

# The Role of Transgovernmental Networks in Combating Terrorism in the West African Sub-Region

**Adole Raphael Audu,  
Manpa'a Aliyu Musa**

Department of Public Administration,  
University of Maiduguri, Borno State- Nigeria

&

**Haruna Ayuba**

Department of Political Science,  
University of Maiduguri, Borno State- Nigeria.

## **Abstract**

An increasing number of scholars and observers have described the European Union (EU) as an advanced form of transgovernmentalism. Some referred to it as Europeanization, multilevel governance, administrative fusion etc. Transgovernmentalist thesis however, states that European politics is shaped by the growing interaction of national government officials at every level of decision-making process within the European Union. This paper therefore examines the transgovernmentalist thesis in the West African sub region by looking at patterns of formal' and informal cooperation in the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as it combats terrorism. The data is based on the secondary source and content analysis was employed to analyse the data. Nevertheless, this form of cooperation is hampered by ideological differences and suspicion between the Anglophone and Francophone countries affected by the Boko Haram insurgents. The paper recommends amongst others that government units working across borders in the affected countries should be divided among different countries that want to demarcate the domestic from the international. There should be interaction with their foreign counterparts directly without much monitoring by foreign offices or senior executive branch officials so as to promote cooperation in the region.

**Keywords:** Transgovernmental Networks, Terrorism, West Africa,  
West African Sub Region.

## **Introduction**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was created for the purpose of Economic development and integration

of its fifteen member states. Over the years ECOWAS has drawn from the activities of the African Union, the European Union and other regional organizations across the globe. For instance, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has over the last decade become one of the most dynamic sections of administrative interaction in the European Union (EU). Vanhoonacker, Dijkstra and Maumer (2010) asserts that the interaction has entailed the creation of several political military bodies in Brussels as well as functional desks specifically devoted to European security cooperation in member states foreign and defence ministries. As a result, an expanding group of diplomats, policy advisers, military officers, and civil servants, are now involved in the decision-making process and the implementation of ESDP in its various dimensions, operations, civilian crisis management, and capability development.

It is based on the above premise that the upsurge of terrorists' activities, particularly the Boko I Ta7-am sect in Nigeria and the M23 in Mali and other parts of the West African sub region has attracted attention from governments in the region to promote interaction on how to combat terrorism. Some analyst like Iheme (2012) and Peters (2010) concludes that security and defence policy has moved beyond intergovernmental decision making towards a transgovernmental form of governance. Whether called supranational, intergovernmentalism, multilevel governance, administrative or Brussclization. The Transgovernmentalist argument states that European politics is shaped by the growing interaction of national government officials at every level of the decision making process (Wallace and Wallace, 2000; Webber, 2004; Regelsberger and Wessels, 2005; Duke and vanhoonacker 2006; Norheim-Martinsen, 2010).

Within the context of this paper, a systematic way of analyzing and conceptualizing administrative interaction among ECOWAS members against the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria particularly is examined. For instance, policies relating to the formation of Multinational force

to combat terrorism in the region. Obviously, the spate of bomb blasts, kidnappings, vandalism and series of killings from 2009-2015 especially in Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria has raised serious concerns about the institutionalization of violence as a means of redressing grievances, its wide spread use and abuse by the state and non-state actors. This has spawned humanitarian crises, human insecurity, and development and governance crises in the West African sub region. Consequently, it became imperative for these countries to interface to curb insurgent activities. As Nuttall (2005) argues, even the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) faces the twofold problem of coherence along the various dimensions of *ESDP* (Capabilities, civil crisis management, and military operations) and consistency between various institutions and actions.

The paper seeks to contribute to the literature on the changing nature of governance in international security particularly as it relates to the Boko Harm sect. Petrou (2010) and Yustaert and Keukeleive (2010) use the governance metaphor to describe the complex *ESDP* decision-making machinery, in which state and non-state European Union and national actors coexist alongside one another. A key challenge in this perspective is to identify potential policy entrepreneurs that fit the governance image "beyond intergovernmental" (Norheim-Martinsen 2010). This paper is set to thus examine the role of transgovernmental networks as a political and social structural approach that allows us to detect formal and informal social relations amongst the countries combating the Boko Haram insurgency in the West African sub region.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

The concept of Transgovernmental Networks is the basic concept that needs to be clarified in this paper. Transgovernmental Network thesis has attracted a lot of attention from so many scholars and observers in the social science field. This aspect of this

paper is therefore designed to clarify the concept of Transgovernmental Networks.

### **Transgovernmental Networks**

Howarth (2000) coined the term "Supranational intergovernmentalism" to capture the phenomenon whereby several institutions and groups take root in Brussels and tend to formulate and even drive ESDP policies. This is close to the idea of Brusselisation used by Allen (1998) and Nuttali (2000) to describe the institutionalization of the common foreign and security policy in the 1990s. Keohane and Nye (1974, p.43), states that "transgovernmental cooperation" implies "direct interactions among sub-units of different governments that are not controlled or closely guided by the policies of cabinets or chief executives of those governments". Those networks of government officials interact beneath formal state hierarchies along functional lines (through transversal bureaucratic cooperation) to produce policy outcomes. Slaughter (2004) also opines that by contrast, intergovernmentalism describes traditional inter-state relations that take place exclusively via chiefs of government and the formal diplomatic machinery while transnationalism refers to devise interaction across different levels of society such as the *EU* in a more complex form of governance.

Each form of international cooperation defined by Keohane and Nye corresponds to a different network structure - these network structures differ along two dimensions - the looms of gate keeping and the strength of national borders. Gate keeping refers to who controls access to important sections of the network while border effects refer to the boundaries that delineate cohesive groups within the network.

Allen (1998) in similar view also observes that Transgovernmental networks serves as direct interactions among sub-units of different governments that are not controlled or closely guided by the policies of cabinets or chief executive of those

governments. He adds that a Transgovernmental network facilitates assessment of the traditional inter-state relations that take place exclusively in a chief of government and the formal diplomatic machinery. It also serves as a means of decision-making towards a transgovernmental form of governance. Transgovernmental networks therefore represent a formalized process of social network, a methodology that detects patterns of formal and informal social relations across a policy field.

It also serves as a policy which is shaped by the growing interaction of national government officials at every level of the decision making process (Wallace and Wallace, 2000; Webber et al., 2004; Nuttall and Schroeder 2006) summarise the uses of transgovernmental networks into two. First it offers a systematic way of analyzing and conceptualizing administrative interaction in ESDP policy making. Second, it contributes to the issues that address the gap with rich case studies of individual administrative bodies or specific crisis management operations.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Globalisation refers to the process of the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across international boundaries. It is principally aimed at the transcendental homogenization of political and socio-economic theory across the globe. It is equally aimed at making global being present worldwide at the world stage or global arena. It deals with the "increasing breakdown of trade barriers and the increasing integration of world market (Fafowora, 1995). In other word, as Oluabunwa, (1999) once opines:

Globalisation can be seen as an evolution which is systematically restructuring interactive phases among nations by breaking clown barriers in the areas of culture, commerce, communication and several other fields of endeavour.

This is evident from its push of free-market economics, liberal democracy, good governance, gender equality and environmental

sustainability among other holistic values for the people of the member states. Within the parameters of the foregoing, globalization could be correctly defined from the institutional perspective as the spread of capitalism (MacEwan, 1990). However, it is germane to state that the collapse of the Eastern bloc in the late 80s and early 90s led to the emergence and ascendancy of a global economy that is primarily structured and governed by the interest of the capitalist west, thus, facilitating the integration of most economies into the global capitalist economy. Globalization, according to Ohiorhenuan (1999) is the broadening and deepening linkages of national economics into a worldwide market for goods and services, especially capital. As Tandon (1998) once opines, globalization seeks to remove all national barriers to the free movement of international capital and this process is accelerated and facilitated by the supersonic transformation in information technology. It is principally aimed at the universal homogenization of ideas, cultures, values and even life styles (Ohiorhenuan, 1999) and the villagization of the world.

Globalization has created a platform where ECOWAS member states encourage foreign direct investment and international portfolio flows and also established a premise where they operate together to also protect their political and security interests through global interaction.

### **Terrorist activities in the West African sub region**

This section examines insurgents' movements in the West African sub region. Though, it is crucial to make reference to other armed non-state actors such as the national liberation movements, rebel movements, belligerents and militias. Nevertheless, this paper deals with Insurgent activities in the West African sub region. Insurgents are armed elements that rise up in rebellion against a constituted authority like the M23 in Mali and the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'arwati wal jihad* (Boko Haram) in Nigeria. Dele (2011) stated that since 2009 when the Boko Haram staged a bloody

confrontation with law enforcement agents in. Kano, Bauchi, Yobe and Borno States in Nigeria, its leader late Urtaz Mohammed Yusuf had been in and out of detention and the courts before his alleged murder by the police in 2009. At various times the group has been urged by politicians including State Governors to perpetrate violence on political opponents. It is the combination of these factors that have sustained the group who depended on these politicians and other top government officials who showered them with gifts for their survival.

Corroborating the above view, Mohammed (2011) asserts that the uprising started in Bauchi, capital of Bauchi State on July 26, 2009 and within four days, spread to neighbouring states of Borno, Yobe and Kano. Failure of the police to put down the uprising led to the order of late president Musa Yar' Adua to crush the sect. The army did but in the process between 800 and 1000 lives mostly innocent civilians were reportedly lost. The culture of political violence in Nigeria would not be complete particularly in this present dispensation (Fourth Republic) if one failed to mention the United Nations Building blast at the Federal Capital Abuja. Mohammed and Remoke (2011) states that the death toll from the bomb blast at the United Nations building in Abuja reached 23 while four unnamed staff were flown to South Africa for medical attention.

Reacting to the UN Office bombing, Ismail (2011) quoted late Governor Patrick Yakowa by saying that the bombing of the UN 1 louse was a wake-up call to Nigerians to rise and fight terrorist acts in the country. Governor Yakowa describes the attack as a direct assault on the sanctity of life. He viewed the attack on the humanitarian and development institution that has added value to the lives of many Nigerians as a direct assault on the sanctity of life by people who do not value the peaceful co-existence, progress and development of other country.

Nigeria did not recover from the shock and horror of the UN Building at Abuja when on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 over 100 persons

were killed in suicide attacks in Damaturu the Yobe State capital. Hamza and Kabiru (2011) report that over 100 persons were killed on Friday 6, November, 2011 in Damaturu, the Yobe State Capital as a result of sporadic suicide bombings and gunshots launched by suspected members of the Yusifiyya movement also called Boko Haram on many security and Federal Government formations. Over 130 corpses were seen at the Sard Abacha Specialist Hospital in Damaturu. Many of them were burnt beyond recognition. Two Storey Building housing the Anti Terrorist Unit of the Police was destroyed. The whole building was reduced to shreds as a result of the suicide attack. Dozens of houses belonging to top government functionaries were also affected by the seismic impact of the blast.

Didier (2014) stated that the Boko Haram insurgents from Nigeria also bombed Niger border town, killing five people and carried out attacks in neighbouring Cameroon, kidnapping a bus full of passengers. Militants stormed a prison in Diffa in Niger and attacked its prison and in the process five people lost their lives. Boko Haram attacks were also recorded in Cameroon as suspected Boko Haram militants attacked the northern village of Kerawa and kidnapped at least 18 people travelling on a bus near Adanga Danga. Boko Haram also stepped up cross - border incursions into Cameroon as it seeks to build its caliphate. Didier (2014) further adds that Cameroon military killed about 30 suspected Boko Haram militants who attacked areas where 480 Nigerian troops had crossed over during a battle with the insurgents. He stated that the President of Cameroon instructed that the columns of Nigerian soldiers that entered Cameroonian territory should be camped in specific locations and supervised by the Cameroonian army. In addition, an intensification of attacks near Lake Chad, a crossroads between Nigeria, Chad and Niger has made tens of thousands of Nigerians fleeing across borders. In February, 2015, the governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Benin agreed to establish an 8700 strong multi - national force to combat terrorist activities in the West African sub region combat terrorists



activities through Transgovernmental networks. Most of the affected countries in the region have committed personnel, equipment and funds to curb terrorists' activities. Transgovernmental networks are often seen as informal institutions linking regulators, legislators, military, and other actors across national boundaries to carry out various aspects 'of global governance - they exhibits pattern(s) of regular and purposive relations among government units working across the borders that divide countries from one another and demarcate the "domestic" from the "international" sphere. Slaughter (2004) added that countries with such kind of network (Transgovernmental) allow domestic officials to interact with their foreign counterparts directly, without much supervision by foreign offices or senior executive branch or formal negotiations amongst countries.

Challenges of combating terrorism through Transgovernmental networks in the West African sub region

Terrorism is a serious problem today that has threatened the security of various countries the world over for a long time that is why efforts are being made by most International and regional organizations to develop framework and strategies to combat terrorism. Most of the strategies developed are more often than not incorporated in their conflict prevention and management techniques. Conflict prevention and management has been on the top agenda of the United Nations, African Union, the European Union and other regional organizations such as the ECOWAS. For instance, Article 1 (para.1) of the UN Charter stipulates that " the purposes of the UN are to maintain international peace and security and that to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of peace. The EU, AU and ECOWAS also put a high premium on conflict prevention and management that is why Mwanasali (2012) opines that three recurrent themes: conflict prevention, good

neighbourliness and greater 'African unity are the core of Africa's political ideal to foster a sense of community among member states and the African people. It is this philosophy that ECOWAS also drew heavily on.

In view of the forgoing discourse, the inevitable poser is: what are the challenges of Transgovernmental networks in the West African sub region? Given that international integration requires that states surrender some of their powers on policy issues to a supranational body. Yahaya (2015) states that integration tinkers national policies with the aim of creating a regulatory regime that is common between and/or among states for their mutual benefits. This can only be achieved through formal and informal interaction which the transgovenmental networks thesis advocates. Transgovernmental networks look beyond national policies and laws by the individual states to suit the condition and requirements for cooperation, underlie the political process that facilitates integration between and among states in the international system (Yahaya,2015).

However, the fight against the Boko Haram Islamist sect in the West African sub - region is still a huge challenge despite the formation of a Multinational Joint Task Force in the region. One of the challenges confronting the states affected" by insurgency in the region is that of suspicion. The rivalry between the Anglophone and Francophone countries within the region has seriously hampered cooperation amongst the states. It is against this premise that the President of Nigeria, General Muhammadu Buhari made diplomatic visits to Chad and the Republic of Cameroon in April and May 2015 to reiterate Nigeria's desire and commitment to end the war against the Boko Haram insurgents in the region. In the past, Nigeria, Chad and the Cameroon had blamed each other over the refusal to grant their forces the right to pursue the insurgents across the borders.

Another major challenge that impedes cooperation within the purview of transgovernmental networks in the West African sub

region is the Non-implementation of agreements reached between states. For instance, all the countries affected by the activities of the Boko Haram sect should not recognize international boundaries but the lack of implementation of treaties or agreement reached between states within the West African sub region has seriously affected the workings of ECOWAS. Other challenges such as inadequate funds, lack of institutional framework and the challenges of moving personnel and equipment across borders have interrogated the transgovernmental networks thesis in the West African sub region.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examines Transgovernmental networks in the West African sub region. Over the years, scholars have no reliable and systematic information on transgovernmental networks decision-making processes. Ultimately, the objective of this paper is to map out the policy domain by identifying the position of actors, their social relations, trajectory, social representations, and role in the decision-making process. The paper reveals that the presidents of the affected countries occupy a strategic position in the web of cooperation. They are the main actors in the web of cooperation as such they act as the main gatekeepers for their respective domestic governments. The transgovernmentalist thesis finds greater support when looking at the constellation of actors in structurally equivalent positions. Thus, there are clear elements of transgovernmentalism in the West Africa domain, but the phenomenon seems limited to a narrow group of officials.

## **Recommendations**

1. It is important for countries within the West African sub region to protect the lives of their citizens and all individuals within the region be subjected to their jurisdictions. The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms should be compatible with the ECOWAS charter on security and the spirit of the United Nations global counter-terrorism strategy

should be adopted. Counter-terrorism strategy measures often posed serious challenges to economic, social and cultural rights, which are particularly important for the promotion of the rights of individuals.

2. States within the region should address the root causes and conditions that were conducive to the emergence and spread of terrorism, including poverty, marginalisation, political oppression, and polarisation of ethnic and religious characteristics. These factors were observed to be the main motivations behind the emergence of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria.
3. Transgovernmental networks are an informal institution that links regulators, legislators, judges and other actors across national boundaries to carry out various aspects of global governance. Therefore, government units working across the borders should be divided among different countries that want to demarcate the domestic from the international. There should be interaction with their foreign counterparts directly without much monitoring by foreign offices or senior executive branch officials like the National Assembly in Nigeria.
4. Transgovernmental networks are crucial in passing out information and communication technology, in response to the increasing complexity and transnational nature of contemporary problems, to which they are uniquely suited. States within the West African sub region should strengthen their interaction through the protection of information they classify as urgent or secret. This will go a long way in promoting trust and confidence amongst the states in the region.
5. Funds are an essential ingredient that needs to be provided for the multinational force to succeed. Governments affected by the crisis in the region should show commitment by funding the multinational force to enable them achieve their goals. Legislatures in the affected countries should ensure that

oversight committees and institution review their monitoring mechanisms to give presidents of these countries the leverage to assist in the funding of the multinational force without much supervision.

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