured terrorists in Yobe State attested to this strategic undertaking (Walker 2012; Asuelime and David 2015).

On the political front, Nigerian state has many issues still unresolved. Although the country has seen successive changing governments through periodic elections, it still lacks enough credible institutions to safeguard liberal political best practices. Internal politics in Nigeria is mainly about winners taking charge of the state's resources. Many politicians across the country are noted for employing whatever means are necessary to cling onto power (Ake 1996). This may include sponsorship of radical groups in order to intimidate opposing candidates and citizens (Akinola 2015). Obi (2004, 114) describes the trend as "patrimonial networks lubricated and reproduced through the distribution of oil largesse". Thus, the Nigerian state allows reckless craving for political power at the expense of common security concerns. This was the exact political situation that unleashed the group which eventually became known as Boko Haram. One of the groups clandestinely sponsored by gubernatorial candidate Ali Modu Sheriff in advance of the 2003 general elections was led by Mohammed Yusuf, the first leader of the Boko Haram. When Ali Modu Sheriff won the election and became Governor of Borno State, Mohammed Yusuf was appointed to the Borno State Sharia Board (Akinola 2015; Weeraratne 2015). This provided initial connections, enlargement, appropriation, empowerment and logistical support for the group in pursuit of Islamic extremist ideology. After a few years, the group grew stronger and demanded strict application of sharia law. The governor's refusal set the stage for the violent attacks which government forces are still battling today (Adesoji 2011). This is one of many instances relating to misguided politics in Nigeria, especially before 2015 (see Joseph 1987). A strong state with viable political institutions would safeguard internal political affairs from developments that make the country susceptible to instability. As noted by Ismail (2013, 216), "radical groups often emerge in the context of overt or covert support by political elites who tap into their popularity and youth membership for political gains".

In the context of security, the dysfunctional nature of the Nigerian state system was also revealed in its failure to maintain the monopoly of the use of force that would have neutralised the Boko Haram terrorist group as soon as it was discovered in 2009. Wendt (1999, 193) argues that "states are key actors in the regulation of organised violence". From 2009 until early 2015, members of the terrorist group successfully defied Nigerian intelligence agencies, perpetrated mayhem and controlled a significant swathe of Nigerian territory. Walker (2012, 11) acknowledges that "the security services' inability to deal with Boko Haram in any meaningful way [especially before early 2015] has highlighted the extreme weakness in its capacity to carry out investigations." For instance, the mass abduction of Chibok school girls on 14 April 2014 caught the government unawares and over four years later, many of the kidnapped school girls are yet to be released, despite the unusual approach of negotiations and concessions. The former

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Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, reprimanded the leadership of the country for the failure to act until 72 hours after the abduction of the school girls (*Daily Post*, 6 February 2016). This is not typical of a competent state. For instance, when terrorists attacked several locations in France on 13 November 2015, all the perpetrators were not only immediately and publicly identified, but also brought to justice.

On a related note, Nigerian armed forces failed on various occasions to maintain superiority of firepower over Boko Harem, creating opportunities for the terrorists to raid prisons and military bases and pillage arms with impunity (Bappah 2016). As a further illustration of state failure, it is on record that some of the Nigerian soldiers fled when Boko Haram overran the headquarters of the MNJTF in Baga on 5 January 2015 (Akinola 2015). After this particular incident the essential ingredient of Nigerian "stateness" became questionable (Wendt 1999). Brainard, Chollet, and LaFleur (2007) correctly contend that "weak governments are often unable to adequately control their territory". At the time of writing, the Nigerian government still depends on the advanced states for supplying sophisticated weapons (including for internal security), with sales often refused on grounds of human rights violations.

Moreover, many of the Nigerian borders are far from being properly controlled. Their vulnerability is further complicated by the ill-equipped and corrupt personnel securing the borders and the difficult terrain separating Nigeria from neighbouring states. Former Nigerian interior minister Abba Moro, confirmed this when he noted that the number of irregular entry routes into Nigeria outnumbered the regular ones (Onuoha 2013). The covert message was that Nigeria is unable to thoroughly account for the inflow and outflow of migrants, especially illegal ones. Patrick (2006, 36) asserts that "states that do not control borders or territory facilitate terrorist infiltration and operations". Therefore, the inability of a state to control its borders is a sure sign of susceptibility to infiltration and attacks. Boko Haram strategically takes advantage of this inadequacy to smuggle in weapons and foreign nationals from contiguous states. It facilitates Boko Haram's joint training with other terrorist groups in states like Mali and Somalia; and encourages cross-border hit-and-run operations and establishment of hideouts in neighbouring states (Weeraratne 2015). In the

words of Adesoji (2011, 114), "the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for foreigners who share ethnic and religious affinities with Nigerians to slip into the country and enlist or otherwise join the fanatics' army". This shortcoming has significantly helped the group to recruit members from other states and allowed it to use hideouts in neighbouring territories to carry out attacks in Nigeria. The first line of defence against national insecurity is the border, so a state's failure to effectively manage its border is a direct indicator of weakness.

The rise of Boko Haram as a feared terrorist organisation posing unparalleled threats to Nigeria's territorial integrity and human security is not unconnected to the economic, political and security ineffectiveness of the Nigerian state. In this regard, the *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* categorises Nigeria as a critically weak state (Rice and Patrick 2008). Weeraratne (2015, 17) succinctly states that "the general weakness of the Nigerian state forms the backdrop of many explanatory accounts of [the] Boko Haram-related violence". It should be noted, however, that while Nigeria is described as a weak state in connection with the rise of Boko Haram, that is not to deny its status as an African giant and one of the world's leading peacekeeping contributors. The yardstick for the analysis here is not based on national potential or external role, but on the willingness/capacity of the state to effectively handle significant domestic issues.

From the regional perspective, security instability in the Lake Chad region could not have been prevented. First, weakness on the part of the Nigerian state allowed non-state terrorist forces to build momentum, networks and a territorial base, as well as expanding its membership and gaining access to sophisticated weapons. This provided an avenue for the gradual local and cross-border spread of violence once the prevailing conditions permitted it. Second, the state weakness syndrome is not limited to Nigeria in the Lake Chad region. Nigeria's neighbours in the region, especially Cameroon and Niger, also have their own weaknesses. Issues related to poverty and porous borders are common across the Lake Chad region. These neighbours were unable to properly control their borders to prevent initial terrorist usage of their territorial spaces, both as a theatre of violence and for hideouts. In this case, preventing the expansion of Nigeria's internal instability into regional

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instability became impossible. Third, ethno-religious, cultural and historical affinities among people residing in the region are not clearly demarcated by national borders. This was a direct consequence of "arbitrary border demarcations by colonial powers" (Oginni et al. 2018, 1). This enabled Boko Haram to mobilise combatants who have sympathy for "the struggle" across countries in the region. Fourth, the flow of refugees across national borders further reinforces the regional dimension of the instability.

The situation in the Lake Chad region demonstrates how weakness of a state or group of states can trigger regional security instability. Regional security can never be sustained where state actors fail to fulfil central responsibilities properly. Roger Benjamin and Raymond Duvall argue (quoted in Wendt 1999, 202) that the state is an institution "by which conflict is handled, society is ruled, and social relations are governed". The reality in the Lake Chad region has got to the point where security issues are a subject of regional concern and no single state has the ability to proffer a lasting solution without the support of others. Rather, regional cooperation and efforts are required to combat the direct consequences of the insurgency and its indirect as well as immediate causes. The United Nations Security Council expresses the same position when it "encourages governments in the region to sustain momentum, [and] further enhance regional military cooperation and coordination" (UNSC Resolution 2349, 2017, 3). The strengthening of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a regional initiative for security stability in the Lake Chad region is a significant security arrangement and highlights the need for a regional approach (Obamamoye 2017).

3. Addressing Security Instability in the Lake Chad Region: The Imperative of State-Building

One of the dominant concerns that occupy the attention of policy-makers in the Lake Chad region today is how to finally dislodge Islamist terrorists and create enduring regional security stability to allow peaceful coexistence. This singular project has (re)directed the focus of leaders across the regional space towards the pursuit of better inter-state military cooperation via the instrument of the Lake Chad Basin Commission

(Obama-moye 2016). This reinvigorated collaborative engagement seeks to rescue human and national security from the new patterns of violent extremism and threats of terrorist attacks that beset the space. Indeed, this became unavoidable after indiscriminate attacks, suicide bombings, community raids and other atrocities by the violent non-state actors created an unprecedented wave of security threats to lives and property in the region. A notable measure collectively put in place by these states is the revival of the Multinational Joint Task Force for counter-terrorism. The regional force possesses a mandate to create a safe environment, restore lost territorial integrity and ensure safe return of refugees (African Union 2015). As argued elsewhere, although such a regional response is conventional and exigent, the strategy alone is at best reactionary and palliative with no capacity to deliver needed long-lasting solution (see Obamamoye 2017).

The more reliable pathways to peace and security as described in this article, which many policy-makers often overlook or ignore, revolve around state-building through enhancement of government responsibility and improved domestic governance (Sawyer 2004; Marc, Verjee and Mogaka 2015). The major threats in the region are sub-national terrorists operating within the borders of the states in the region. The remedy therefore lies within the constituent states. Second, Boko Haram is largely a product of states' weakness in discharging their basic functions (Yusuf 2013). As established earlier, the government's inadequate capacity to fulfil citizens' economic needs, prohibit counterproductive "illiberal" democratic practices, prevent porous borders, and dispense necessary internal security tasks allowed violent extremism to proliferate. Therefore, besides on-going regional security cooperation as a way of responding to the by-products of governance crisis (terrorism and insurgency), deliberate attention needs to be directed to the state-building project in order to resolve the root causes.

At the heart of the state-building approach to national/regional stability is institutional empowerment for effective governance. As defined by Fukuyama (2004b, 17), state-building means "the creation of new government institutions and the strengthening of the existing ones". This is an issue that many states in the Lake Chad region, particularly Nigeria in this in-

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stance, have been unable to properly address. Nigeria suffers high rates of youth unemployment and poverty despite having enormous natural resources at its disposal (Khan and Cheri 2016). While the number of students graduating from higher institutions yearly grows exponentially, the available job opportunities increase only arithmetically. Furthermore, systemic corruption, embezzlement of government funds and persistent non-accountability continue unabated. The unresolved issue of institutional deficiencies of security agencies also makes matters even more complicated. These trends have adversely affected Nigerian society, as reflected in the growing governance gap, crime rate, conflict, militancy and violent extremism. No level of regional collaboration can solve these problems; the solution lies in the strengthening of internal institutions and improving domestic governance. Government institutions if empowered have the potential to be more responsive, thus reducing governance gap, creating a national sense of belonging, connecting the state to the society and tackling security challenges (Bappah 2016). This empowerment is the best way to provide sustainable solutions to human, national, and regional insecurity.

Furthermore, domestic security institutions across the region, particularly within Nigeria's space, require empowerment and restructuring. The core instrument for any state to maintain law and order, without which there is no "stateness", is the national security apparatus. Unfortunately, many of Nigeria's security agencies have been so crippled by corruption and complacency that they are unable to discharge their duties effectively. In the same vein, the porous nature of Nigerian borders allowed radical groups like Boko Haram to obtain sophisticated weapons (Weeraratne 2015). These are the major reasons why Nigeria could not redress the Boko Haram problem before it became a major security challenge. All these issues suggest that immediate internal restructuring and overhauling of national security institutions in is imperative. That would permit efficient management of situations before they deteriorate into threats.

State-building through the enhancement of government's domestic responsibility, as described in this article, is applicable not only to the Nigerian state, but also to other states in the Lake Chad region. Once the four countries are ready to restore security stability in their respective spaces, regional instability will quickly become history.

4. Conclusion

The article examined the nuanced links and interactions between state weakness (which manifests when a government lacks the institutional potency to provide essential services internally) and regional security instability. It became imperative because the domestic government's approach to regional security has not received due attention in mainstream regional security studies. Unlike previous studies, this article used contemporary developments in the Lake Chad region to explore the connections between the two variables – state weakness and regional instability. Overall, it contended that activities within and across constituting states of a given region are alternative factors in determining the security stability or otherwise in the regional space. In other words, this article has argued that any state that could not efficaciously manage its borders, promptly respond to security emergencies and demonstrate considerable capacity in addressing citizens' needs is vulnerable to regionalised security instability, especially when the neighbouring states share similar characteristics. Therefore, just as hostile inter-state relations can trigger regional security instability, so also can the weakness of states. Whenever states fail in carrying out their basic roles – such as maintaining an internal monopoly of the legitimate use of force, building institutions to pragmatically respond to the myriad needs of citizens and ensuring effective border management – domestic rebellion with possible regional implications becomes likely. Among other things, this is a response to the observation raised by Tavares (2009, 154) that "literature on regional security has so far neglected the question of how peace and (in)security become regionalized".

This article argued that sustainable stabilisation of a region suffering trans-state terrorism demands state-building through institutional empowerment. This is particularly applicable as a durable strategy for resolving the security crisis affecting the Lake Chad region. In addition to a regional military arrangement that would only react to the symptoms of state weakness,

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rebuilding government institutions will facilitate and strengthen their capacity to resolve the challenges that triggered or regionalised the conflict in the first place. Although Boko Haram laid claim to religion as the main factor propelling the ongoing violent campaigns, the weakness of state(s) in the region, especially the Nigerian state, hampered their early response to these attacks. The Nigerian government was therefore unable to hinder the group's operations before it had subdued about fourteen different local governments, killed tens of thousands and rendered millions homeless. Since this new dimension of insecurity in the Lake Chad region emanated from sub-state actors, remedy should be sought primarily within the component states through assertive governmental responsiveness.

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