

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 05-11-2022		2. REPORT TYPE FINAL		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) N/A	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Climate and Conflict in Lake Chad Basin – Improving USAFRICOM’s Strategy Towards Complex Climate-Security Challenges			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A		
6. AUTHOR(S) CDR Catherine A. B. Reppert, USN			5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A		
			5e. TASK NUMBER N/A		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Writing & Teaching Excellence Center Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR’S ACRONYM(S) N/A		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR’S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the curriculum. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT This paper evaluates the impact of the current approach of viewing climate change as a threat multiplier and the impact of the United States’ security posture on partner nations of the Lake Chad Basin and finds that USAFRICOM’s current focus on counterterrorism is too narrow. Climate change is a primary threat to the Lake Chad Basin region and climate change awareness and adaptation should be part of USAFRICOM’s strategy due to the climate-conflict cycle. By exploring the terminology typically associated with climate change and security, examining the climate-conflict cycle and impacts of hate-and-heat on security, and assessing current security initiatives, we can see opportunities for improvement in USAFRICOM’s regional security efforts. Climate change awareness and adaptation needs to be part of USAFRICOM’s strategy in the region due to the climate-conflict cycle.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS (Key words) USAFRICOM, Lake Chad Basin, Climate change, conflict, drought, heat, threat multiplier, security					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: UNCLASSIFIED			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT N/A	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Director, Writing Center
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-6499

Climate and Conflict in Lake Chad Basin – Improving USAFRICOM’s Strategy Towards Complex Climate-Security Challenges

Once a vast lake and part of an ancient inland sea on the continent of Africa, Lake Chad is a shadow of its former size. The lake, once described as an “immense swamp” by Winston Churchill, is less than 90% of its size from when he penned those words because of overgrazing and changing climate patterns.¹ The shrinking lake is the backdrop for conflict as 30 million people in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon are competing over its resources. Displacement, hunger and malnutrition are rife. Farmers and herders vie for water to maintain their livelihoods and the tensions resulted in abductions, killings, and the growth of terrorist organizations. Lake Chad Basin is now a significant hotspot of terrorism from Boko Haram and ISIS. Climate change is a primary threat to the Lake Chad Basin region and climate change awareness and adaptation should be part of USAFRICOM’s strategy due to the climate-conflict cycle. Lasting stability and security in the Lake Chad Basin requires empowered local communities, enforced property rights, effective regional and sub-regional organizations to oversee land dispute resolutions, and shared political power.

The convergence of climate risks and conflict create a negative feedback loop where food insecurity, economic instability, and fierce competition for limited resources weaken the capacity of government institutions to provide support. The weakened government is unable to provide access to health care, essential services, and an environment for investment which leads to further food insecurity, economic instability, and strife. While this phenomenon is most

¹ Winston Churchill describes the shrinking of the lake in 1899 with no uncertain terms: “Lake Chad, into which the Shari flows, appears to be leaking through some subterranean exit, and is rapidly changing from a lake into an immense swamp.” From Winston Churchill, *The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Sudan (1902 edition)*, (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg). Retrieved May 11, 2022 from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4943/4943-h/4943-h.htm#link2HCH0017>

recognizable in the conflicts of Somalia and Mali, the Lake Chad Basin is another area subject to the climate-conflict negative feedback loop. This paper evaluates the impact of the current approach of viewing climate change as a threat multiplier and the impact of the United States' security posture on partner nations of the Lake Chad Basin and finds that USAFRICOM's current focus on counterterrorism is too narrow. Climate change is a primary threat to the Lake Chad Basin region and climate change awareness and adaptation should be part of USAFRICOM's strategy due to the climate-conflict cycle. By exploring the terminology typically associated with climate change and security, examining the climate-conflict cycle and impacts of hate-and-heat on security, and assessing current security initiatives, we can see opportunities for improvement in USAFRICOM's regional security efforts. Climate change awareness and adaptation needs to be part of USAFRICOM's strategy in the region due to the climate-conflict cycle.

“Threat Multiplier”?

In 2007, the CNA Corporation Military Advisory Board described the deleterious effects of climate change overlaid on traditional security challenges as a “threat multiplier”.

Economic and environmental conditions in already fragile areas will further erode as food production declines, diseases increase, clean water becomes increasingly scarce, and large populations move in search of resources. Weakened and failing governments, with an already thin margin for survival, foster the conditions for internal conflicts, extremism, and movement toward increased authoritarianism and radical ideologies.²

Climate change thus can “seriously exacerbate already marginal living standards in many Asian, African, and Middle Eastern nations, causing widespread political instability and the

² *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*, The CNA Corporation (2007), 6, https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/national%20security%20and%20the%20threat%20of%20climate%20change.pdf

likelihood of failed states.”³ In general, the thinking goes, climate change makes existing and emergent security challenges worse.

In 2014, the CNA updated its analysis from “threat multiplier” to labeling climate change as a “catalyst for conflict” but the concept of climate change as a “threat multiplier” largely stuck and that term is now common in government and policy documents. Climate change is widely acknowledged as contributing to security challenges. But the terminology of “threat multiplier” nests climate change within a broader framework of security threats and enables it to be coupled with more traditional threats.

This is politically expedient and, in some ways, also permits the diminishment of climate change as a threat by the Pentagon. As Michael Stricof explains, “by making climate change a part of other threats—allowing it to be coupled with terrorism for example—it can be integrated into whatever issues are actively considered most pressing...In this sense, the Pentagon understood “stability” as the object being threatened and in need of response, not the environment itself.”⁴

However, the concept of climate change as a threat multiplier does not help us understand *how* or *what to extent* climate change exacerbates security issues or if the climate change itself is the security issue. Additionally, “threat multiplier” is not specific nor helpful in identifying specific climate risk factors or interventions to diminish those risks.⁵ It also is less helpful when

³ CNA, 6.

⁴ Michael Stricof, “Representing Climate Change through the Lens of Environmental Security: Thirty Years of the Department of Defense Defining a Threat Multiplier and Military Resilience,” *E-rea* 18, no. 2, 15 June 2021, accessed 23 September 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/erea/11609>

⁵ Josh Bushby, “It’s Time We Think Beyond “Threat Multiplier” to Address Climate and Security,” *New Security Beat*, 21 January 2020. URL: <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2020/01/its-time-threat-multiplier-address-climate-security/>

assessing complex climate-related security challenges as it presumes the security risk (terrorism, armed conflict, etc.) is the primary threat.

Moving beyond “threat multiplier,” how can we better predict the impact of climate change on security challenges and craft policies to mitigate these threats? Academic research in the field of climate and security can help. It also helps us understand the complex security environment of the Lake Chad Basin.

“Hate and Heat”

Academic literature in the study of climate and security shows rates of conflict increase when drought and temperature increases. Agriculturally dependent societies and politically excluded groups are especially prone to drought-driven conflict.⁶ Uexkull et al. describe a “reciprocal nature–society interaction in which violent conflict and environmental shock constitute a vicious circle, each phenomenon increasing the group’s vulnerability to the other.”⁷ Again in a cyclical construct, Rohrer et al. describe a “heat and hate” cycle in which a 1 degree Celsius increase in temperature resulted in a 54% increase in conflict probability in mixed areas (areas in which farmers and herders both lived and competed for resources) compared to 17% increase in non-mixed areas.⁸ Additional research reveals that one standard deviation adverse precipitation in a transhumant pastoral society raised the risk of conflict by 35%.⁹ Thus, hot and dry weather increases the risk of violence at interpersonal and intergroup levels by 30-50%.

⁶ Nina von Uexkull, Mihai Croicu, Hanne Fjelde, and Halvard Buhaug, “Civil Conflict Sensitivity to Growing-Season Drought,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 44, (November 2016), 12391–12396 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1607542113>

⁷ Uexkull et al., 12391.

⁸ Eberle, Ulrich J. and Rohner, Dominic and Thoenig, Mathias, “Heat and Hate: Climate Security and Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Africa,” Center for Economic and Policy Research Discussion Paper No. DP15542, (December 2020) <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3753942>

⁹ Transhumant pastoralists are groups who practice animal husbandry and engage in the seasonal movement of grazing animals. Eoin F. McGuirk and Nathan Nunn, “Transhumant Pastoralism, Climate Change, and Conflict in Africa,”

Climate-conflict research also sheds light on what factors reduce hostilities. In general, violence is substantially reduced when the affected groups share more political power. Specifically, in conflicts between farmers and herders, policies that empower local communities, enforce property rights, and regulate land dispute resolution improve security and reduce the risk of conflict.¹⁰ Development programs and foreign aid, except for irrigation aid projects, have little demonstrable effect on conflict. Irrigation projects help reduce conflict in areas of farmer-herder strife and climate change but the best predictor of peace despite drought and heat is when pastoral groups share political power.¹¹ Sharing political power ensures advocacy of resources to all in need. Implementing power sharing can both help end existing conflicts as well as prevent future hostilities. The research shows that areas which have power sharing relationships in place have less conflict and that inclusion of pastoral groups in local politics helps resolve existing conflict.¹²

These findings are critical to resolving the complex emergency in the Lake Chad Basin region. However termed, “heat and hate,” “heat and aggression” relationship, the “climate-conflict trap,” or a “climate-conflict negative feedback loop” – the evidence demonstrates that climate change is an inextricable component of conflict especially in areas with both herders and farmers.

Lake Chad Basin Complex Emergency

The Lake Chad Basin crisis has many contributing factors. It is rooted in inequality and long-term political marginalization of the predominately rural population. Over grazing and

National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 28243, (December 2020), Revised May 2021
https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w28243/w28243.pdf

¹⁰ Eberle et al., “Heat and Hate,” 27

¹¹ Ibid, 37.

¹² McGuirk and Nunn, 45.

increasingly variable rainfall patterns lead to competition between farmers and herders over the increasingly scarce resources of freshwater, grazing lands, fish stocks and vegetation.¹³

The region's challenges fueled the rise of terrorist organizations. Describing the conflict to the UN in 2017, former President Buhari of Chad said that the "The 'oasis in the desert' is just a desert now... Farmers and herdsman struggle over the little water left; Herdsman migrate in search of greener pastures resulting in conflicts; Our youths are joining terrorist groups because of lack of jobs and difficult economic conditions." ¹⁴

Religious and cultural differences exist in the Lake Chad Basin as the herding population groups are typically Muslim and the farmers are more likely Christian. While it may be tempting to view the conflict between farmers and herders as a type of religious warfare, research demonstrates that climate change and resource scarcity are the critical factors that engender conflict between herders and farmers. Climate change "affects both jihadist conflicts and non-jihadist conflicts similarly."¹⁵ In the Lake Chad Basin, religious undertones to water disputes underscore the need for participatory and representative governance but are not a primary driver of conflict.

Taking advantage of the resource scarcity and weak government presence in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group, is fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state. Founded in 2002, Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam which makes it "haram," or forbidden, for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with Western society, including participating in elections or getting a secular

¹³ "Lake Chad Risk Assessment: The Role of Climate Change in the Current Crisis," Adelphi, Accessed 22 September 2021 <https://www.adelphi.de/en/project/lake-chad-risk-assessment-role-climate-change-current-crisis>

¹⁴ "Climate Change Could Mean More Terrorism in the Future," UNDOC, Accessed 7 October 2021, <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/climate-change-could-mean-more-terrorism-in-the-future.html>

¹⁵ McGuirk and Nunn, 3.

education. Boko Haram regards the Nigerian state as being run by non-believers and extended its military campaign by targeting neighboring states to grow its self-declared caliphate.¹⁶ Since it became militarized in 2009, Boko Haram caused nearly 40,000 casualties and contributed to the displacement of 2.4 million people around the Lake Chad Basin.¹⁷

The primary security organization countering Boko Haram is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Comprised of military units from Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Benin, the MNJTF was founded to fight the regionalization of the Boko Haram threat in 2009. The MNJTF operates under the political lead of the African Union (AU), which mandated the broader regional organization, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) be the political coordinating body of the MNJTF. The LCBC was founded in 1964 to foster the shared and sustainable management and exploitation of Lake Chad, as well as to promote cross-border security along the changing shores of the Lake.¹⁸ The LCBC is working to introduce drought-resistant crops and a sensitization campaign to reduce the water consumption associated with traditional, and less sustainable, farming techniques. These adaptation techniques and the broader LCBC regional governance agenda has been overshadowed by the threat of Boko Haram and the efforts of the MNJTF. This is challenging because the conditions that gave rise to Boko Haram – farmer/herder land disputes, water insecurity, scarce resources – are not addressed in current MNJTF security efforts. Military cooperation under the MNJTF is has “broken down walls between member states,” enabled quick cross-border troop deployments, and led to some success

¹⁶ “Who are Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamist Group?” BBC News, (24 November 2016) <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>

¹⁷ Rafael Prieto Curiel, Olivier Walther, and Neave O’Clery, “Uncovering the internal structure of Boko Haram through its mobility patterns,” *Applied Network Science* 5, no. 28 (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-020-00264-4>

¹⁸ Greta Galeazzi et al., *Understanding the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC): Water and Security at Inter-regional Crossroads* (Maastricht, Netherlands: European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2017)

in countering Boko Haram.¹⁹ However, infighting and factional rivalries cloud relations among member states and it is still an immature organization with mistrust and protectionism hampering a larger regional security role.

The LCBC is a critical organization in cooperation and mediation for resource scarcity. Given the climate-conflict cycle, improvements need to be made in the underlying environmental and political issues to lessen the likelihood of conflict. To date, the performance of LCBC is mixed due to immature mechanisms to monitor and control the use of water resources, insufficient clarity of roles and competencies, and most significantly a lack of political interest among member states.²⁰ The partner nations tend to favor more politically visible military interventions.²¹ While several countries in the region have heavily invested in their security forces as part of the MNJTF, investments in expanding political participation, increasing economic opportunities, irrigation and land dispute resolution frameworks are less prevalent. A common theme is that militarizing to go after Boko Haram and “improving security in the region” will allow the Lake Chad Basin Commission to focus on “underlying environmental issues exacerbating the conflict”²² but viewing the problem from the climate-conflict cycle perspective indicates that another security threat, another terrorist organization or tribal militia,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ For example, the massive proposed transnational inter-basin investment to transfer water from the Congo River Basin to Lake Chad is favored over structural interventions to address environmental decline and agricultural transformation in the wider basin area, particularly around the southern tributaries of the lake. While technically feasible, the mega infrastructure project would come at an extremely high cost and is heavily criticized for its potentially adverse effects on the ecosystems of both basin as well as possible negative effects on flow in the Congo basin. From Greta Galeazzi et al, *Understanding the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) Water and Security at Inter-regional Crossroads*.

²² Thomas E. Griffin, “Lake Chad Changing Hydrography, Violent Extremism, and Climate-Conflict Intersection.” *Expeditions with MCUP*, 23, <https://www.usmcu.edu/Outreach/Marine-Corps-University-Press/Expeditions-with-MCUP-digital-journal/Lake-Chad/>

will always emerge. This over militarization and under development are exacerbated by the theater security posture of the United States.

U.S. AFRICOM Theater Strategy and the Way Ahead

USAFRICOM's approach to the Lake Chad Basin is primarily couched in terms of counterterrorism. USAFRICOM's primary mission is to counter VEOs, transnational threats, and strengthen security forces with the goal of promoting regional security, stability, and prosperity.²³ But this approach neglects the underlying causes of conflict. It also misses matching USAFRICOM's efforts up with the current administration's strategic guidance highlighting climate change as a key security issue.

Part of the challenge of addressing the root causes of conflict is the funding mechanisms provided by Congress. For the past twenty years, the words "terrorist organization" and "VEO" loosened congressional purse strings. Since 2021, Congress appropriated over \$2 trillion above budget levels to fund emergency requirements in support of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) and the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).²⁴ For USAFRICOM, a Combatant Command created after the GWOT started, OCO is a significant source of funding for its operations and the efforts for the Lake Chad Basin are primarily addressed through Operation Enduring Freedom – Juniper Shield (OJS) and the Department of State's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). The core of the OJS plan is counterterrorism.²⁵ OJS provides equipment, assistance, and advice to increase partner capacity to deny safe haven to terrorists, strengthen

²³ Stephen J. Townsend, "USAFRICOM Posture Statement," 20 April 2021.

²⁴ U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Overseas Contingency Operations Funding: Background and Status*, by Brendan W. McGarry and Emily M. Morgenstern, R45519 (Updated 6 September 2019), 2 <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44519.pdf>

²⁵ Department of Defense, *Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 President's Budget Justification for Component Contingency Operations the Overseas Contingency Operation Transfer Fund (OCOTF)* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, June 2021), 13 https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2022/FY2022_OCOTF_J-Book.pdf

counterterrorism and border security, reinforce bilateral and regional military ties, and is projected to total \$59 million for 2022 while the TSCTP funding projection is \$38.5 million, also for counterterrorism support.²⁶

In contrast to the flow of funding for counterterrorism, funding for development and diplomatic programs abroad are frequently contested in Congress and are often subject to political vagaries. USAID responded to the crisis in the Lake Chad primarily through emergency health, nutrition, protection, shelter, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) interventions. Due to the large nature of the complex emergency with over 12 million people requiring humanitarian assistance, USAID funding for these emergency response programs has been robust with over \$499 million spent in 2020 for food and non-food humanitarian assistance.²⁷ However, there is little cross-connection between USAID programs and USAFRICOM efforts and no connection to the LCBC. In Somalia, USAID coordinates with DoD and other agencies through working groups and Mission Civil-Military Coordinators but a similar program is not established in Lake Chad.²⁸ At least for now, “climate change” and “resource scarcity” and “irrigation aid” elicit no significant Congressional funding response and aid provisions tend to be

²⁶ Ibid, 13 and United States Agency for International Development, *Congressional Budget Justification Department of States, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2022* (Washington DC: USAID, 2021), 115, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FY-2022-State_USAID-Congressional-Budget-Justification.pdf Note that it is difficult to get a clear sense of AFRICOM funding allocations in total for, as USAFRICOM reported to the Department of Defense Inspector General, it “does not have visibility on expenditures” noting that counterterrorism is funded through “multiple lines of accounting, some of which are outside the DOD.” From the Department of Defense Inspector General, *Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress on the East Africa Counterterrorism Operation and the North and West Africa Counterterrorism Operation* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2020), 14 <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Feb/21/2002252793/-1/-1/1/LEAD%20IG%20EAST%20AFRICA%20AND%20NORTH%20AND%20WEST%20AFRICA%20COUNTERTERRORISM%20OPERATIONS.PDF>

²⁷ This total includes approximately \$61.7 million in supplemental funding through USAID/BHA and State/PRM for COVID-19 preparedness and response activities and \$97.5 million for the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. From United States Agency for International Development, *Lake Chad Basin Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #4* (Washington DC: USAID, 30 September 2020), https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2020_09_30_USG_Lake_Chad_Basin_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_4.pdf

²⁸ DoD Inspector General, *Quarterly Report*, 31 and 33.

reactive and short-term in nature rather than taking a more holistic approach to the root causes of the complex emergency.

Research suggests that America gets a poor rate of return on security cooperation and security assistance funding in Africa.²⁹ An alternate approach is possible in which the U.S. coordinates efforts across the whole of government and works to build self-sufficiency for our African partners. As Nigeria's president recently wrote, and the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan painfully demonstrates, "we must not complacently assume that military means alone can defeat terrorists." Buhari eloquently argues for partnership to build economic opportunities for African youth, "not swords but ploughshares to defeat terror."³⁰ In this same vein, USAFRICOM's strategy neglects to address the broader role for diplomacy, development, and regional organizations. Programs to promote political inclusion, sound governance, irrigation aid, land dispute resolution, and economic opportunities are the stable foundations which are needed to combat the heat and hate cycle. A simple counterterrorism strategy does not address the root causes and could contribute to over militarization of a region at the expense of civilian organizations. Neglecting the climate-conflict cycle bodes poorly for regional security, stability, and prosperity. The United States should adopt a security strategy that acknowledges the impact of the changing climate on stability and security and the interrelated nature of climate change and conflict.

²⁹ Stephen Watts et al, *Building Security in Africa An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present*, RAND Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2447.html

³⁰ Muhammadu Buhari, "Africa needs more than US military aid to defeat terror," *The Financial Times* (15 August 2021), Accessed 27 August 2021, <https://www-proquest-com.usnwc.idm.oclc.org/docview/2564155865?pq-origsite=primo>

The Way Ahead

Moving beyond limited counterterrorism objectives, the U.S. military should broaden its scope and use its significant influence to build trust within both the MNJTF and LCBC, positively impact the behavior of African security forces, and encourage partners to look beyond security responses as a means of addressing regional instability. The tendency towards militarizing leads partners to focus on short-term mission success instead of working towards governance reform, local dispute resolution, and pathways for opposition groups to share in governance.³¹

Specific efforts USAFRICOM could take that are mindful of the climate-conflict cycle and work towards resolving the root causes include incentivizing using MNJTF forces to provide security for climate adaptation projects; working with DoS, USAID, LCBC, and regional partners for irrigation aid and cultivation of drought-resistant crops; coordinating U.S. government efforts through Mission Civil-Military Coordinators, and supporting regional organizations in economic empowerment and investment opportunities. Importantly, USAFRICOM can help Lake Chad Basin partner militaries by emphasizing their pivotal roles in protecting their populations and protecting services that support their populations such as health, governance, and commerce. Investing in the long game of prevention, climate change mitigation, and adaptation will lead to strategic gains and improve the relationships between member states of the Lake Chad Region.

³¹ “How to Spend it: New EU Funding for African Peace and Security,” *International Crisis Group*, no 297 (14 January 2021), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/african-union-regional-bodies/297-how-spend-it-new-eu-funding-african-peace-and-security>

Conclusion

Over militarization and underdevelopment hampers peace in the Lake Chad Basin region. The theater security posture of the United States must be careful not to only address the symptoms but the root causes of conflict by acknowledging the primary threat of climate change and the vicious climate-conflict cycle it propagates. Despite its infighting, the MNJTF is effective at countering Boko Haram and its successes demonstrate that a regional approach to regional problems is possible. Lake Chad Basin partners, with USAFRICOM support, could build upon the successes of the MNJTF and apply them to the climate-conflict cycle. Supporting policies that empower local communities, enforce property rights, regulate land dispute resolution, and share political power will enable the region to break the conflict-climate cycle and adapt to our changing world.