



CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN 2020-2021

Trends, developments and
implications for peace and stability

Acknowledgement

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1. Introduction

For decades, Lake Chad Basin (LCB) countries have grappled with various forms of insecurity including banditry, abduction, highway robbery and cattle rustling among other challenges. In addition, the most significant security challenges confronting the LCB remain the Boko Haram crisis. Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria have all been impacted by violent extremism that impedes State functionality and its capacity and willingness to provide human security. The focus on conflict dynamics in the LCB is therefore to be understood as a critical examination of the wide spectrum of actors, structures and processes that spawn insecurity in the region while still centring the Boko Haram phenomenon and its connections with other conflict or security dynamics.

The death of long-time Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau in May 2021, greatly altered the landscape of violent extremism in the LCB in 2021. While trying to take over territories previously occupied by Shekau's faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) also attempted to co-opt the late leader's fighters, with little success. This triggered fierce inter-group clashes and a massive wave of disengagement from Boko Haram that has continued into 2022. At the end of 2021, about 20,000 persons had left territories controlled by the *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad* (JAS) and handed themselves over to security forces. In October 2021, the Nigerian army confirmed the death of Abu Musab al-Barnawi, ISWAP's charismatic leader and son of late Boko Haram founder, Mohammed Yusuf. However, ISWAP has continued to spread and deepen its reach, particularly in Nigeria's northeast.

The rapidly evolving dynamics in the Boko Haram crisis underscores the critical need for real time analysis to support stabilisation

policy and programming. In addition, an understanding of the continuities and discontinuities between the various types of conflict in the LCB provide a basis for long-term stabilisation and peace building responses.

The antecedents of the Boko Haram crisis can largely be traced to the failures of the State and the last decade underscores a context where Boko Haram factions have thrived and evolved through the exploitation of socioeconomic and political gaps. However, long before Boko Haram's emergence, at the Fort Lamy Convention of 1964, the LCB countries set up the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) initially to deal with environmental issues. Subsequently, the LCBC sought to coordinate efforts to address cross-border criminality. In the 1990s the same countries created the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The decision to create this force to combat organised crime and banditry in the region was first taken in 1994 and by 1998 it was effectively established. By 2015, the deployment of the MNJTF was authorised by the African Union's (AU) Peace and Security Council in response to the regional character of Boko Haram crisis.¹

States have further seen the need to complement security responses with developmental interventions, facilitated by regional and global cooperation, with the LCBC serving as a common platform for a regional approach. Hence, the 'Regional Strategy for the Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin (RS-SRR) was launched in 2018 with the support of the African Union (AU).² It benefits from the UNDP's Regional Stabilisation Facility (RSF)

with the aim of connecting local, national and regional scales of interventions to deny Boko Haram a platform for expansion and survival. Although the struggle against violent extremism and insecurity persists, the RS-SRR supports LCB states in their efforts to strengthen community-based, national and regional initiatives that can shift the trends from emergency and insecurity to long term stabilisation and sustainable recovery.

This conflict analysis report was prepared to help inform programming aimed at the resilience and recovery of the Lake Chad Basin region. Following the methodology section of this report, the context along with the typology of conflicts in the region are presented. Details of the main drivers and actors are examined. The shifting positions of the different actors are analysed and this is followed by a discussion of the socio-economic and humanitarian consequences of trends. The report concludes with key recommendations targeted at LCB countries, regional and international actors, civil society organisations and the private sector.



1 William Assanvo, Jeannine Abatan and Wendyam Sawadogo (2016). Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram. ISS West Africa Report 19. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/research/west-africa-report/assessing-the-multinational-joint-task-force-against-boko-haram>

2 Lake Chad Basin Commission (2018), Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery & Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region. Available at: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/regional-stabilisation-recovery-and-resilience-strategy-rss-.pdf>

2. Methodology

Two data collection approaches were employed. Primary data collection in the eight most-affected Boko Haram regions in the Lake Chad Basin and secondary data collection included monitoring of security and conflict events.

Primary data collection

In addition to the ISS LCB team, a network of local research partners in the eight Boko Haram-affected areas of the LCB was set up for data collection and media monitoring. They organised continuous monitoring to build a dataset on ongoing conflicts. Supplementary targeted interviews allowed for more in-depth analysis of specific conflicts. Local media monitoring of conflicts allowed daily documentation of Boko Haram and other violent extremist groups' (VEGs) attacks, as well as other types of conflicts such as banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, communal clash/conflicts, among others in the LCB. These consultants provided access to real-time information on the dynamics underway in the various zones and to capture situations that only such close monitoring allows.

The research was carried out in the eight provinces/states/regions directly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency: Far North and North regions (Cameroon), Hadjer Lamis and Lac provinces (Chad), Diffa region (Niger), Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states (Nigeria).

Secondary data collection and media monitoring

Secondary data collection relied on a mix of documentation already produced by the ISS on the Lake Chad Basin and other organisations focused on trends in the region. Online conflict analysis databases like ACLED were consulted for statistics on the conflict, reflecting the number and frequency of incidents and fatalities. This was complemented by the distilling of information from reliable social media sources.

The ISS has developed a human security monitoring system through media tracking which also provides up-to-date information on conflicts in the eight regions covered by the project. This media monitoring was systematised in the current research, through field consultants deployed in the eight LCB zones directly affected by Boko Haram. This effort is reinforced by the collection of a wide range of publications on the unfolding situation in the affected zones.





Figure 1: The eight affected states, regions and provinces in the Lake Chad Basin countries



3. Context

The research focuses on the eight regions, states and provinces directly impacted by the Boko Haram crisis and which are also the areas considered to be the focus of the Lake Chad Basin Commission's (LCBC) Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience (RS-SRR). Given that conflicts and their implications are never territorially circumscribed, adjoining areas are reflected in the analysis. Over the years, insecurity linked to Boko Haram and other organised crime actors with possible links to Boko Haram has extended beyond these areas. These potential buffer and expansion zones also deserve to be analysed. In Cameroon, wider political instability expands the interest zones beyond the North and Far North to include Adamaoua region. In Chad, beyond Lac and Hadjer Lamis, the areas of Kanem and N'Djamena itself are also of interest. In Niger, beyond the Diffa region, buffer zones include Zinder and Maradi. In Nigeria, this refers to areas outside the northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe including other northeastern states as well as states in the northwest and northcentral. These geographical continuities help to understand the nature, object and manifestation of conflict, as an essential set of considerations in fostering effective stabilisation and peace-building processes in the basin.

Beyond geography, the conflict context is characterised by social (dis)ordering and violence on the margins of states' responses

that are generally targeted at resolving the conflict. However, these responses sometimes both amplify violence and reshape the resource base. On the one hand, Boko Haram's ability to adapt its modes of operation, sustain itself economically, recruit new members, in an effort to navigate the states' responses has contributed to shaping the crisis. On the other hand, the clashes between the states and communities have created conflict situations that increase the overall complexity of the conflict. The introduction of other violent actors that are sometimes for or against the State and communities adds to the different dimensions of conflict. These interactions in turn result in the transformation of the causes of conflict and its manifestations. Understanding these continuities and discontinuities between the types of conflict in the region provide a basis for achieving long-term stabilisation and peace building responses.

In 12 years, the conflict has exerted disastrous consequences on communities. Since the crisis started, around 350,000³ people, the majority of whom are civilians, have died in attacks, clashes and explosions in Nigeria alone. However, the 350,000 estimate is about ten times previous fatality estimates of around 35,000 for the entire LCB region. One possible reason for this is the inclusion of indirect fatalities as a result of the wider



impact of the conflict such as disease and hunger.⁴

To date, the conflict has forced at least 2.8 million people to relocate within their own country, with over 2 million within Nigeria alone.⁵ More than 280,000 people have been forced to leave their homes and return to their countries of origin, and at least 265,000 others have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, particularly Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Moreover, over the years, these figures have continued to grow, thus exploding the humanitarian needs which other negative circumstances have aggravated (floods, drought, COVID-19). OCHA estimates that there are 11.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 3.3 million people affected by food insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin, while the gap in funding has reached US\$ 2.5 billion.⁶

The dynamics and patterns observed during the period covered by this report unfortunately confirm these trends, which also seem to be increasing.

2.8M

people forced to relocate within their own country.

280,000+

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3.3M

people affected by food insecurity in the Lake Chad Basin

US\$ 2.5Bn

gap in funding

These figures have continued to grow, thus exploding the humanitarian needs which other negative circumstances have aggravated (floods, drought, COVID-19).

³ Reuters (2021). Northeast Nigeria insurgency has killed almost 350,000 – UN. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/north-east-nigeria-insurgency-has-killed-almost-350000-un-2021-06-24/>

⁴ Jibrin Ibrahim (2021). Boko Haram: Breaking the conflict trap in the Lake Chad basin, Premium Times. Available at: <https://www.premium-timesng.com/opinion/476529-boko-haram-breaking-the-conflict-trap-in-the-lake-chad-basin-by-jibrin-ibrahim.html>

⁵ OCHA (2021). Lake Chad Basin humanitarian snapshot as of 29 November 2021. Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/west-and-central-africa/infographic/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-29-november>

⁶ OCHA (2021). Lake Chad Basin humanitarian snapshot as of 29 November 2021. Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/west-and-central-africa/infographic/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-29-november>

3. Typology of Conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin

Trends in modi operandi

There is a well-known distinction between the approaches taken by JAS and ISWAP in the LCB, which is mainly in how they perceive and treat civilians, especially Muslim civilians. This was a sticking point that contributed to the 2016 Boko Haram split. While JAS does not spare civilians during attacks, ISWAP adopts a more humane approach towards them, seeing them as useful in achieving its objectives of an Islamic state.

Consequently, ISWAP only attacks civilians for specific reasons such as collaborating with security forces and non-payment of taxes. However, both groups are aligned in their targeting of security forces, government officials, humanitarian and development workers and non-Muslims.

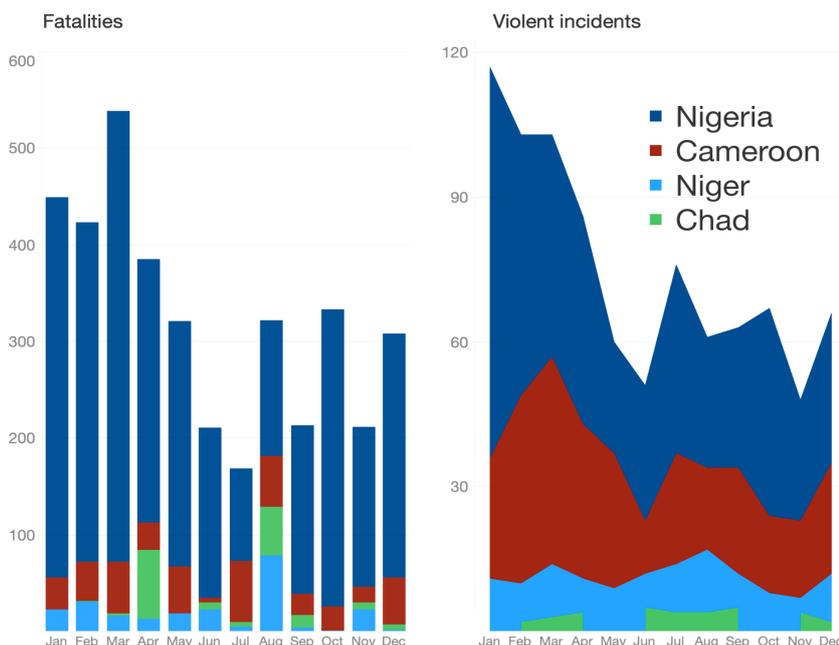
The two factions' operations are usually characterised by coordinated attacks on security forces locations, raids on

communities and mounting of checkpoints for the purposes of looting, robbing and abducting passengers. These tactics did not change in 2021. Additionally, though, there were inter- and intra-group dynamics, including deadly clashes as both factions sought to inflict losses on the other.

There was an increase in ISWAP activity from the beginning of the year, and the death of Shekau helped to further consolidate the group's operations in the area. There were targeted attacks on security forces, hospitals and even schools. There was also some evidence of a regrouping of JAS with localities like Koza in Cameroon that had never been attacked, experiencing an attack likely carried out by JAS commanders that refused to pledge allegiance to ISWAP. Beyond this, the death of Shekau led to the mass exodus of fighters from the region in 2021.

Lake Chad Basin

Armed violence*



*Data for North & Far North regions of Cameroon, Lac and Hadjer Lamis regions of Chad, Diffa region of Niger and Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe
Data: ACLED
Visual: J. Luengo-Cabrera

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Figure 2: Shifting frequencies of fatalities and violent incidents

The first half of 2021 saw a steady decline in violent incidents, driven primarily by the death of Abubakar Shekau in May. Incidents were at their lowest in June, followed by an uptick that was probably influenced by the resumption of activities by JAS members that refused to align with ISWAP. Nigeria experienced the larger share of attacks, followed respectively by Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

Regarding casualties, one trend that was observed was the increase in military casualties driven both largely by ISWAP attacks, majorly from the overrunning of super camps. In Nigeria, there was also very deliberate profiling and targeting of security forces, government officials, humanitarian workers and other individuals with the aim of identifying and intercepting them during road travel. ISWAP mounted roadblocks,

screened and interrogated passengers in vehicles, and picked out persons of interest for elimination.⁷

These trends can be further analysed within the framework of clashes between violent extremist groups and civilian community members; activities of VEGs related to state actions; the intersection between crime and terror; intercommunal conflicts and the activities of other non-state armed groups in the region. The time scope of analysis remains limited to 2021.

Communities versus VEGs

The first half of 2021 witnessed a carryover of Boko Haram’s activities from the previous year – attacks on military posts, raids on communities, mounting of roadblocks on highways and abductions of civilians. These

Lake Chad Basin

Abductions* (2021)

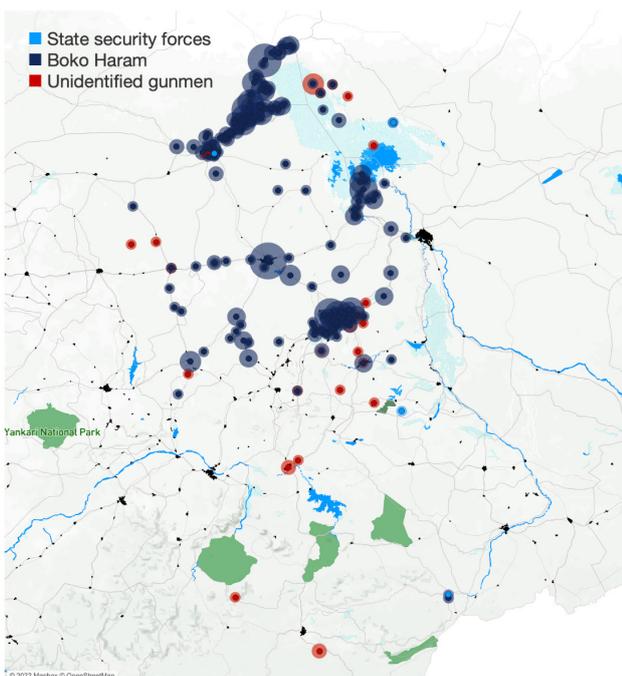
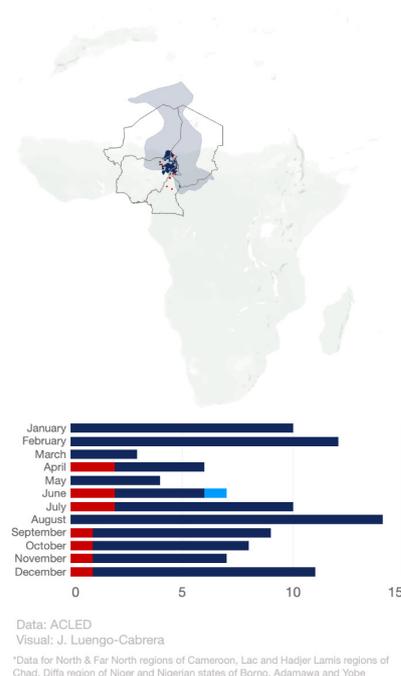


Figure 3: Trends of abductions in the eight Boko Haram-affected regions in 2021



⁷ For instance, on 22 August 2021 ISWAP set up a checkpoint at Kijimatari village in Monguno, where they robbed passengers and then searched them. Those found with National ID cards were allowed to go while those without ID were taken into the bush for more questioning to determine if they were government officials, security agents or humanitarian workers. They had realised that some people, particularly security agents, were not traveling with their ID to avoid detection.

abductions were carried out by the Shekau faction and were a key component of their revenue generation strategy. This is because the Shekau faction had less stable finances compared to ISWAP. Armed robberies also increased for similar reasons.

JAS' activities were somewhat downgraded in 2021, with ISWAP presenting a stronger show of force. JAS carried out a lot of minor attacks including highway ambushes and direct attacks on communities and their farmlands. In the Far North of Cameroon, along the border with Nigeria, JAS members harassed communities on an almost daily basis, particularly for food and other supplies.

There were, however, frequent minor incidents such as the kidnapping and harassment of civilians, particularly fishermen and cattle herders in remote areas. Some of these attacks were aimed at stealing the fish and cattle produced by these actors. Some attacks also targeted persons perceived to be informants and spies working with the government. Individuals that were reluctant to pay taxes also had fees imposed on them by the VEGs.

In 2021, Niger experienced fewer attacks claimed by Boko Haram compared to 2020. There were, however, challenges in determining the specific VEG that perpetrated particular attacks, with some of ISWAP's claims disputed. There were also cases of criminals making unverifiable claims of membership of a VEG. Bakura Doro, a former JAS commander based in Lake Chad, continued to carry out attacks in the Diffa region after Shekau's death. Attacks on humanitarians were minimal as a majority of the attacks focused on civilians and the military. There were particularly more attacks on security forces, with many of them claimed by ISWAP.

In Cameroon, prior to Shekau's death, JAS members were involved in criminal activities such as theft and armed robbery for food supplies, abductions, cattle rustling among others. JAS attacks in Cameroon were quite sporadic and dropped in June, after Shekau's death. There were several cases of kidnap for ransom in the North, but with no clear links to Boko Haram. However, kidnapping cases in the Far North region were perpetrated by Boko Haram.

ISWAP was also largely responsible for civilian casualties. This was largely as a result of being caught in the middle of clashes between ISWAP and the security forces. For example, an ambush on a security forces patrol team in Gudumbali, headquarters of Guzamala local government area on 11 March 2021, resulted in the death of about 18 civilians, all herders. ISWAP also targets civilians as a means of pressure and retaliation against individuals and communities suspected of collaborating with security forces or refusing to pay taxes.

Trends also show that security forces were sometimes responsible for civilian casualties, particularly through airstrikes on civilian populations that have been described as "operational errors".⁸

State versus VEGs: ISWAP and JAS

Three key events shaped the year for both Boko Haram and security forces, especially in Nigeria, the epicentre of the crisis. The first event was an internal reform embarked upon by ISWAP, which saw former ISWAP leader and son of late Boko Haram founder, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, assuming interim leadership of the group to oversee the reforms.

Major parts of the reforms included addressing the thorny issue of spoils of war and the rights of fighters⁹. The reform was welcomed by fighters, with the consequence being that lots of former fighters, especially those who left the LCB, returned, further boosting ISWAP's fighting capacity. The second incident was the killing of Abubakar Shekau, giving ISWAP the opportunity to co-opt some of his fighters and take over territories previously viewed as JAS's stronghold. This further cemented ISWAP's position as the dominant violent extremist group in the LCB.

The third event is the change in the Nigerian military strategy against Boko Haram. Since 2019, the Nigerian military largely relied on a supercamp strategy,¹⁰ the purpose of which was mainly to address the many casualties the military was suffering from attacks by Boko Haram. With the supercamp strategy, soldiers were pulled from smaller posts into bigger, more equipped and more fortified camps as a way to prevent Boko Haram from easily overrunning them. JAS particularly exploited this strategic withdrawal to restock its supplies.

While this worked for the army, albeit temporarily, it exposed civilians to more attacks, notably from JAS¹¹. Similarly, ISWAP, which in 2020 could not successfully attack the supercamps, also changed its strategy. The group displayed its nous to adapt to whatever strategy government forces put up against it. To attack the supercamps, ISWAP deployed fighters in larger concentrations, while at the same time setting ambushes

against military reinforcements. This tactic worked, and it was able to overrun supercamps at least three times, between February and April 2021.

The successes by ISWAP may have played a part in the Nigerian military rethinking its tactic and bringing back the Forward Operating Bases concept to complement the supercamp strategy. Instead of being reactionary, waiting in the camp to fend off attacks, the military took the fight to Boko Haram by carrying out several patrols. This resulted in the deaths of several ISWAP members, including commanders.

In Chad, the frequency of major attacks remained largely unchanged between 2021 and the previous year. This may be partly due to the increase of military operations in the region, following the major attack in Boma in 2019 that led to the deaths of 100 soldiers. Attacks have been sporadic, with one notable incident occurring in the Lac region in April, after the death of President Idriss Déby. It is thought that the preoccupation of the security forces with pushing back rebels in the north created a gap that Boko Haram exploited to carry out the attack, which resulted in 40 casualties, mostly military. Although the attack was not claimed by either of the VEGs, it is suspected to have been carried out by JAS.

State versus organised criminality

The activities of organised crime actors in the LCB even before the advent of the Boko Haram crisis meant that the region presented

⁸ Reuters (2021). Nigerian air force strike kills dozens in northeast Nigeria – sources. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigerian-air-force-kills-dozens-civilians-northeast-sources-2021-09-28/>

Joe Hemba (2021). Nigerian airforce takes responsibility for bombing of Yobe village. Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/485299-nigerian-airforce-takes-responsibility-for-bombing-of-yobe-village.html>

⁹ Spoils of war, called Ghanima, are supposed to be shared among fighters but the former leadership did not adhere to this, leading to some disquiet among fighters. Similarly, the former leadership, especially the head of ISWAP military, Mustapha Krimima, was highly dictatorial - with severe punishments not commensurate with offence committed. These resulted in a lot of fighters leaving the groups.

¹⁰ The Guardian (2019). Army opens 20 super camps to checkmate terrorism in north east. Available at: <https://guardian.ng/news/army-opens-20-super-camps-to-check-terrorism-in-north-east/>

¹¹ Malik Samuel (2020). Nigeria's super camps leave civilians exposed to terrorists. ISS Today. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/nigerias-super-camps-leave-civilians-exposed-to-terrorists>

a fertile ground for violent extremism. Acts of banditry, abduction, highway robbery and cattle rustling have historically been recorded in these spaces. Given that violent extremists are known to take advantage of unresolved local conflicts and criminal activities, it was not surprising that Boko Haram grafted itself onto these existing threats. Many individuals with histories of these criminal activities joined Boko Haram and remained with JAS after the 2016 split. This was evidenced in JAS' mode of operation, where it incorporated these criminalities as major parts of its operation.

This also explains why it was easy for the group to reach out to criminals outside the regions affected by the crisis. Before his death, Abubakar Shekau had formed an alliance with some bandits in northwest and northcentral Nigeria, as he sought to expand his territory outside the northeast and also take advantage of the burgeoning kidnap-for-ransom industry. This alliance, which had gone practically unnoticed, came to the fore with the December 2020 Kankara abduction of over 300 school boys in Katsina state, northwest Nigeria.¹² The motivation for this cooperation seemed largely monetary, with sources claiming JAS was to receive a certain percentage of whatever revenue was generated from the abduction activities. In spite of ISWAP reaching out to bandits outside the northeast, many of those who formed an alliance with JAS, chose to remain with the group, notwithstanding its losses wrought by Shekau's death.

Across the four LCB countries, the State has had to contend with organised crime manifested in varying degrees but with Nigeria being the epicentre. The trends in 2021 are quite telling in terms of the frequency of incidents. During the first six months of that year, the rate of abductions exceeded figures for the whole of 2020. From January to June 2021, at least 2,944 individuals were reported kidnapped compared to 2,860 in 2020, 1,386 in 2019 and 987 in 2018.¹³ In July 2021, an escalation of this challenge was evident when bandits shot down a Nigerian Airforce fighter jet during its return from an air interdiction mission in the northwest zone of the country.¹⁴ The steady rise in the capabilities of so-called bandits had become clear at this point, raising suggestions that they may be receiving support from violent extremist groups in the region. The support provided by violent extremists to bandits may be motivated by various reasons including expanding the pool for recruitment, resource mobilisation, and potentially expanding the scope of their activities. There is also a possibility that these alliances support the movement of weapons and personnel, as well as other forms of logistics for the violent extremists. The compelling nature of linkages between crime and terror actors was observed at the start of 2022 when the Nigerian government published a gazette that declared bandit groups operating in the country's northwest zone as terrorists.¹⁵

¹² Al Jazeera (2020). Boko Haram Claims Kidnapping of Hundreds of Nigerian Students. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/15/boko-haram-claims-kidnapping-of-hundreds-of-nigerian-students>

¹³ Kunle Adebajo (2021). Data: More Nigerians Kidnapped in First Six Months of 2021 Than all of 2020, HumAngle. Available at: <https://humanglemedia.com/data-more-nigerians-kidnapped-in-first-6-months-of-2021-than-all-of-2020/>

¹⁴ Kingsley Omonobi (2021). Updated: Bandits Shoot Down NAF Fighter Jet in Zamfara; Pilot Rescued, Vanguard. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/updated-bandits-shoot-down-naf-fighter-jet-in-zamfara-pilot-rescued/>

¹⁵ Ameh Ejekwonyilo (2022). UPDATED: Nigerian Government Gazettes Declaration of Bandit Groups as Terrorists, Premium Times. Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/504177-just-in-nigerian-govt-gazettes-declaration-of-bandit-groups-as-terrorists.html>

The risks that accompany increased and opportunistic alliances between organised crime actors and violent extremist groups is one that should not be overlooked as 2022 unfolds. Such alliances can create more complexity for the State as it struggles to muster financial and human resources. Overstretched security forces will be a consequence as the diversion of personnel across an increasing space of insecurity becomes necessary. The State is also contending with a challenge that can stretch over a long period of time as a result of the lucrative nature of organised crime which clearly benefits those involved. The ‘profitable’ nature of abductions manifested in the increased scale and frequency of the phenomenon all through 2021. In other words, it created an incentive for perpetrators who show no sign of retreat even in the face of State responses.

An additional dimension of the impact of organised crime relates to the burden on affected communities that already suffer from weak local economies. Regional trade and commercial networks have already been disrupted by the Boko Haram crisis. In fact, many traders have become bankrupt, while those still in business have seen a drop in income. To ensure survival, they have had to resort to other sources of supply, take new, longer export routes and incur higher costs.¹⁶ Such a trend can take a turn for the worse if communities are made to bear the brunt of attacks from bandits and those who abduct for ransom. So far, the State’s ability to contain these actors remains limited.

Other non-state armed groups (NSAGs): Vigilantes

The protracted nature of the Boko Haram conflict has led to the proliferation of non-state armed groups beyond the violent extremist groups. These groups include several and varied community militia organised in the form of vigilantes that seek to join forces with the state in counter-insurgency measures. In Cameroon, the Comite de Vigilance (COVI) continued to play a supporting role to military efforts in 2021. The relative decline in attacks is partly attributed to their involvement. In Nigeria, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) is the most prominent vigilante group and also continued in their efforts to support military operations. There have however been confrontations between the vigilantes and other security forces such as the military or the police¹⁷. Some members of the group have also been accused of crimes such as drug dealing, extortion and robbery.

The alignment of community militia with state actors has come at a cost to communities. After the death of JAS leader, Shekau, violence against civilians picked up after a short decline. Although ISWAP is generally regarded as less-violent towards civilians, they were the main perpetrators of civilian deaths in the period after Shekau. This could have been driven by retaliatory attacks on communities suspected to be aiding the military either through vigilantism or intelligence sharing.

¹⁶ Remadji Hoinathy and Teniola Tayo (2022). Lake Chad Basin: socio-economic resilience in the shadow of Boko Haram. ISS West Africa Report 38. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/research/west-africa-report/lake-chad-basin-socio-economic-resilience-in-the-shadow-of-boko-haram>

¹⁷ ICIR (2015). Civilian JTF: The making of a human timebomb. Available at: <https://www.icirnigeria.org/civilian-jtf-the-making-of-a-human-time-bomb/>

Community violence: inter-community and intra-community trends

Various intra- and inter-community conflicts were observed in the regions bordering Lake Chad in 2021. These conflicts varied in degree, ranging from the exacerbation of latent tensions to bloody confrontations resulting in several fatalities.

The northern part of Cameroon has been the epicentre of most of the bloody confrontations, particularly in the department of Logone and Chari (Far North region). In this department, the tension between communities has been very palpable and in 2021, it led to at least four bloody clashes. This occurred in Waza in the month of May between Kanuri and

Shuwa Arabs¹⁸ and in June between Shuwa Arabs and Kotoko in Aboudangala.¹⁹ The remaining two occurred in August between Musgum and Shuwa Arabs in El Birké and in December, in Logone-Birni, involving Shuwa Arabs, Musgum and Massa communities. This kind of opposition was reported in the past in the region.²⁰ In general, these conflicts implicate Shuwa Arabs, Massa, Musgum, Kotoko and Kanuri communities.

The Shuwa Arabs or Hassaouna Arabs are semi-nomadic pastoralists living in the four countries of the Lake Chad Basin. The Kanuri are a sedentary farming and fishing community, living mainly in Borno in Nigeria and Diffa in Niger but also in Cameroon and Chad. The Kotoko are a group of fishermen and farmers, living mainly in Cameroon,

Lake Chad Basin

Intercommunal violence* (2021)

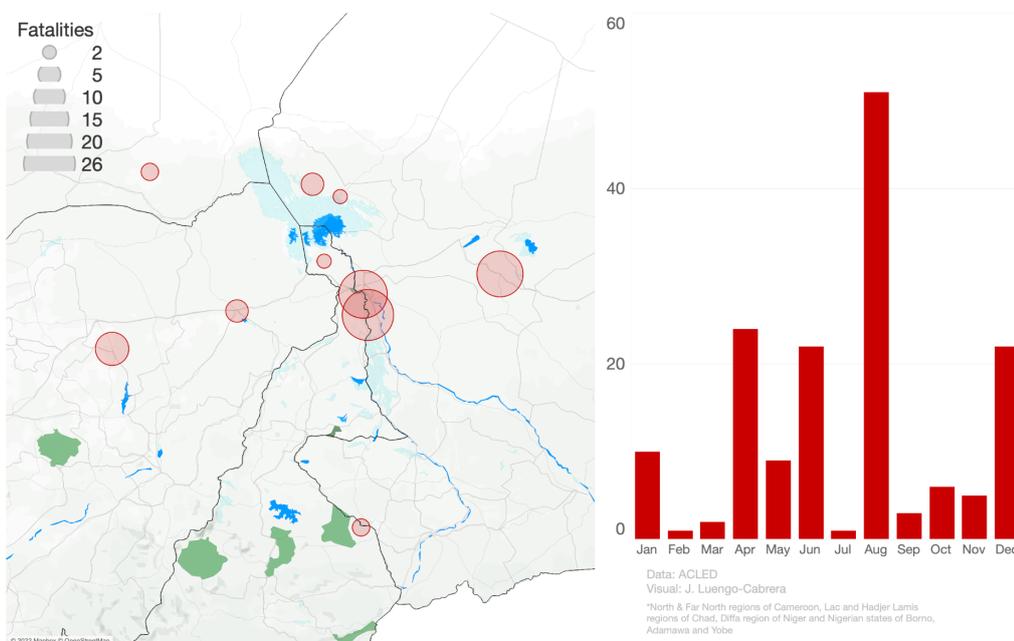


Figure 4: Trends of inter-communal violence in the Boko Haram affected regions

¹⁸ Chief Bisong Etahoben (2021). Inter-Communal Clash Between Kanuri, Arab Shoa Communities In Cameroon Lead To Death, Injuries. HumAngle. Available at: <https://humanglemedia.com/inter-communal-clash-between-kanuri-arab-shoa-communities-in-cameroon-lead-to-death-injuries/>

¹⁹ Remadji Hoinathy and Celestin Delanga (2021). Cameroon's community violence adds to Lake Chad Basin security woes. ISS Today. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/camerouns-community-violence-adds-to-lake-chad-basin-security-woes>

²⁰ Ibid.

Chad and Nigeria. The Massa live around the Logone river between Chad and Cameroon. The Musgum live in Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria. These communities earn their living mainly from agriculture, livestock and fishing. The communities implicated in the various conflicts all live in the same geographical areas (the Chari and Logone valleys and the shores of Lake Chad) and are scattered between at least two of the four countries bordering Lake Chad.

The types of activities carried out by these communities lead them to share the same territories, to covet the same arable lands, the same fishing areas and the same pastures. More often than not, claims over these resources are the starting points of conflicts. For instance, in August 2021, in the Logone-Birni commune, Musgum and Shuwa Arab communities clashed over land. As 2021 concluded, clashes resurfaced again

in December over territories in Logone-Birni, killing over 40 individuals.

Although such clashes are not new, an important feature to observe is the increasing use of firearms which, apart from increasing casualty rates, also underscores issues of access to weapons in the region. To date, these conflicts have resulted in at least 37,018 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Cameroon and around 37,500 taking refuge in Chad.

In Chad, clashes are growing within the Buduma group, with sub-groups opposing each other over the ownership of certain islands or developed polders. In the Nguelea canton, fatal clashes have been reported. Clashes over land property also led to fatalities and displacement in Layrom and Tchougoudi, in the sub-prefecture of Bol. Conflicts could also recur between the

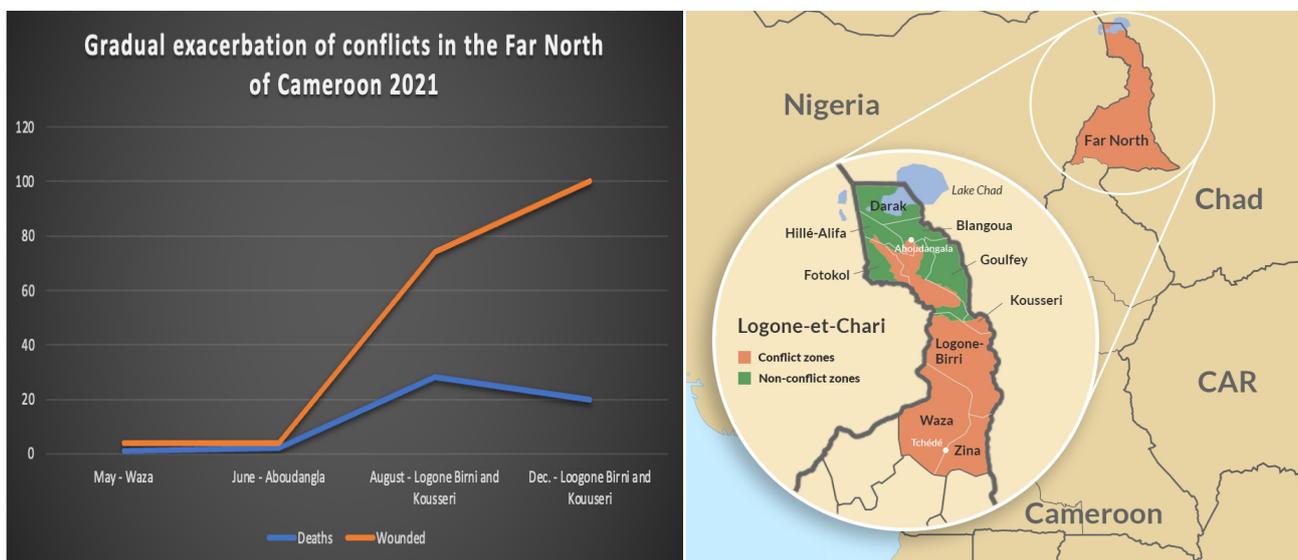


Figure 5: Conflict intensification in Cameroon's Far North

Buduma and Kanembu communities with the reconfiguration of traditional chieftaincies, which will once again raise the issue of land ownership. This is because in a number of instances, claims to ancestral land rights go hand in hand with claims to chieftaincy. The issue of land is key in these semi-desert areas, located on the margins of the Sahel. The watered lands around the lake provide a sanctuary for productive activities and are at the centre of intense competition within and between the riparian communities.

In the Diffa region, the commune of Foulatari, in the department of Mainé Soroa, conflicts have pitted the Fulani communities against the Mahamid Arabs. Tensions continue to occur regularly, although bloody escalations are rare.

Inter-community and resource-based conflicts are often old conflicts transformed by contemporaneous dynamics. These conflicts have either been exacerbated or mitigated by changing power configurations, climate change and resource scarcity in the LCB region.

The surrounding areas, shores and islands of Lake Chad have always been refuge areas for the riparian communities. The abundance of fertile land, pasture, and fishery resources have allowed for a diversity of communities, both indigenous and from diverse backgrounds. With the conflict, most of the islands had to be abandoned for security reason. This was either due to community members fleeing Boko Haram or because they were banned from access by the security forces.

These are age-long conflicts over resources – water and land (pasture, farmland and fishing spaces) – whose origins are difficult to pinpoint. In the past, some of these conflicts were settled amicably, first, between the farmer and herder/fisher, and if there was no agreement, the concerns were moved to a community leader's palace. The last resort was the police or judiciary, if the community leader was not able to settle the dispute.

With the intensity of population movements due to insecurity, conflicts are worsening in all four countries between host populations on the one hand and IDPs and refugees on the other in areas already under climatic stress. Small and light weapons²¹ have been circulating around Lake Chad over the course of different periods of instability in countries such as Chad. In recent years, their appropriation and use by communities against each other is alarming. Despite States' effort to collect them, they seem to resurface during inter-community conflicts that occurred in 2021. What we now witness is a degeneration into a full-blown crisis, with the deployment of (semi-) automatic weapons, resulting in a high frequency of deaths.

In an area already weakened by the presence of Boko Haram, it is important to carefully consider these different sources of tension and inter-community conflicts. The latest developments in the Far North of Cameroon have clearly shown that they can easily assume regional dimensions.

²¹ Eric Berman (2022): Weapons losses fueling Africa's militant groups. Available at: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/weapons-losses-fueling-africa-militant-groups/>

Oluwole Ojewale (2021). Cameroon alone can't stop illicit arms flooding into the country. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/cameroon-alone-cant-stop-illicit-arms-flooding-into-the-country>

Premium Times (2021). Six million weapons in circulation in Nigeria - Abdulsalami ABubakar. Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/453878-six-million-weapons-in-circulation-in-nigeria-abdulsalami-abubakar.html>



In the Diffa region, the commune of Foulatari, in the department of Mainé Soroa, conflicts have pitted the Fulani communities against the Mahamid Arabs. Tensions continue to occur regularly, although bloody escalations are rare.

4. The Shifting Positions of Actors in the Conflict

The Violent Extremist Groups

JAS: Deadly, divided and indiscriminate

The particular targeting of Muslim civilians became a source of intragroup rift, with Shekau insisting that irrespective of religious affiliation, anyone living under the State was an unbeliever that should be attacked. Some members of Boko Haram, led by Mamman Nur, a cleric, argued against the targeting of Muslim civilians, including using them as suicide bombers. Among other reasons, this resulted in the eventual 2016 split that saw the so-called Islamic State or ISIS recognise the breakaway faction led by Nur and Abu Musab al-Barnawai. The relationship with civilians remained a major point of divergence between the two groups. While JAS carried on with its indiscriminate violence against civilians, ISWAP adopted a more conciliatory approach in its relationship with locals.

JAS' violence against women gained it global notoriety. For the year 2019, the Global Terrorism Index identified the group as responsible for around 80 percent of global fatalities linked to female suicide attacks between 2013 and 2018.²²

At different periods, a mix of locations in the four LCB countries have been under the influence of JAS and ISWAP. Influence in this sense entails territorial occupation or temporary hideouts, and in other instances, locations that the different factions find conducive for attacks. Following the splintering of Boko Haram in 2016, JAS was

known to have retained a stronghold in areas close to the Sambisa Forest, extending to the southern and central parts of Borno and northern and central parts of Adamawa states in Nigeria, and the North and Far North regions of Cameroon.

The second half of 2021 witnessed a major shift in territorial control between JAS and ISWAP. Following Shekau's death, ISWAP swooped in to take over control of JAS' major stronghold, Sambisa Forest, which had been Shekau's hideout throughout his brutal reign. With the taking over of Sambisa, coupled with its presence in Alagarno forest, ISWAP's influence extended from northern Borno to the central and southern parts of the state and into the northern part of Adamawa state, particularly the Madagali axis.

Before Shekau's death, ISWAP had been mostly dominant in the northern part of Borno in close proximity to Nigeria's border with Chad and the Republic of Niger, including the islands of Lake Chad. Sometimes, however, the line demarcating each faction's area of influence was unclear, with each faction carrying out attacks in areas considered as the stronghold of the other, leading to occasional skirmishes between the two groups. For instance, ISWAP's foothold in Alargarno forest in Damboa local government area, southern Borno, saw the group carrying out attacks in that axis, notably setting up an almost daily checkpoint at Wajiroko village along Damboa-Biu road. Similarly, Bakura Doro, one of Shekau's top and most influential commanders, extended JAS' reach to the Lake Chad islands, with JAS credited with some deadly attacks on both civilians and security forces in Niger and Chad.²³

²² Institute for Economics & Peace (2019). Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. Available at: <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/GTI-2019web.pdf>, 2019.

²³ For instance, the 12 December 2020 attack on five villages in the Diffa region of Niger, that resulted in the death of about 50 civilians and scores of villages razed, was led by fighters under the command of Bakura Doro. The villagers were specifically targeted for not being able to raise the money requested by JAS in exchange for access to farmlands. Three villages in the same region were not attacked because they managed to pay a total of about \$14,600 a day before the attack. Earlier in the year, JAS carried out its deadliest attack on Chadian soldiers in Boma in March 2020, resulting in the death of about 100 soldiers.

The immediate period after Shekau's death witnessed a temporary lull in JAS activities, perhaps because it was still dealing with the shock of his passing, the consolidation of power by ISWAP and the defection of some of its fighters to ISWAP. Nonetheless, JAS managed to provide a rallying point for fighters who refused to join ISWAP, especially those caught up in the battle in Sambisa. Bakura Doro, a long-time Shekau loyalist and senior JAS commander based in the Lake Chad islands, assumed the position of military leader while another staunch Shekau follower, Abu Sa'alaba, was made the Wali (leader) of the group.

Sa'alaba was the head of all JAS clerics under Shekau and was based in Sambisa. His knowledge gave him the upper hand in being appointed as the Wali. He was able to flee from Sambisa to Barwa in Niger, where Doro is based, before ISWAP came down hard on deserters.

The period from the death of Shekau to the end of the year was marked by JAS taking the fight to ISWAP, trying to defend what was left of its territories and, by extension, maintaining its visibility and presence in the violent extremism landscape of the LCB. The resurgence in activity by JAS came after a sharp decline in their operations following Shekau's death. Several clashes happened between the two factions, with JAS gaining the upper hand in a few battles. For instance, on 6 August, sources reported that ISWAP attacked JAS locations in Barwa but suffered heavy losses, including the loss of 12 out of 20 vehicles. JAS successfully deployed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to force ISWAP into a retreat. A week later, JAS retaliated by attacking Tumbuma, an

ISWAP stronghold. It was during this attack that ISWAP leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi was injured, leading to his reported death. Three months later, around 25 November, JAS inflicted arguably the heaviest casualty on ISWAP when Bakura Doro sent his fighters under the command of Abdulrahman Jango, to attack Shuwaram island in Kukawa, resulting in the death of 180 ISWAP fighters. Again, JAS relied heavily on IEDs, which it planted around the village before triggering confusion with gunshots. Most of the people died from the explosions as they tried to make sense of what was happening.

Despite the death of its leader, JAS was able to maintain its position in Barwa, Niger, part of Lake Chad islands, which has become its de facto headquarters with the reconstitution of a Shura Council (consultative assembly) there. It was also able to successfully receive about 450 fighters, who managed to make the journey from Sambisa Forest to the Lake Chad islands. In addition, it maintained a stronghold atop the Mandara Mountains, even though ISWAP was able to take control of villages in lower areas of the mountain.

ISWAP: The international scope and increased presence

2021 witnessed perhaps the biggest change in the dynamics of the Boko Haram conflict in the LCB and saw ISWAP record major successes. As part of the Islamic State's expansionist agenda, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, ISWAP was instructed to take Shekau out of the equation to pave the way for territorial expansion, not just in northeast Nigeria, but Lake Chad as a whole. Within a month of being reinstated to ISWAP's

leadership, Abu Musab al-Barnawi led the attack on JAS that conquered Sambisa to establish ISWAP as the dominant group in that area. ISWAP leveraged its affiliation to the Islamic State (ISIS) to gain support from the global terror group for this move, with former fighters returning mostly from Libya to rejoin ISWAP and be part of the attack against JAS. What followed next was the attempted reintegration of JAS fighters into ISWAP. Perhaps unexpectedly, the reintegration did not go according to plan. ISWAP, which started the process subtly, soon became forceful when it became clear that many fighters would not join due to anger over the death of Shekau. This resulted in several fierce confrontations between both factions, as ISWAP tried to stop Shekau's loyalists from deserting. This led directly to a mass disengagement of JAS elements, which began with civilians who had been trapped and forbidden from leaving by Shekau, but also saw fighters and their families, including high ranking commanders, surrendering to security forces.

Despite the setback caused by the disengagement, which, according to the Borno state government, stands at about 30,000 people, ISWAP became the dominant VEG in the region. As a demonstration of its reach and ability, on two occasions the group launched rocket attacks on Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, in December 2021. Earlier, in November, the group attacked Askira Uba in southern Borno, which resulted in the death of a very senior military commander. This confirmed one of the reasons for the capture of Sambisa — to make it easier for ISWAP to carry out attacks against targets in this

area, instead of travelling all the way from its Lake Chad islands base. Significantly, while attacks against security forces intensified, attacks against civilians reduced.

Its successes notwithstanding, ISWAP faced major challenges. The group has always been known to experience frequent internal power struggles and leadership changes. This explains why in its five years of existence, there have been at least five such changes. The latest change occurred around March/April 2021 when al-Barnawi took over as interim leader from Ba Lawan. The former powerful military head of the group, Mustapha Krimima, was also replaced.

Former associates

For reasons explained above, as individuals abandoned JAS in droves following Shekau's death, it was clear that those who left were a mix of combatants and civilians. The civilians, who constitute the majority of the disengaged, were people living in areas controlled by JAS and prevented from leaving while Shekau was alive. As ISWAP took over villages in and around Sambisa immediately after Shekau's death, it gave the people the options of staying or leaving.²⁴ Most people opted to leave. Fighters not willing to join ISWAP were also given the option of leaving, but without their weapons. Given the massive departures that followed the announcement and the huge media coverage, ISWAP realised it may have miscalculated by allowing people to freely leave. At the beginning of 2022, the Borno state government said more than 30,000²⁵ people had left Boko Haram.

²⁴ Former JAS fighters and civilians said as ISWAP fighters moved from one village to the other in the days after Shekau's death, they gathered people in front of mosques or markets to make the announcement.

²⁵ Premium Times (2022). Over 30,000 ISWAP/Boko Haram terrorists have surrendered – Zulum. Available at: <https://www.premium-timesng.com/regional/north-east/510864-over-30000-boko-haram-iswap-terrorists-have-surrendered-zulum.html>

Civilians left Boko Haram because they did not want to continue living with the group against their will and submit to abuses, such as slavery, extortion, abduction and sexual violence.

Fighters left the group for different reasons. One was the unhappiness of some of the fighters with the death of their leader, Shekau. Another was that ISWAP extended the choice of whether or not to join them in areas they took over to both JAS fighters and civilian elements.²⁶ Some of those unhappy with Shekau's death, chose to relocate from Sambisa to Barwa, a Lake Chad island occupied by JAS under the leadership of Bakura Doro. Others who had been unable to leave Boko Haram when Shekau was alive²⁷ now took the opportunity to do so. When ISWAP discovered that so many fighters wanted to relocate to Barwa, it decided to block the road leading to the island to prevent them from leaving. This explains many of the clashes that took place between fighters from both sides, notably between July and August. Seeing how difficult it then became to go to Lake Chad, most then chose to surrender to security forces.

Disengagement mainly happened in Nigeria and Cameroon, in areas in and around Sambisa Forest and local governments areas where JAS was known to operate. These included Bama, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Konduga, Mafa, and Monguno local government areas. In Cameroon, most of them surrendered around Mora, in the Far North.

In Nigeria, the disengaged handed themselves over to security forces, who then profiled and handed them over to the Borno state government. In Cameroon, some returned directly to communities while some went through the National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee (NDDRC) section in Mora.

The Communities

Victimisation

Communities are at the centre of the ongoing crisis and violence in the LCB region, notably between VEGs and security forces. As a result, they are sometimes caught in the middle of hostilities with accusations from each party of supporting the other. This has led to communities occasionally being victimised by both sides of the conflict. This is in spite of the enormous losses they have suffered in lives, livelihoods, displacement and the associated ills of hunger and disease which accompany such dislocations. Boko Haram targets communities as well, looting them to restock their supplies abduction for ransom, unpaid labour, as sex slaves and forced marriages. Communities usually don't have the capacity to defend themselves from such attacks, and Boko Haram does not take kindly to any form of objection. Delays in meeting demands from Boko Haram are punished. In some cases, Boko Haram attacks communities to mete out punishments for what it considers as cooperation with security forces. In these cases, attacks are brutal, ranging from indiscriminate slaughter of community members, to targeted summary executions.

²⁶ ISWAP fighters went round villages in and around Sambisa to inform the civilians that anyone that did not want to stay was free to leave. For the fighters who wanted to leave, they could only do so without their weapons

²⁷ A lot of people who managed to leave while Shekau was alive gave their reasons to include unfulfilled expectations, hunger, military operations, selfishness of group leaders, among others. Some managed to leave but others could not because punishment for desertion could be execution..

Alternative social contracts with the VEGs

The presence or absence of the State in the peripheral areas of Lake Chad has a strong link with the narrative, ideology and actions of Boko Haram. From the outset, the group built its messaging on the perceived corruption of the State and its political elite. As a result, Boko Haram gradually evolved its posture into that of war against the State, which it perceived as oppressive and predatory. Boko Haram built its recruitment discourse on the failures of the State, its inability to provide basic services, including security, especially in remote communities. On the ground, Boko Haram's main objective has been to neutralise and eradicate the four riparian states' presence in the targeted communities, presenting itself as the sole provider of these services.

Contested state presence in many remote communities results in situations where communities have had to involuntarily foster some sort of social contract with various actors of insecurity such as Boko Haram.

ISWAP has particularly benefited from this limited presence of the State by stepping in to fill gaps. In areas where it controls, particularly dozens of Lake Chad island villages, the group is securing market routes, providing security and some basic services like potable water, medical assistance. They also control access to farm lands as one way to extort rent from communities. In return, the group has been able to bolster its revenue base from the taxes levied on communities who have little alternative but to pay.



5. Socio-economic and humanitarian consequences

For communities

The socio-economic impact of the conflict reflects a continuation of the trends that were earlier observed. Economic actors that lost their livelihoods due to Boko Haram activities or due to the government's response have struggled to recover their incomes. Communities are also facing challenges with the appropriation of livelihood activities by state and non-state actors.²⁸ Boko Haram has also set up parallel markets where communities under their governance can exchange goods. Although Boko Haram sometimes offers safe passage to farms, this often comes at the cost of taxes levied on farmers. These farmers are also at risk of retaliatory attacks if Boko Haram suspects their collaboration with security forces. In towns such as Maiduguri, attacks on the power supply infrastructure caused a further strain on the local economy, increasing the operating costs of businesses.²⁹ The ongoing conflict has also led to secondary livelihood losses, especially when resettled IDPs are attacked by Boko Haram. Consequently, one of the major socio-economic consequences of the conflict in 2021 was the stalling of livelihood recovery efforts through Boko Haram activity.

The humanitarian situation in the region continued to be challenging, with millions of people still displaced amid ongoing conflict. Besides the conflict, climate change and population pressures have led to dwindling land and water resources. As at December 2021, according to IOM Displacement

Tracking Matrix, there were 3,032,378 IDPs in the four LCB countries affected by the Boko Haram crisis, 73 percent (2,200,357) of whom were in northeast Nigeria. Borno state accounted for the highest number of displaced persons in the region, with 1,639,028 IDPs (54 percent).³⁰

In 2021, the Borno state government intensified its resolve to return IDPs to their homes, despite the insecure nature of many of the villages that people come from. While the government does not contradict the principle of voluntary return, the decision to close the IDP camps in Maiduguri³¹ meant that in practice people had no choice but to leave. The consequence was that people were secondarily displaced because they could not go back to their original homes. They either relocated to other IDP camps that remained open, especially the unofficial ones, or resettled in host communities within the state capital. Still others who agreed to return home were put in temporary shelters in major towns within the local government areas for security reasons and not their towns and villages of origin. The Borno state government's decision to ban humanitarian assistance to places where IDPs were being returned as well as ongoing Boko Haram attacks have contributed to worsening the food crisis among the people.

In the case of Niger, there was the resettling of inhabitants of Baroua in the Diffa region in July 2021. This was done following six years of desertion of the village due to Boko Haram's attacks. However, in this context as

²⁸ Remadji Hoinathy and Teniola Tayo (2022). Lake Chad Basin: socio-economic resilience in the shadow of Boko Haram. ISS West Africa Report 38. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/research/west-africa-report/lake-chad-basin-socio-economic-resilience-in-the-shadow-of-boko-haram>

²⁹ Murtala Abdullahi (2021). ISWAP Knocks Off More Electricity Towers To Sustain Maiduguri Blackout. HumAngle. Available at: <https://humanglemedia.com/iswap-knocks-off-more-electricity-towers-to-sustain-maiduguri-blackout/>

³⁰ IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (2021). West and Central Africa – Lake Chad Basin Crisis Monthly Dashboard 39 (22 December 2021). Available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/west-and-central-africa—lake-chad-basin-crisis-monthly-dashboard-39-22-december-2021>

³¹ Punch (2021). Borno to shut down all IDP camps December 31. Available at: <https://punchng.com/orno-to-shut-down-all-idp-camps-dec-31/>

well, the major challenges have been the scarcity of infrastructure, basic services and civil protection. In the same month, Boko Haram launched an attack on the village. This attack was repelled by the Niger Defence Forces but resulted in the loss of a dozen soldiers.

For humanitarian actors

Humanitarian actors have long been targeted by both ISWAP and JAS. Over the years, humanitarian workers lost their lives both during attacks and while in captivity. The enormous risks faced by NGOs and their staff complicate their ability to deliver critical services, especially in hard-to-reach communities. Boko Haram attacks NGOs for different reasons. They see them as part of the State it is fighting against, and also as an opportunity to raise revenue through ransom payment, as well as to restock their supplies through the looting of NGO goods.

In 2021, ISWAP particularly posed a serious security challenge to humanitarian actors, further limiting their ability to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to populations. They were targeted for abduction and the looting of their offices, notably in communities outside the Borno state capital of Maiduguri. There were at least six Boko Haram incidents that involved humanitarian actors, all perpetrated by ISWAP between January and April. Damasak in Mobbar local government area was attacked the most – four times.

When ISWAP fighters entered towns or villages, they specifically went after

humanitarian-supplied goods.³² This was witnessed on 15 January 2021 when they attacked Gajiram. After soldiers retreated to their camp, the fighters entered the town and looted shops, carefully looking for items donated by NGOs.

Perhaps the biggest attack targeting NGOs occurred on 1 March in Dikwa. ISWAP fighters arrived around 5pm and engaged soldiers, who retreated to their base in Ajiri village. The following day, they entered the town and burnt all houses used by NGOs. They also went away with seven NGO vehicles and abducted 13 people working for an NGO, made up of eight casual workers and five permanent staff. The casual workers were all released, while the five staff, two women and three men, were kept hostage. In one of the NGOs' offices, ISWAP found a large sum of money, which they took and shared with elderly people in the town before leaving.

In a similar incident, on 10 April ISWAP fighters attacked Damasak around 5pm. They came in through clandestine means, crossing the river along Asaga road. They burnt the offices of three NGOs and went away with a police vehicle. Three days later, they attacked the town again, this time they came in through a Nigerien village, Garin Chuku, six kilometres away from Damasak. They burnt the police station, hospital (which they looted first) and some NGO properties.

³² More information on the tensions between violent extremists, humanitarian actors and government actors can be found here: UNDP (2021). Civil-Military and Humanitarian Collaboration Dilemmas in the Lake Chad Basin. Available here: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/africa/UNDP-Regional-Stabilization-Facility-Lake_Chad_Policy-Paper_EN.pdf

6. Policy Recommendations

The following key entities have both distinct and related roles to play in regard to stabilising the LCB and shoring up the resilience of communities against the impact of violent extremism and other forms of conflicts in the region.

The LCB Countries

- There is a need to better align political will with the mobilisation of public resources towards security and development in the LCB. Platforms such as the LCB Governors' Forum already contribute to this objective, but it is vital that commitments made translate into real and measurable results in the coming months.
- Governance challenges need to be addressed to counter the “hearts and minds” efforts of violent extremists. This includes improving the delivery of public services within available resources and the conduct of public officials. Public communication also has to be improved in order to consistently assure communities of the government's commitment to and action towards better security and welfare of the people.
- It is essential that LCB governments demonstrate political will towards higher accountability and reforms in the justice system. Equitable and transparent application of the rule of law is critical for rebuilding inclusive and fair societies.
- There should be a constant monitoring of changing community needs in order to ensure the responsiveness of government measures. Heads of regions, departments and communes in the contexts of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, and heads of local government areas in the context of Nigeria, should work more closely with the various societal groups embedded in communities. These include religious

organisations, traditional authorities, civil society organisations, women groups, youth groups and ethnic identity groups.

Regional Actors

- The LCBC should continue to provide the integrating platform for the four affected countries. The nine pillars of its Regional Stabilisation Strategy should be prioritised and the Steering Committee that oversees the Strategy's implementation should treat this with a sense of urgency.
- The African Union should continue to provide guidance that can shape approaches to key issues such as deradicalisation and reintegration based on their experience in other countries. Notwithstanding, this guidance will always need to be modified to reflect and accommodate LCB realities.
- The transnational nature of the crisis in the LCB calls for regional and continent-wide cooperation between the LCB and other (sub)regional blocs in North Africa, the Sahel, Central Africa, and East and the Horn of Africa. The African Union's expansive footprint on the continent can contribute to facilitating this kind of collaboration.
- The African Development Bank remains an important actor in financing the recovery of the LCB. Its efforts towards restoring livelihoods and rebuilding infrastructure need to be deepened. Their interventions need to be pragmatic by taking into consideration issues such as the current skill levels of LCB populations.

International Actors

- The support of key implementing partners such as the UNDP remains vital particularly

through the Regional Stabilisation Facility. The coordinating role the UNDP - through its support to the RSS Secretariat - plays remains critical. There is however a need to ensure institutional learning through capacity building and knowledge transfer to local officials.

- The World Bank is another key player in the stabilisation agenda. There is a need to ensure the complementarity of interventions by different actors in order to build on and not replicate activities.
- Other foreign governments involved in the recovery of the LCB need to keep communities at the centre of their intervention plans, and all other considerations must be secondary.

Civil Society Organisations

- The whole-of-society approach to addressing or managing the complex crisis in the LCB means that the efforts of state or government actors are simply part of a broader framework of endeavours. Involving non-state actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), especially those situated among affected communities, is important as far as mobilising opinion and raising awareness about crises is concerned.
- CSOs are also helpful in terms of serving as a bridge for citizen participation in discussing issues that concern them, as well as being the critical voice that keeps state actors in check when it comes to accountability and transparency of policy implementation.
- Community leaders need to ensure that the collective needs are given priority and amplified, rather than their individual or personalised needs.

Private Sector

- There are already efforts to better engage the private sector to participate in recovery and development activities in the LCB. These efforts however need to be consolidated into a more coherent approach that covers both the humanitarian and development responses.
- Corporate Social Responsibility budgets for large local and international private firms should be regarded as a resource pool that can potentially be mobilised to finance recovery efforts in the LCB by helping to address some of the underlying issues.
- The private sector should continue with and ramp up its contribution towards the creation of job opportunities that can complement the State's ability to address mass unemployment particularly among youths.
- Public-private partnerships are essential not only for the exchange of technical know-how and lessons but also for the unique innovations and experiences each sector brings to bear. They can also be useful with the delivery of technological solutions that can support the State with more effective management of porous borders, among other areas of weaknesses that insecurity actors exploit.

7. Conclusion

The scope and complexity of the conflict trends in 2021 presented challenges but also opportunities for state and non-state actors to engage several concerns in the LCB. From violent extremism to organised crime to inter-community clashes, most of these challenges were not new but were reinforced by unprecedented events that characterised the year in focus. Such events included the death of Abubakar Shekau which set in motion disengagement waves that rippled across the region. The implications along with the livelihood and humanitarian consequences of the aforementioned conflict dynamics have been examined in this paper. Policy options are presented and tailored in line with the roles of specific entities. Stabilisation, recovery and resilience in the LCB will require more concerted attempts by the affected countries, regional and global actors, civil society organisations and the private sector among others.



8. Appendix

Selected Key Incidents in 2021

January

- 7 January: In Ajiri-Fada village, 6km away from Dikwa. JAS fighters opened fire on IDPs fetching firewood. They killed 10 people but only five corpses were retrieved. The rest could not be retrieved because of the insecurity. JAS fighters chased the IDPs up to the entrance into Dikwa, close to the military checkpoint before returning.
 - 8 January: 14 people were killed when a Boko Haram suicide bomber detonated explosives in the town of Mozogo, Cameroon.
 - 11 January: 13 soldiers were killed when Islamic State West Africa Province militants ambushed a convoy in the village of Gazagana, Nigeria.
 - 17 January: Seven IEDs were activated against a Nigerian Army convoy of APCs and other vehicles, escorted by ground patrol in Gorgi, Borno. Over 30 soldiers were killed. Three vehicles were destroyed, and an armoured vehicle, weapons and ammunition were seized.
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February

- 14 February: ISWAP dislodged a military base in Marte, killing at least eight soldiers.
 - 19 February: ISWAP dislodged a military base in Dikwa.
 - 23 February – JAS fired a rocket into Kaleri, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Maiduguri, killing 10 people, including eight children.
 - 24 February: ISWAP set up a checkpoint at Meleri village, 6 km from Damasak. They abducted six young men and looted some hygiene kits belonging to an NGO, which was being transported to Damasak from Maiduguri.
 - 25 February: A newly-married woman and her four maids were abducted alongside 20 men by JAS at Dogon Waya checkpoint, along Maiduguri-Damaturu road.
 - 28 February: Two soldiers were killed when ISWAP attacked the convoy of Farouq Yahaya, the Commander of Nigeria's counter-insurgency operation, in Borno state.
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March

- 1 - 2 March: ISWAP dislodged a military base in Dikwa, looting and burning houses used by NGOs and abducting 13 people, including five NGO workers. They also went away with several NGO vehicles.
 - 11 March: ISWAP fighters attacked a Nigerian military convoy near Gudumbali in Guzamala LGA of Borno state, killing 15 Nigerian soldiers and 4 CJTF members. 18 civilians were killed in the crossfire.
 - 18 March: ISWAP attacked a military base in Damasak and burnt one NGO vehicle.
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April

- Death of Chadian president, a key ally in the counter-terrorism effort.
- 2 April: IS operatives targeted a Cameroonian Army camp on the Nigerian-Cameroonian border. Five Cameroonian soldiers were killed in the attack.

- 8 April: 16 Chadian soldiers were killed when the Chad army boats transporting soldiers across Lake Chad were attacked.
 - 10 April: ISWAP attacked Damasak around 5pm, burning down FHi360, NRC and ACTED offices. They went away with a police vehicle. A military helicopter arrived around 7pm and dropped a bomb on a house where people were gathered for a baby's naming ceremony. Five women were killed while two men and a woman were injured.
 - 25 April: ISWAP fighters in about 20 vehicles, killed at least 31 Nigerian soldiers around Mainok, along Maiduguri-Damaturu road.
 - 25 April: 12 Chadian soldiers were killed following a Boko Haram attack.
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May

- 3 May: JAS fighters went to Ajiri Mafa in Borno state, killed eight civilians, three CJTF members and abducted five women.
 - 18–19: Long-time JAS leader, Abubakar Shekau, was killed when he detonated a suicide vest, following ISWAP fighters' attack on his Sambisa stronghold.
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June

- Waves of disengagement following Shekau's death.
 - 13 June: ISWAP fighters attacked Chabbal village in Konduga, killing two soldiers, three CJTF members and went away with six military vehicles.
 - 28: In a video released by ISWAP, former JAS fighters were shown pledging allegiance to ISIS.
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July

- 4 July: Waves of disengagement, including 180 women, men and children came out of Sambisa Forest to Bama IDP camp in one day.
- 7 July: 24 civilians killed when ISWAP raided communes in northern Adamawa.
- 7 July: ISWAP set up a checkpoint at Mainok along Maiduguri-Damaturu road and abducted 11 travellers. They went away with four vehicles. The abductees were returned around 10 pm the same day.
- 10 July: 5 women were abducted by ISWAP on their farm on the outskirts of Bama in Borno state.
- 18 July: ISWAP attacked and dislodged a military post at Ajiri-Mafa in Mafa.
- 19 July: ISWAP killed five farmers in Tamsukawu village near Benesheikh in Borno state, accusing them of giving information to the military regarding ISWAP's activities.
- 25 July: At least seven Cameroonian soldiers were killed in Zigi in Maroua, following an ISWAP attack.
- 29 July: ISWAP fighters abducted about 13 travellers between Mainok and Benisheikh along Maiduguri-Damaturu road. Nine were released, leaving behind a policeman and two others who were found with ID cards.

August

- Waves of disengagement.
 - Major inter-communal clash between Musgum and Shuwa Arab communities.
 - 5 August: At least 24 Chadian soldiers were killed and 14 more were wounded, in a suspected jihadist attack on Tchoukou Telia, an island 190 kilometres (118 miles) northwest of the capital N'Djamena.
 - 8 August: Nigerian soldiers went to Kukawa and banned people from using the market because ISWAP members were taking advantage of the absence of soldiers in the town to trade in the market. Soldiers informed the civilians to instead use the newly opened Doro market.
 - 11 August: Around 7pm at Amchide in Banki, three IDPs were hit by bullets from Cameroon soldiers, who were testing some newly acquired weapons. The three injured IDPs were evacuated to Mora for treatment.
 - 13 August: Some children, who went to fetch firewood on the outskirts of Gamboru town, mistakenly triggered an IED, which exploded and killed four of them.
 - 13 August: Community members in Baga went fishing on the outskirts of town and they accidentally triggered an IED buried in the ground, killing six men.
 - August 30: 17 people, including a soldier and an aid worker, were killed after hundreds of ISWAP militants launched an attack on the town of Rann on the border with Cameroon.
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September

- 1 September: IDPs in Bama, Borno state, escorted by vigilante members to fetch firewood in the bush were met by ISWAP fighters, who killed five vigilante members and seven IDPs.
 - 24 September: ISWAP fighters ambushed soldiers along Marte-Dikwa road. 25 corpses of soldiers were discovered, with six injured.
 - 26 September: At least 22 Nigerian soldiers were killed when ISWAP militants launched an attack on Burkusuma military base in Sokoto. An unspecified number of ISWAP militants were killed in the attack.
 - 27 September: Nigerian Air Force (NAF) fighter jets arrived in Daban Masara village in Marte around 10am to carry out surveillance. One hour later, the jet returned and bombed a location called Kwatan Daban Masara, the first point where fishermen bring their fish for sale, killing nine civilians. The jet then dropped bombs in nine different locations in the village, killing about 200 people and unconfirmed number of injured individuals.
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October

- 12 October: At least 35 Nigerian soldiers were killed and 10 of their vehicles destroyed when ISWAP fighters ambushed them around Bremari village, along Monguno-Gajiram road, in Nganzai LGA of Borno state.
- 13 October: Farmer-herder clashes in Gwange and Karwaram villages in Kukawa resulted in the death of a farmer. In the first village, an argument between a Fulani man and farmer led to the Fulani attacking and cutting off his hand, while in the second village,

the Fulani herders attacked and killed a farmer in his farm. Both incidents occurred after the herders were confronted for allowing their cattle graze on the victims' farms.

- 30 October: 72 IDPs in Ngala went to obtain firewood but were abducted for venturing into ISWAP territory. However, they were all released the following day. They explained that they were taken to the ISWAP leader in charge of the area, who ordered their release because they were only looking for a means of livelihood.
 - 30 October: A video of senior ISWAP members was released by the group, showing an act of pledging to reaffirm allegiance to ISIS leader, Caliph Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.
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November

- 4 November: ISWAP fighters attacked Mamuri village in Magumeri LGA, where they looted and burnt the police station, abducted two policemen and freed detainees held in the cell. They also looted the hospital in the village and burnt down a communication mast.
 - 4 November: A fire outbreak in Muna Garage IDP camp resulted in the loss of 100 shelters. Fire was caused by a woman in the camp preparing a meal around 2 pm.
 - 6 November: Another fire outbreak in Muna Garage led to the death of a 12-year old girl and loss of 70 shelters.
 - 7 November: Another fire outbreak in Muna Garage destroyed 150 shelters, with two people dying in it.
 - 13 November: The Nigerian Army Brigade Commander of 29 Task Force Brigade, Brigadier General Dzarma Zirkusu and three other soldiers were killed in an ISWAP ambush in Askira, Borno State.
 - 18 November: JAS fighters killed four individuals and abducted four IDPs who went to fish in Dikwa.
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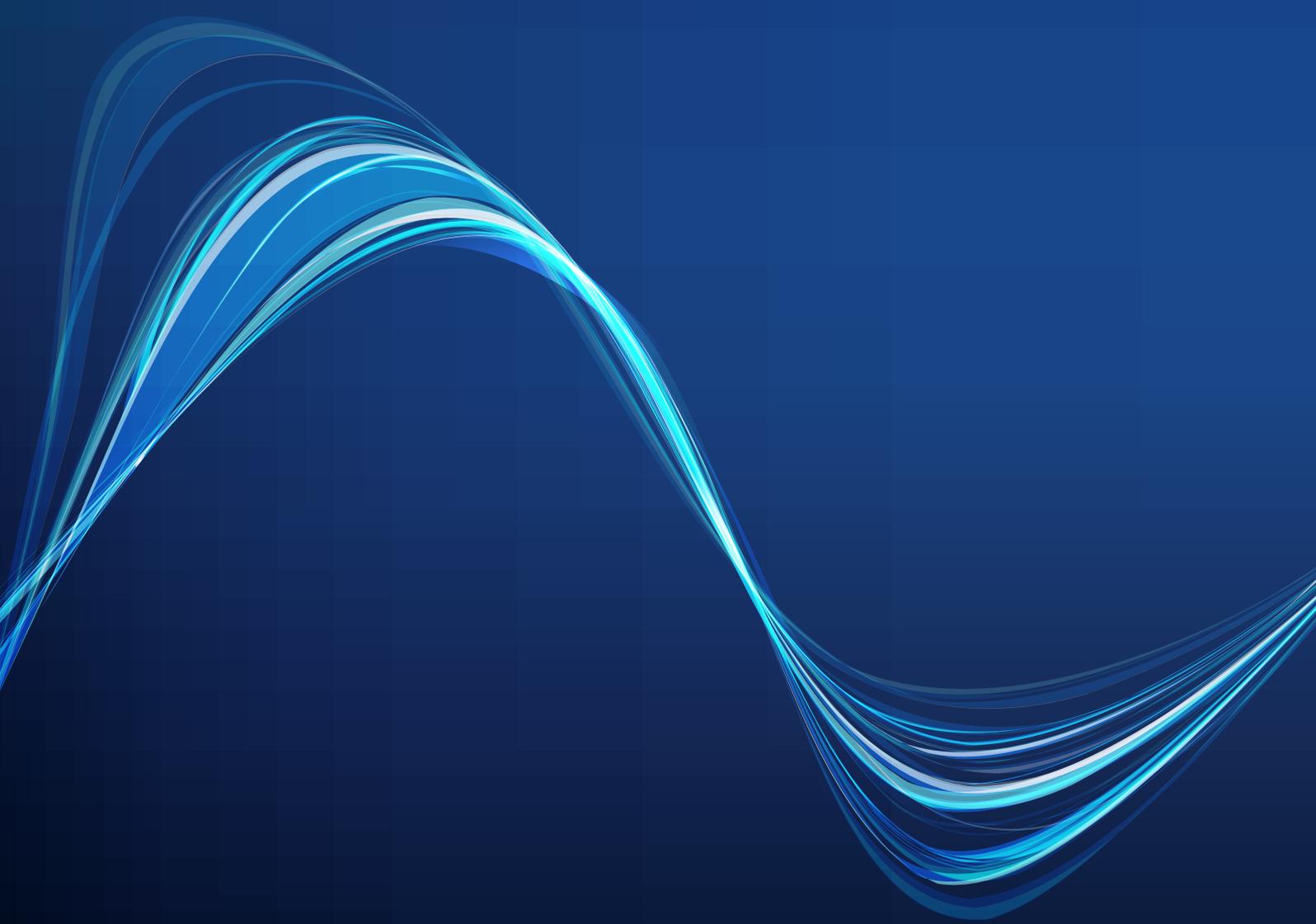
December

- 4 December: Around 6am, ISWAP launched rockets into Maiduguri. One hit and destroyed a house in 1,000 Housing Estate, with minor damages on six other houses. Another landed on a car in the Gomari neighbourhood close to the NAF base.
- 10 December: Around 8 am at Dogon Waya, along Maiduguri-Damaturu road, ISWAP set up a checkpoint and abducted about 30 people from eight vehicles, including the drivers. They went away with five vehicles.
- 16 December: ISWAP fighters attacked a military post in Zariye, a major ISWAP logistics route in Abadam, killing 15 soldiers.
- 23 December: Around 11 am, ISWAP fired three rockets targeting Maiduguri. One landed on a bakery in Moramti, near Maiduguri, along Jimtilo road. The second one landed behind the bakery. The third one landed at Ayafe neighbourhood in Gomari, Maiduguri. Six people were killed and eight injured.

Source: ISS conflict monitoring and media monitoring







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CONFLICT ANALYSIS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN 2020-2021

Trends, developments and implications for peace and stability