Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-insurgency

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Executive Summary

For the last two years, Niger has been at war with Boko Haram. The conflict has disrupted this poor country’s development, especially public finances, and destabilised the south east, the main scene of armed clashes. In this region, located some 1,350km from the capital and faced with an economic collapse, the battle against Boko Haram has stoked up local intercommunal tensions and exacerbated violence over access to resources. Despite direct support from Chadian troops since 2015 and improved collaboration with the Nigerian army, Nigerien forces have been unable to put a stop to attacks by insurgents, some of whom have links to the Islamic State (IS). The military option has produced results but has also shown its limits. The war effort must be accompanied by an approach that would allow demobilisation of the movement’s militants and promote a political solution to the tensions that have stimulated its local spread. The government must also prioritise economic revival and public service provision to bring relief to an exhausted population, whose suffering fuels the insurrection.

Despite alarmist scenarios, Boko Haram has failed to extend its influence beyond the south-eastern Diffa region. This relatively wealthy territory has a special relationship with the Nigerian state of Borno. Close historical, religious, and economic ties explain the resonance of the message spread by Mohammed Yusuf, the Nigerian founder of Boko Haram. Many Nigeriens, especially the youth, became his supporters after they travelled to Maiduguri, the capital of Borno, only 425km away from Diffa, in search of religious training or business opportunities. When Nigerian armed forces massacred more than 1,000 of his followers in July 2009, many members of Boko Haram found refuge in south-eastern Niger. The movement has long avoided conducting military operations in the country to build up Diffa as a refuge and a place to seek funds, supplies and recruits.

Nigerien authorities initially responded to the Boko Haram threat by keeping the movement under surveillance. They believed that it was essentially a Nigerian problem. This attitude changed in 2014, when the threat became more pressing. Boko Haram’s territorial expansion toward the Niger border was accompanied by a new push to recruit hundreds of young Nigeriens. Persuaded by its regional and international partners to become more actively involved, Niger joined the military efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The war effort has since proved to be a burden on the national budget and the judicial system and fuelled tensions between the government and the military hierarchy.

The Diffa region is suffering from both Boko Haram attacks and counter-insurgency measures taken by the Nigerien authorities, such as the extension of the state of emergency introduced in February 2015 that includes a ban on some commercial activities. Hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people only survive thanks to foreign aid. Recourse to local vigilante committees and reprisals by Boko Haram against anyone who collaborates with the army have created a difficult atmosphere in which local score-settling, collective fear and informants are all ingredients of a dangerously toxic brew.
On the shores of Lake Chad, in the extreme east of Diffa region, Boko Haram’s presence has aggravated intercommunal tensions, which have degenerated into deadly conflicts since May 2016. Mediation between communities by the authorities since June 2016 is a welcome initiative but has yet to dissipate all of these tensions. On the lake’s islands, a group of combatants who have broken away from the Boko Haram faction led by Abubakar Shekau, head of the movement since the death of Mohammed Yusuf, is exploiting these local tensions. This group is currently trying to take root more permanently and allegedly has close ties with IS.

Faced with Boko Haram’s resilience, the Nigerien government can no longer restrict itself to an approach solely based on military operations and commercial restrictions. In December 2016, the establishment of demobilisation sites signalled a change in the policy of repression that had prevailed since 2015. The government is also drafting a special plan for the resolution of the crisis in the Diffa region. With the support of regional and international partners, it must continue in this direction and expand its counter-insurgency strategy that goes beyond a mainly military response. This is all the more important given that some insurgents have rejected the excesses of Abubakar Shekau and may try to regain the support of the local population by avoiding the targeting of Muslims. The government must also increase cooperation with its neighbours and make contingency plans for the possible disengagement of international partners, whose public finances are deteriorating and who could opt for more isolationist policies in the months to come.
Recommendations

To reduce violence by going beyond the security response

To the government of Niger:

1. Discourage the development of armed community-based militias.
2. Pursue and strengthen the efforts to mediate between communities on the shores of Lake Chad started in June 2016.
3. Ensure equitable and fair access to the lake’s resources, including, if necessary, through a thorough reform of the system of chiefs in the lake area.
4. Propose quickly a plan for resolving the crisis in south-eastern Niger, prepared in close partnership with civil society and elected representatives in the Diffa region, and paying particular attention to reconciliation, the reintroduction of public services and economic revival.

To ease the pressure on the judicial system and prepare for the reintegration of Boko Haram militants

To the government of Niger:

5. Formulate demobilisation and reintegration policies for former Boko Haram combatants, especially those who have not been involved in serious crimes, while consulting Boko Haram’s victims and their representatives to avoid a cycle of score-settling. The recent establishment of demobilisation sites is welcome but the reintegration of former insurgents is a sensitive issue that requires skilful handling and major long-term investment by the government and its partners.
6. Increase the resources allocated to the judicial system to ensure improved treatment of Boko Haram-related cases, including those dealing with suspects of involvement in serious crimes, which are currently clogging up the country’s courts.
7. Insist that the security services make a strong case to justify the transfer to Niamey prison of people who have been arrested on the basis of intelligence provided by informants.

To Niger’s partners:

8. Provide advice and human resources to boost the resources allocated to the judicial system.
To suspend economic restrictions linked to the state of emergency and launch a plan to revive the economy of the Diffa region as early as possible

To the government of Niger:

9. Redirect suspended economic flows by channelling them through the town of Diffa and encouraging exporters to use more secure roads toward Nigeria until the southern Komadougou area becomes stable again.

10. Build the capacities of the public administration to provide the population with tangible judicial, health and education services, encourage the recruitment of local civil servants and the granting of temporary bonuses to civil servants working in the regions affected by the insurrection.

To supervise more effectively the security forces and their budgets

To the government of Niger:

11. Encourage the High Authority for the Fight against Corruption (HALCIA) to investigate the use of funds allocated to the war effort.

12. Provide the armed forces on the ground with the resources they need to conduct counter-insurgency military operations, while tightening supervision of the armed forces and requiring that military personnel found guilty of abuses and other crimes against civilians are held accountable.

13. Supervise the vigilante committees to limit their role to the collection of intelligence; prepare policies immediately for their complete or partial demobilisation if the insurrection’s decline is confirmed.

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Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-insurgency

I. Introduction

Niger, located at the heart of an area subject to intense geopolitical turbulence, remains a weak link in the Sahel. The March 2016 re-election of President Issoufou provided some political stability but the country has yet to deal with the immense economic and demographic challenges it faces. Pointing to the cross-border threats from Mali, Libya and Nigeria, the government has focused on security rather than the Renaissance socio-economic plan put forward by President Issoufou when he was first elected in 2011.

For the last two years, Niger has been waging open war against Boko Haram, a jihadist insurrection founded in north-eastern Nigeria that has spread to neighbouring countries. The government has mobilised the armed forces and adopted a harsh policy aimed at depriving it of its economic resources that has curbed the movement’s advance in Niger. But counter-insurgency operations have deeply disrupted the Diffa region, located in the south east, where the conflict is raging. Boko Haram is certainly on the back foot in Niger but that does not mean it has been defeated. In any case, this insurrection, joined by hundreds of people, has generated a conflict that will leave a lasting mark on the country’s south east.

This report analyses the dynamics of Boko Haram’s penetration into Niger and assesses the authorities’ response. It describes the different stages of this process and highlights the local circumstances that the jihadist insurrection is taking advantage of. It is essential to understand these dynamics to ensure lasting stability in the Diffa region. The report therefore calls on the authorities and their partners to develop a strategy that goes beyond the current military response. It is based on interviews with a wide range of political, religious and community leaders and eyewitnesses, including militants and former Boko Haram supporters met in detention or in the Diffa region, conducted during two research visits to Niger in 2016. It forms part of a series of Crisis Group publications on the jihadist threat in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin.
II. South-eastern Niger: Fertile Soil for Boko Haram

Diffa’s geographical and cultural proximity to Maiduguri, the cradle of Boko Haram in Nigeria, makes it particularly vulnerable to the movement’s ideas. The teachings of its founder, Mohammed Yusuf, had a special resonance there. Inevitably, the fierce war Boko Haram leaders and the Nigerian authorities started to fight in July 2009 affected south-eastern Niger.

A. A Region Leaning Toward Nigeria’s North East

In terms of geography, Niger’s south east is very specific. Diffa is the regional capital most distant to Niamey (more than 1,300km by road). Along with Agadez, it is the country’s most sparsely populated region, but its population is growing the fastest. It consists of three unequally populated areas. Most of the population, estimated to be 591,000 (less than four per cent of the country’s population), is concentrated in two different border areas: one on the banks of the Komadougou River, which delineates the Niger-Nigeria border, and includes the town of Diffa (48,000 inhabitants), and another around Lake Chad, which Niger shares with its neighbours Chad and Nigeria.1 The region’s interior is almost a desert and mainly inhabited by nomadic Fulani, Tebu and Arab herders.2

However, the Diffa region is not poor, at least in comparison to the rest of Niger. It combines the natural resources from the Komadougou River and Lake Chad with its proximity to the large Nigerian market. Until the conflict interrupted trade, Nigeria was by far the main consumer of its agricultural products (peppers and rice from the Komadougou area, livestock from the interior and fish, livestock and corn from the Lake Chad area), and in return supplied it with manufactured goods and smuggled fuel. The Diffa region is also located on long-distance trade routes that lead to Chad, Libya and Sudan, often bypassing Niamey.

Nigeria, especially Borno state, holds great sway over the Diffa region. The Nigerian currency, the naira, is widely used in the area and competes with the official currency, the FCFA — “[Diffa] uses the naira; the FCFA is used by officials and [development] projects”.3 The region’s inhabitants are often less familiar with Niamey than with the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, which is closer (175km) and therefore more accessible.4

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1 Socio-demographic indicators in Diffa region are a cause for concern but slightly better than in other parts of southern Niger. For example, the child mortality rate is 41 per 1,000 while the average in the country’s rural areas is 163 per 1,000. The fertility rate is 6.4, compared to the national rate of 7.6. “Niger. Enquête démographique et de santé à indicateurs multiples”, Institut national de la statistique (INS) and ICF International, 2012.

2 Statistics confirm the region’s specificity. The human development index there is lower than the national average (0.302 compared to 0.324 in 2011), but this is mainly because of low school attendance. The primary school enrolment rate is 35 per cent, compared with the national rate of 49 per cent in 2012. Conversely, the poverty rate in Diffa region (34 per cent in 2011) is lower than the national average (42 per cent). “Annuaire statistique du Niger, 2008-2012”, INS, 2013.

3 Crisis Group interview, prisoner originally from the Diffa region, May 2016.

These ties are rooted in history and culture. The Diffa region in its current boundaries and north-eastern Nigeria were part of Kanem-Bornu, a political entity that started shaping the area in the eighth century. The language (Kanuri), identity and old religious tradition (“Kanuri Islam”) long enjoyed much prestige as indicators of affiliation to a powerful political and economic entity. The latter influenced and attracted surrounding groups to various degrees, sometimes incorporating them. The fall of the last sovereigns of Bornu at the beginning of the twentieth century, the division of the area by the French and English empires and then independence movements have not weakened the links between south-eastern Niger and north-eastern Nigeria.

Islam from northern Nigeria therefore spread quickly to Niger and even beyond Kanuri territory. A major commercial centre, Maiduguri is also a sub-regional crossroads for Islamic education, which attracts many Nigeriens. The reformist Islamic movement Izala, where Mohammed Yusuf received his education before turning away from it and fighting it, is very influential in Niger, especially around Diffa. It controls two of the towns’ six main mosques.

The State in South-eastern Niger

Relations between the Komadougou area, where the Kanuri are dominant, and the Nigerien state are paradoxical and to state that the government has marginalised the area would be simplistic. Despite being far from the capital of Niger and having much more in common with Nigeria, the Kanuri are well represented among the political and military elite in Niamey. Former president, General Mamadou Tandja, is from Mainé Soroa, in Kanuri territory, and President Issoufou’s administration includes many Kanuri.

Relations with the state are different in the more ethnically diverse Lake Chad area, which has long resisted government projects, including those from Kanem-Bornu. In addition to the Kanuri, there are large Buduma, Arab, Tebu and Fulani communities. This diversity is all the more significant because the lake’s natural resources – fish, pastures for livestock and alluvial basins for agriculture – have for decades attracted migrants from the rest of Niger and even from other African countries. Unlike the Kanuri, these population groups are unequally represented among the Nigerien political and military elite. Although members of the Tebu community have had a role in the state administration since their rebellion in the 1990s, the Mohammedan Arabs, who arrived from Sudan during the last third of the twentieth century, and the Buduma communities are not so well represented in either Niamey or local government.

6 Among the most prominent figures are the education minister and former vice president of the National Assembly, the general secretary at the defence ministry and President Tandja’s former private chief of staff.
7 Crisis Group interviews, Kanuri, Fulani and Buduma leaders in Diffa region, Niamey and Diffa, May, October 2016.
Many factors fuel tensions in this region: the population movements that accompany the lake’s changing water levels; the importance of transhumance; disagreements between local government administrations (chefferies) and locally elected representatives, who play a role in regulating access to natural resources; the resentment felt by people who consider themselves to be natives of the region, notably the Buduma, and do not have the financial and political capital to profit from the growing sectors of the economy. Moreover, the area has been the scene of intercommunal conflicts and even outbreaks of armed rebellion. The lake is a border area that the government finds difficult to control: it is endowed with rugged topography, a place where four countries meet, a pioneering front, an area where smuggling and trafficking is common and a migratory melting pot.

The state has not displayed much interest in this distant region, whose economy is more integrated with that of neighbouring countries. It lacks resources to invest in the area, but it is not completely absent. The state has acquired expertise in conflict resolution in the course of the crises that have afflicted the northern Tuareg areas, but also the southern Diffa region. The High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP), created in October 2011 to take over from the High Authority for the Restoration of Peace (created in 1994), and which reports directly to the presidency, is the institution that has and uses this experience. Under the leadership of a senior Tuareg official, it administers a range of programs on everything from intercommunal dialogue to the demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and development projects aimed at promoting cohesion and peace in various regions.

The government does not enjoy particularly strong popular legitimacy and the political elites do not hesitate to manipulate ethnic and regional loyalties at election time, but these elites are relatively united and mixed as inheritors of nationalist sentiment and great sociability. In the field of religion, many observers consider

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8 As elsewhere, there is a debate around the lake about who is and who is not indigenous. Some Kanuri intellectuals dispute the indigenous character of the Buduma on the Nigerien shores, noting the absence of Buduma toponyms there and claiming they are of Chadian origin. Crisis Group interviews, Kanuri and Buduma leaders, Niamey and Diffa, May 2016.


10 In the 1990s, the Tebu rebellion led by the Democratic Front for Renewal (FDR) ended with a peace accord signed in 1998 in N’Djamena. The combatants, including the Fulani and Arab militias opposed to the Tebu, were reintegrated quite effectively.

11 This change in name reflects the desire to prioritise an approach based on socio-economic development rather than on strict adherence to the 1990s peace agreements between the government and the rebel movements. Crisis Group Africa Report N°208, Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?, 19 September 2013, p. 32.

the Nigerien state’s support for pluralism and secularism to be a decisive factor. But Islam’s hegemony in Niger might as well make it less divisive, unlike in Nigeria, where competition between Christianity and Islam generates tensions.

C. Mohammed Yusuf’s Nigerien Militants

In the 2000s, Mohammed Yusuf’s preaching had an impact on the Diffa region. Many of the thousands of Nigerien men and women who went to study or work in Maiduguri heard Yusuf’s message and some attended his mosque. Back in Niger, they disseminated his thoughts in electronic format but also more directly: Yusuf’s assistant and future successor as Boko Haram’s leader, Abubakar Shekau, reportedly has family contacts in the area and preached in Diffa before 2009. From the start of the 2000s, some of Yusuf’s Nigerian supporters formed an isolated sectarian community in Kannama village, on the border with Niger. They were violently dispersed by Nigerian forces in October 2003 after they entered into conflict with the local authorities and population, and some found refuge in Niger.

In either 2007 or 2008, a small movement formed around Diffa’s central mosque, influenced by Yusuf and sharing his interpretation of Islam. It mainly comprised young people who had broken with the Izala current, which had gradually been establishing itself in Diffa since the start of the 2000s, especially among traders. Yusuf’s young followers adopted a more radical attitude than Izala members. In particular, they condemned Izala for only criticising the state’s corruption while maintaining its links with the government. They also made contact with the faithful near places of worship, urging people to join them.

The Yusufiya opened its own place of worship in October-November 2008 in the district of Diffa Koura, in Diffa, with financial support from El Hadj Kakabuno, a prosperous young Kanuri trader whose business network extended to Maiduguri and Kano, northern Nigeria’s great metropolis. He acted as leader of the community in Diffa, helped by a young Fulani preacher, Sayedi, a native of Fulatari (a pastoralist


16 Crisis Group interview, gendarmerie officer, Niamey, December 2014.


18 For example, an important member of the group persuaded his elder brother, a police officer who was close to Izala, to leave the public service. He also criticised an Izala scholar for attending the Islamic university of Say in Niger, which he regarded as an impious institution. Crisis Group interview, Izala member, Niamey, February 2017.
zone in the interior of Diffa) who had also been an assiduous visitor to Maiduguri.\footnote{Crisis Group interviews, security officer, detainee and Yusufiyya member, May 2016; and Izala member, Niamey, February 2017.}

As tension increased in Maiduguri in July 2009, most of Yusuf’s Nigerien supporters in Diffa sold their belongings, some of them divorced their wives if they baulked at accompanying them and joined their mentor with the idea of “starting a jihad against the Nigerian government”.\footnote{Crisis Group interview, detainee, originally from Maïné Soroa, Kotoukalle, May 2016.}

D. **Diffa, Boko Haram’s Support Base**

The situation started to deteriorate in 2009, as the escalating confrontation between the Nigerian security forces and Yusuf’s supporters led to massive violence in Maiduguri and other towns in northern Nigeria. Yusuf was arrested and killed in detention by the police. Some of his Nigerian and Nigerien supporters found refuge in Niger, either to distance themselves from Boko Haram or, on the contrary, to sustain the violent strategy of its new leader, Abubakar Shekau.\footnote{On their return to Diffa, Yusuf’s followers were more inclined to join the Tidjanes than Izala. Many doubt their sincerity and believe they conceal their real loyalties. Crisis Group interview, Izala member, Niamey, February 2017.}

For example, about twenty militants returned to Maïné Soroa in 2009. They formed the basis of a cell that has counted up to a hundred members.\footnote{Crisis Group interview, detainee originally from Maïné Soroa and former Boko Haram member, May 2016.}

The Diffa region became a place to raise funds and stock up on petrol, weapons and food supplies. Boko Haram sold some of its looted goods. This economy created a network of people who benefitted from the insurrection without necessarily joining it or even sharing its ideology – suppliers, dealers, and transporters.\footnote{Some members of the security forces in the area reportedly conducted business with jihadists. Crisis Group interview, detainee originally from Diffa region, May 2016.}

Boko Haram sometimes used violence to control its network.\footnote{In May 2014, a report noted Boko Haram’s recruitment of urban gang members in Diffa. “BBC meets gang ‘paid to join Boko Haram’ in Niger”, BBC, 22 April 2014.}

For example, it is generally acknowledged that the killing of the president of Diffa’s Chamber of Commerce in May 2015 was related to the fact that the movement subjects the region’s major businessmen to extortion.\footnote{Crisis Group interviews, traders, Diffa, 18 May 2016.}

Boko Haram has used its funds to recruit members, combining its call to jihad with practical material benefits: credits to open small businesses or buy vehicles, money when combatants enlist, promises of wages and motorcycles and prospects of marriage. The latter is particularly attractive in a cultural context where marriage is an essential characteristic of identity. In the villages of Komadougou, starting in 2014, young Nigeriens tried to identify, persuade and escort young women from Kanuri villages to areas held by Boko Haram on the other side of the border.\footnote{Crisis Group interviews, former detainee, Bagara, October 2016. See also Crisis Group Africa Report N°242, *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*, 5 December 2016.}

Meanwhile, the ostentatious prosperity of combatants on their return from Nigeria,
rich from looting and the rewards granted by the movement, has attracted new recruits.\textsuperscript{27} Between several hundred and a few thousand young Nigeriens have reportedly joined the organisation, some out of conviction but a growing number out of opportunism and greed.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} Crisis Group interview, detainee, Kotoukalle, May 2016.

\textsuperscript{28} It is difficult to provide more precise figures and the lists compiled are not necessarily reliable. An initial calculation, made on the basis of information provided by local government officials, identified several hundred individuals who had joined the insurrection since the start of 2015, when the first clashes between the Nigerien forces and Boko Haram started. In December 2014, a senior Nigerien officer familiar with the region estimated their total number at less than 200. Shortly after the attack on Bosso, the authorities made a new estimate of the number of Nigerien members of Boko Haram: “We made a secret list using information supplied by the chiefs. They gave us about 4,000 names after the attacks in February, but there were some false accusations”. Crisis Group interviews, Nigerien officer, Niamey, December 2014; senior government official, Niamey, May 2016; and regional government official, Diffa, May 2016.
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III. Niger at War

A. From Surveillance to War

Niger’s initial response to Boko Haram was “an approach that combined relative tolerance, surveillance of preachers and targeted actions”. At that time, the authorities viewed Boko Haram as a Nigerian problem which was not a direct threat to the country, though they needed to monitor its impact on Nigerien soil. Some security sources said there was a non-aggression pact between the Nigerien authorities and Boko Haram before 2014, but it is difficult to confirm this. True or not, it did not stop the Nigerien security services from making arrests in areas that supported the insurrection in and after 2010. Moreover, their concern increased after the jihadist advance in Mali at the start of 2012 and the arrest in the following months of Nigerien and Nigerian supporters of Boko Haram who were linked with northern Mali.

Collaboration with Nigeria was then minimal. It was limited to the extradition of a few suspects at the request of the authorities in Abuja and joint border patrols that produced little results. Despite the conflict’s growing impact on Niger, notably the influx of tens of thousands of people fleeing the fighting and finding refuge in the Diffa region, the Nigerien elites remained divided about whether to take a more active stance against the movement. Senior military officials concerned about the extension of fighting to Nigerien territory advised Niger to remain neutral or offer to mediate between the movement and the Nigerian government. Many officials believed they

29 Niger had adopted a similar attitude toward the Maitatsine religious movement in the 1980s, the Nigerian community of “talibans” inspired by Yusuf in Kannama in 2003 and the Sake guerre haram movement. Crisis Group Report, Niger: Another Weak Link ..., op. cit., p. 44.
31 Crisis Group interview, senior Nigerien official, Niamey, May 2016.
32 These arrests mainly took place in Maïné Soroa, where Boko Haram had about one hundred followers. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien security officer, Niamey, December 2014.
33 Crisis Group interview, Nigerien security officer, Niamey, December 2014. In May 2013, an attack on Niamey central prison, for which the jihadist movement al-Mourabitoun, led at the time by the Algerian Mokhtar Belmokhtar, claimed responsibility, allowed several Boko Haram members to escape. That same year, other suspects were discreetly arrested in Maïné Soroa after having sought weapons, apparently for use against the Nigerien authorities. Crisis Group interview, detainee, originally from Maïné Soroa, May 2016.
34 Crisis Group interview, detainee originally from Diffa, former supporter of the Yusufiyya, May 2016. The Nigerian justice system apparently limited the number of extraditions of Nigerian suspects, partly because it believed the Nigerian authorities had not presented enough evidence. Crisis Group interview, Nigerien security officer, Niamey, May 2016. In October 2012, Niger and Nigeria agreed to launch joint border patrols but they had a very limited impact on the ground because of a lack of resources and poor coordination. Crisis Group interview, Western security officer, Niamey, December 2014.
35 There was some confusion in the higher echelons of government. In February 2014, the head of the Nigerien army, General Seyni Garba, said Islamists were getting ready to attack markets and other crowded places in Diffa to take revenge for Niamey’s firm policy against extremists in the region. “Le Niger déjoue des attaques de Boko Haram visant les marchés”, Afrik.com, 17 February 2014. The following month, the defence minister said: “Boko Haram does not pose an imminent threat and remains focused on Nigeria. We will not provoke them, but they will regret it if they attack us”. “Niger fears contagion from Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamists”, Reuters, 19 March 2014.
should focus on gathering intelligence and maintaining public order rather than mobilising the military against Boko Haram.\(^{37}\)

Niger decided to go to war with Boko Haram in 2014. There were two reasons for this: first, it was pushed in this direction by an international context that favoured the constitution of a regional military force, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The regional military option was revived in 2012 by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), which comprises Niger, and important international actors – the U.S., France and the African Union (AU) – supported it in 2014.\(^{38}\) Ever since he was elected in 2011, President Issoufou, who had maintained his stance as a reliable ally of the Western countries in the fight against the increasing terrorist threat in the Sahel, remained faithful to his commitment.

The increasing threat was the other core factor in Niger’s military involvement.\(^{39}\) In 2014, Boko Haram conquered a vast area in northern Nigeria and thus began to represent a direct threat to neighbouring countries.\(^{40}\) Moreover, in a video dated 21 January 2015, Shekau threatened the presidents of Chad, Cameroon and Niger and criticised the latter for offering support to the French president after radical Islamists attacked the satirical periodical *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris.\(^{41}\) Boko Haram stepped up recruitment in the Diffa region in 2014: all along the Komadougou River, hundreds of young men and women, most of them Kanuri, joined the movement, attracted by its successes and the prospects of making easy money.\(^{42}\) In June 2014, the army mounted a defensive operation, codenamed *Ngaa* (which means shield in Kanuri), to strengthen its military position on the border with Nigeria and gather intelligence.

**B. Military Action in a Stalemate**

Although the Nigerian authorities were expecting a short war against people who Issoufou described as “amateurs”, the conflict escalated and military operations ended in a stalemate in 2015.\(^{43}\) At the start of 2015, the president authorised Chadian troops

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\(^{38}\) Created in 1964 by the four Lake Chad countries (Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon), the LCBC’s main mission is the sustainable and equitable management of the lake and its basin. It later set up a security component and created a joint multinational force in 1998, initially to deal with cross-border crime and, more recently, to combat Boko Haram.


\(^{40}\) Since March 2014, Boko Haram has carried out attacks on Cameroon territory, confirming that it is capable of carrying its fight beyond the Nigerian borders. In the second half of 2014, it launched an offensive to the north of Borno state, getting closer to Lake Chad and the border with Niger. In November, Boko Haram seized the Nigerian towns of Damasak and Malam Fatori along the Komadougou, which marks the border with Niger. See Crisis Group Africa Report N°241, *Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram*, 16 November 2016.

\(^{41}\) “Shekau menace Déby, Biya et Issoufou”, *Jeune Afrique* (online), 21 January 2015.

\(^{42}\) As a senior official from the Diffa region recognised, the ones joining Boko Haram “are our children”. Crisis Group interview, senior official, Diffa, May 2016. According to estimates, between several hundred and several thousand individuals left Niger in this period to join Boko Haram. Crisis Group interviews, senior officer and Nigerien security force officer, Niamey, December 2014, May 2016.

\(^{43}\) In April 2015, President Issoufou said that “the number of Boko Haram combatants has been overestimated. That is because the movement won many victories against the Nigerian army. But
to enter Niger in their capacity as part of the MNJTF while on 6-8 February, Boko Haram launched violent attacks against the towns of Bosso and Diffa. In a way, the regionalisation of both the threat and the military response fed each other. For many months, the front stabilised along the border with Nigeria.

In April, Boko Haram carried out a successful attack on Nigerien positions on Karamga island, which was the first reliable indicator that it had established itself in the northern part of Lake Chad. In July, its combatants attacked Diffa prison but failed to release any prisoners. Meanwhile, Nigerien authorities supported the creation of vigilante committees, not so much to undertake combat but rather to monitor the movements of combatants and try to prevent surprise attacks. Local public figures and village chiefs were asked to identify suspects. Suspicion and denunciations became pervasive and were accentuated by the killing of people suspected of collaborating with the army. Some civilian and military authorities were tempted to give the committees a greater military role and a few committees did indeed do more than gather intelligence, arresting suspects and building roadblocks. From its positions on the Nigerian side of the border, Boko Haram continued to launch raids into south-eastern Niger, particularly against villages close to the Komadougou River that had set up vigilante committees.

After the presidential election in February and March 2016, which took place in relative calm in Diffa, the MNJTF prepared a new offensive in north-eastern Nigeria. Boko Haram was one step ahead and took control of Bosso for a few hours, inflicting heavy losses on the Nigerien army. The latter was only able to maintain its positions thanks to reinforcements from the west and the return at the end of June of Chadian troops, who concentrated their operations on Lake Chad’s shores and islands. From July onward, the Nigerian army gradually redeployed along the Komadougou River and Nigerien troops mobilised to provide occasional backup at Malam Fatori and Damasak.

Although Boko Haram has been weakened, it has retained its strike capacity in Nigeria, as its attacks on Malam Fatori and Gashagar showed at the end of 2016. In Niger, in the communes of Gueskerou, Bosso and Toumour (extreme south east), Boko Haram combatants still cross the border freely to extort money from villagers and attack military positions, such as at Gueskerou in 20 January 2017. In this area, the security forces, which retreated to the commune’s main towns, are a long way from eliminating the enemy. In rural areas, the population is “caught in the crossfire”: it lives in fear of attacks by Boko Haram, false accusations and arrests by the security forces.45

C. The State and the Burden of War

Niger is not alone in its fight against Boko Haram, but the authorities feel that their Western partners do not help them enough. Niger benefits from major military

after its first encounters with our forces, we quickly realised that they were amateurs”. “Le président du Niger sur Boko Haram: ‘Des amateurs’”, Le Journal du Dimanche, 12 April 2015.

44 Crisis Group interviews, Nigerien official, Niamey, September 2016; member of vigilante committee, Diffa, September 2016.

45 Crisis Group interview, official in Diffa region and member of the Buduma community, Diffa, May 2016.
assistance programs, particularly from France and the U.S. However, Western military aid and presence are more focused on the fight against jihadist groups in the Sahara than on the Lake Chad basin. The French and American military are present in Diffa but in smaller numbers than in Niamey and the Agadez region. Niger also receives financial aid as part of the MNJTF military operations against Boko Haram. But disbursement of some of this aid, which is managed by the AU, is slow and has had very limited impact on the ground.

The fight against Boko Haram requires significant expenditure on domestic security and defence. Allocations made during preparation of the national budget have prioritised security over social services such as health and education. At the Abuja conference in May 2016, President Issoufou emphasised that “operations against Boko Haram place a heavy burden on public finances: Niger has had to increase its military expenditure fifteen-fold since 2010. It now spends more than 10 per cent of its budget on security.”

It is difficult to give a precise estimate of the combined expenditure on the various military assistance programs. American military aid forms part of several bilateral and multilateral programs, notably the Security Governance Initiative (SGI) – Niger is one of five recipient African countries – and the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership Program (TSCTPP) – of which Niger, with $100 million between 2009 and 2013, is the third beneficiary. France has donated military equipment to Niger, including three Gazelle helicopters in 2012, and night vision spectacles in December 2016. The two countries have also provided training programs for the Nigerien military, for example, the French Reinforcing African Peacekeeping Capabilities (RECAP) program, launched in 1998. Another example of the focus on the north is EUCAP Niger. This European Union Mission has provided Niger with training programs and material support for the fight against terrorism and organised crime since 2012, but is focused on Niamey and Agadez.

The French are present in Niger as part of Operation Barkhane, with personnel deployed mainly in Niamey and the Agadez region, in Aguelal, near Arlit mining site where American Special Forces are also stationed and most importantly in Madama, close to the Libyan border. “Dossier de presse sur l’opération Barkhane”, French defence ministry, December 2016. The Americans, also present at Niamey air base, are building another air base at Agadez, from where they will deploy drones. “U.S. building $100 million drone base in Central Mali”, Reuters, 30 September 2016. Canadian Special Forces are also present in Niger as part of a training program based in Niamey and Agadez. Crisis Group interview, Canadian military officer, Niamey, May 2016 and “Western Troops in Niger: Controversial Presence, Usefulness Still to Be Demonstrated”, Briefing Note, Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security (GRIP), 7 November 2016. Five French military personnel and about twenty American military personnel coordinate and support intelligence gathering and analysis at the Diffa military base. Crisis Group interview, Western military officer, Diffa, May, September 2016. In 2014, the annual Flintlock training exercise, a U.S. initiative involving African, European and North American military personnel, also took place in Diffa.

The MNJTF is funded by the Americans, the British and the Europeans. The EU allocated €50 million through an AU-managed mechanism that is very slow. Starting in February 2015, the AU and EU took many months to negotiate this financial assistance and the delivery of military equipment has only just begun at the time this report is being finalised. Crisis Group interview, international official, Addis-Ababa, November 2016. During a visit by the AU Peace and Security commissioner on 17 February 2017, the AU delivered vehicles and generators funded by the UK. Security document seen by Crisis Group, February 2017.

Annual per capita military spending in Niger was $4.3 in 2012, three times less than in Mali and Burkina Faso, five times less than in Côte d’Ivoire. Total spending in 2012 was $73.1 million. “Military Spending and Arms Imports in Five West African Countries”, Briefing Note, GRIP, 15 June 2016. Crisis Group interview, representative of one of Niger’s funding partners, Niamey, May 2016.
its GDP on defence and security”.52 The government, which has to pay the premiums of soldiers deployed to secure national territory, finds it difficult to pay civil servants in other sectors. In 2016, the education and judiciary sectors went on strike in protest at lack of resources and wage arrears.53 Like their Chadian counterparts, Nigerien officials complain that they have to bear the bulk of the financial burden of the war against the insurrection.54

Niger’s involvement in the war against Boko Haram has also put a lot of pressure on the judicial system. The number of detainees held because of their links with Boko Haram increased from about a hundred at the end of 2014 to more than 1,200 in 2016 and close to 1,700 at the beginning of 2017.55 Faced with this explosion in the number of cases and the lack of financial and human resources, justice officials are unable to make progress with investigations. The great majority of detainees have been arrested based on information supplied by informants and the dossiers are often thin or empty.56 Some justice and security officials claim that most detainees have only tenuous links with the insurrection.57 This generates a lot of frustration among detainees and their families.58

Detainees have little awareness of their rights and most of them do not have the means to cover the costs of their defence. The law on counter-terrorism allows the

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52 “En finir avec Boko Haram”, tamtaminfo.com, 20 May 2016. In 2016, the budget for “defence, order and security” in Niger was FCFA207.55 billion, or 11.48 per cent of the total budget of FCFA1,807.22 billion. “Budget citoyen du Niger”, Budget Directorate-General, July 2016.

53 In May 2016, judges took action against the deterioration in their working conditions. In September, students and teachers protested against accumulated arrears in the payment of grants and wages. “Niger: les universités en grève en raison des retards de paiement de salaires”, Radio France Internationale (RFI), 19 September 2016. Although this was nothing exceptional, these strikes indicated growing discontent among civil servants.


55 Crisis Group interviews, prison administration official, Niamey, May 2016; member of the security forces, Niamey, February 2017. Niger’s prison population was estimated at 7,116, including 3,845 awaiting trial in 2013 and 8,525, including 5,115 awaiting trial in November 2015. This increase was mainly due to arrests made in connection with the Boko Haram insurrection. The number of detainees in Kollo prison alone, one of the three main prisons used to detain suspects from the Diffa region, increased from 300 to 919 between April and September 2015. “Country Report on Human Rights Practices, Niger, 2013”, U.S. State Department, p. 3 and “Country Report on Human Rights Practices, Niger, 2015”, p. 2.

56 Some files contain only the names of detainees. Crisis Group interview, member of the security forces, Niamey, May 2016.

57 Accusations of collusion with Boko Haram allow people to settle personal scores, get rid of troublesome neighbours, business rivals and even, in a case reported to Crisis Group, of a jealous husband. According to some security sources, most accusations are false. Crisis Group interviews, administrator, Diffa, and members of the security services, Niamey, May 2016.

58 The Buduma and others believe the arrests excessively target their communities. Crisis Group interviews, members of the Buduma community, Diffa and Niamey, May 2016.
extension of preventive detention for up to two years.\textsuperscript{59} There is some concern that
the explosive mixture of small numbers of hardcore jihadist militants and hundreds
of wrongfully arrested people may turn prisons into a focus for radicalisation.\textsuperscript{60} The
prison authorities, aware of this problem, have put under surveillance or in isolation
some detainees suspected of preaching and recruiting other detainees.\textsuperscript{61} This policy
of isolation is inadequate given the large and growing number of detainees.

The complicated and sometimes conflict-ridden relations between politicians and
the military are not helping the war effort.\textsuperscript{62} The arrest of senior officers accused of
organising a coup in December 2015, a few weeks before the presidential election,
illustrated the recurring tensions.\textsuperscript{63} Although the government is allocating an increasing
proportion of its resources to the defence and security forces, the army is troubled by
rumours of poor administration, especially of funds allocated to efforts in the Diffa
region. These rumours were reportedly behind the replacement of the former defence
minister shortly after President Issoufou’s re-election.\textsuperscript{64} They stir up resentment
and frustration, especially among those on the front line of the fight against Boko Haram.\textsuperscript{65}
The army’s defeat in Bosso at the beginning of 2016 reportedly caused a wave of
discontent against the military hierarchy, accused by the rank and file of misappropriating
government funds.\textsuperscript{66}

The war against Boko Haram has also highlighted Niger’s dependence on the
Chadian army, without whose support the army would be finding it even more diffi-
cult to contain the advance of combatants. The Nigerien army has certainly
strengthened its position in the Diffa region since the attack on Bosso but incursions
attributed to terrorist groups from Mali in October and November 2016 prompted the
redeployment of troops toward the north west.\textsuperscript{67} Niger is having difficulties dealing
with all the threats it faces on its borders.

\textsuperscript{59} The law of 11 March 2011 detailed organisational measures and respective jurisdictions in the
fight against terrorism. It defined terrorist acts, indicated the appropriate punishments and created
a specialised judicial unit in Niamey. Official Gazette, Republic of Niger, 11 March 2011, pp. 505-
510. The law was amended and clarified by a series of rulings, notably one in January 2016 on
financing terrorism. However, no detainee suspected of having links with Boko Haram has yet been
prosecuted even though some of them have been detained since 2012. Internal document of an
international human rights organisation seen by Crisis Group, September 2016.
\textsuperscript{60} Crisis Group interview, UN official, Dakar, April 2016.
\textsuperscript{61} Crisis Group interview, senior prison official, Niamey, May 2016.
\textsuperscript{62} Niger has experienced four coups and several mutinies since its independence in 1960. Crisis
\textsuperscript{63} These arrests were partly related to operations against Boko Haram. One of the officers accused
of organising a coup was responsible for deploying the air force. He reportedly refused to send heli-
copters to Diffa. Some said this was because of a lack of spare parts, other that it was because he was
\textsuperscript{64} Crisis Group interview, member of the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS),
Niamey, May 2016.
\textsuperscript{65} Crisis Group interview, government official, Niamey, October 2016.
\textsuperscript{66} Several dozen officers and soldiers were reportedly removed from army registers for desertion or dere-
liction of duty during the Boko Haram attack on Bosso, or because they openly expressed their anger at
the failings of the military hierarchy. Crisis Group email correspondence, security officer, July 2016.
\textsuperscript{67} Since the fall of the Libyan President Qadhafi in 2011, Niger has increased the number of its
troops in the north of the country, especially through Operation Malhibéro. Crisis Group Report, \textit{Niger:
Another Weak Link} \ldots, op. cit., p. 39 and the following sections.
IV. **Diffa and the Lake: The Long-term Impact**

Until now, the insurrection has affected Niger much less than Nigeria and Cameroon. The conflict remains limited to the south east and, in fact, to the southern part of this area, which is closest to Borno, the historic epicentre of the insurrection.68 The situation in this region is worrying and the population has been hit hard by two years of war.

A. **A Continuing State of Emergency**

The state of emergency declared in Diffa on 10 February 2015 is still in force.69 It is accompanied by restrictive measures that seek to cut off the financial resources flowing to Boko Haram and prevent its expansion into Nigerien territory. The authorities banned the sale of peppers and fishing on Lake Chad after claiming that these resources were filling the movement’s coffers. The government imposed a curfew and banned motorbikes, which Boko Haram has used for lightning cross-border raids.70 The government also closed markets suspected of supplying the insurgents.71 Chad and Cameroon have taken similar measures but later and in a less systematic and restrictive way.72 It is difficult to assess their effectiveness.73 They hit Boko Haram but also punish the entire region, leaving tens of thousands of people without occupation and without income, and dependent on foreign aid. They fuel resentment toward the authorities. If the government continues with this blockade, it risks pushing other young Nigeriens into the arms of Boko Haram, one of the few employers in the area. Moreover, the government has orchestrated massive displacement of people in the hope of cutting Boko Haram off from civilians who, whether voluntarily or not, support the insurrection.74 In May 2015, shortly after the Nigerien army’s defeat on Karamga island, the authorities brutally and hastily displaced the entire population

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68 Contrary to speculations in 2015 about riots in Niamey and Zinder provoked by President Issoufou’s attendance at a tribute to the victims of the attack on Charlie Hebdo weekly magazine, Boko Haram has not yet managed to extend its zone of influence beyond Maiduguri’s area of influence in Niger. There have been some arrests in Zinder and Maradi, but they probably targeted traffickers doing business with Boko Haram envoys, not militants. Crisis Group interview, security officer, Niamey, May 2016. The presence of presumed Boko Haram accomplices near Maradi, Niger’s third largest town, in the middle of Hausa country, arrested in February 2017, might indicate an attempt to extend the organisation well beyond its bases. “Madarounfa/Maradi: des présumés complices de Boko Haram mis aux arrêts”, Air Info (www.actuniger.com), 4 February 2017.

69 Parliament met in extraordinary session to authorise the Nigerien armed forces to pursue Boko Haram into Nigeria as part of the regional force.

70 Motorbikes are a source of income for the kabou-kabou (motorbike taxi drivers), usually uneducated young men with no other way of making a living.

71 As in Gagamari, to the west of Diffa, near the Komadougou River, in May 2016 and in Kindjaidi, to the north east of Diffa closer to the shores of Lake Chad in October 2016.


73 Boko Haram attacks aimed at stealing food have provided evidence of some impact but such attacks have also happened in countries where prohibitions are less draconian.

74 Since the influx of refugees fleeing the Boko Haram advance in the Nigerian districts of Mobbar and Abadam at the end of 2014, many villages along the Nigerien side of the Komadougou River have been evacuated and resettled along Route nationale 1 (RN1).
living on the Nigerien islands and shores of Lake Chad, totalling 81 villages and hundreds of hamlets. Tens of thousands of people had to leave behind almost all their belongings, including thousands of head of cattle.

Near the Komadougou River, villages in areas suspected of collaborating with Boko Haram have also been displaced. In theory, these relocations are voluntary, but the population does not really have a choice because of pressure from official announcements about the imminence of military operations. In September 2016, there were more than 300,000 displaced people in the Diffa region, including about 118,000 Nigerian refugees. Most of them are spread over various spontaneous sites along Route nationale 1 (RN1) or refugee camps or are hosted by Nigerien relatives. These displaced people move around in response to Boko Haram’s attacks or the availability of humanitarian aid.

Officially, for security reasons, the relocation of displaced populations aims to cut Boko Haram off from potential support from lakeshore communities. In reality though, it is also driven by political calculation, due to competition for access to the lake’s islands and their natural resources. Some actors, in particular community chiefs, who have land interests on the Lake Chad islands, encourage the relocation of the shoreline populations, especially the Buduma, to the camps close to Kablewa in the interior and to the official site at Sayam Forage.

Assistance to displaced populations poses major challenges to the authorities and aid agencies. Although the dispersion of most displaced people along the RN1 facilitates humanitarian initiatives, the high level of insecurity disrupts the targeting of aid and access to remote areas remains difficult (north east of Nguigmi, on the lakeshore, Toumour and Bosso communes). Moreover, the local authorities and many Diffa residents suspect some of the displaced population of supporting Boko Haram and even of diverting aid to the movement.

The distribution of aid takes place in uncertain conditions amid frequent rumours of misappropriation, especially in at risk and remote areas. The difficulty of distinguishing between the host population, Nigerian refugees, Nigerien internally displaced people and returnees poses problems for aid organisations, whose work is structured around fixed operational and technical categories. Aid workers have found
it difficult to identify the beneficiaries. They have taken a pragmatic approach and decided against using such distinctions to concentrate on identifying and gaining access to the most vulnerable people, whatever their origin.

B. **Beyond Boko Haram: Access to Resources and Intercommunal Tensions**

The conflict increases the risk of intercommunal tensions and strengthens the tendency to create militias, especially in the Lake Chad area. The tensions between communities for access to local resources have recently become more acute as a result of Boko Haram’s arrival in the southern part of the lake basin in April 2015 and the counter-insurgency measures that followed. The massive population displacements organised by the authorities have exacerbated rivalries, especially with regard to the ownership of cattle.

On the one hand, Fulani and Mohammedan Arab herdsmen accuse the population groups living along the lakeshores, in particular the Buduma, of being allies of Boko Haram and stealing cattle (and abducting women). The Fulani militia that fought alongside Nigerien forces against the Tebu rebellion in the 1990s began to remobilise in 2016, which led to deadly clashes in the lake basin. The Buduma and Kanuri communities accuse Fulani chiefs of manipulating the situation to create private militias and, on the pretext of supporting the security forces against Boko Haram, oust rival communities and seize the lake’s resources, notably by organising a profitable trade in cattle. In a memorandum to the justice minister in September 2016, Kanuri and Buduma representatives held Fulani and Mohammedan herders responsible for the death of 39 members of their communities and the theft of more than 3,000 head of cattle.

The local authorities initially tolerated these auxiliaries who were opposed to the populations of the lake suspected of links with Boko Haram. They “turned a blind eye”. The security forces and local leaders have even been accused of facilitating the acquisition of automatic weapons by these militias but there is no credible evidence to confirm this. Moreover, after violent incidents in May and June 2016, the authorities, especially the Diffa governorate, changed their approach, and have since tried to find a more peaceful way of resolving differences and to discourage the creation of militias.

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81 In a report on the pastoral situation in the Diffa region sent to the authorities in June 2016, the Association for the Revival of Livestock Farming in Niger (AREN), based in Diffa and close to the Fulani communities, wrote: “the conflict brings the Fulani and Arab communities face to face with the Buduma, who are difficult to distinguish from Boko Haram. There is a lot of evidence to show that almost all members of the Buduma community are members of Boko Haram with whom there can be no negotiations”. “Situation pastorale dans la région de Diffa”, p. 5.

82 Crisis Group interview, member of the Fulani militia, Diffa, October 2016.

83 Memorandum from representatives of the Kanuri and Buduma communities to the interior minister, Diffa, 16 September 2016.

84 Crisis Group interview, military official, Niamey, May 2016. The authorities reportedly initially tolerated and even encouraged the circulation of this militia on the lake and the creation of at least two bases on the lake, near the villages of Féféwa and Ngoréa. Crisis Group interviews, members of the Buduma community, Niamey and Diffa, October 2016.

85 Crisis Group interviews, security expert, Niamey and members of the Buduma community, Niamey and Diffa, October 2016.
The deployment of large contingents of Nigerien and mostly Chadian troops on the Nigerien shores of the lake at the end of June 2016 made the presence of a local militia less useful against Boko Haram.

Through its real or imaginary presence, Boko Haram perhaps offers the Buduma an opportunity to take historic revenge against other communities who are being forced to move away from the lake basin. Some Buduma leaders admit that some members of their community have joined the movement but refute any massive recruitment of their people. Young Buduma reportedly act as guides, boatmen, receivers of stolen goods and even as combatants for Boko Haram. However, prudence is required to avoid stigmatising the entire community, all the more so as it forms a small minority that has no control over local government and has little access to the authorities. If it does not take into account the local dimension of the violence, the fight against Boko Haram may be counterproductive and exacerbate intercommunal conflict or facilitate the development of radical forms of protests.

In addition to the tensions between the Fulani and the Buduma, the current climate could fuel rivalry between communities to gain recognition. That is perhaps how to interpret the announcement, in September 2016, of the formation of the Movement for Justice and Rehabilitation of Niger (MJRN), in the north of Diffa. The MJRN claims to be the heir of the Tebu rebellion of the 1990s, denouncing the persistent negligence of the Tebu and threatening the authorities with armed revolt. Moreover, the development of Lake Chad into a permanent “grey zone” may provide opportunities for other political-military enterprises. Chadian deserters, including a senior officer, have reportedly established themselves on the Nigerien side of the lake and made an alliance of convenience with Boko Haram.

86 The governorate organised meetings between the communities and encouraged, or even forced the signature of an agreement at Kablewa on 9 July 2016. A peace caravan then worked its way around Buduma and Fulani lands to try to calm people down. However, the situation remains tense and there is some discontent over the administration’s failure to respect the commitments it made, notably the payment of compensation for stolen cattle and the prosecution of the perpetrators of violence. Crisis Group interviews, representatives of Fulani and Buduma communities, Diffa, October 2016.

87 The Nigerien authorities planned to arm self-defence groups to keep Boko Haram at bay, especially after the attack on Bosso at the start of June 2016. With the resumption of military operations and the return of the Chadian army, they seem to have at least temporarily abandoned this plan, which is controversial among the political and military elite in Niamey. Crisis Group interviews, senior Nigerien official and army officer, Niamey, October 2016.

88 This is Christian Seignobos’ hypothesis about the Buduma in the Cameroonian part of the lake basin. “Tout comprendre de la stratégie des terroristes de Boko Haram”, Le Monde, 20 April 2016.


91 A certain Adam Tcheke Koudigan emerged as the movement’s interim president and successor of the rebel Tebu chief Barka Wardougou, who in the 1990s led the first Tebu rebellion, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Sahara, and who died in July 2016. A source close to the Nigerien authorities said this was only a “publicity stunt”. “Un groupe armé inconnu menace d’attaquer le Niger”, Agence France-Presse (AFP), 7 September 2016.

92 Crisis Group telephone interviews, security analyst, Niamey, July 2016; source in the Chadian security service, N’Djamena, September 2016. Reports about the desertion of Chadian soldiers and the identity of the protagonists, including the officer acting as leader of the renegades, should be treated with caution.
C. A New Jihadist Faction in the Lake Chad Basin?

Weakened by the Lake Chad countries’ offensive, Boko Haram is undergoing a transformation. Niger is on the front line in this process. Tensions within the organisation, long evident, seem to have resulted in a split. This probably occurred in May 2016, when Mamman Nur, a former close associate of Mohammed Yusuf, and Yusuf’s son Habib, who was for a time a Boko Haram spokesman under the pseudonym of Abou Moussab al-Barnawi, hastily left a meeting of the Shura, the movement’s executive body, in the Sambisa forest, in the middle of Borno state.93

The wing led by Shekau, the movement’s historic leader, consolidated its position in the Sambisa forest and the Mandara Mountains, close to the border with Cameroon. Meanwhile, Nur and Barnawi won over or took control of a number of groups of Boko Haram combatants, including on Lake Chad and part of its shores as well as along the Komadougou River. However, the demarcation between the two factions is not clear, especially in the north west of Borno state, close to the border with Niger and on the lake, where Shekau reportedly has supporters and where the two factions have reportedly clashed.94 However, there is no doubt that the Nur/al-Barnawi wing has links with the Islamic State (IS). Recently, IS media have only covered this wings’ operations.95 Barnawi was officially designated leader of IS in sub-Saharan Africa in August 2016.96 But after the defeat suffered in Sirte in Libya, the IS seems less able to provide decisive assistance to its allies on Lake Chad.97

Nur and Barnawi have largely explained their disagreement with Shekau. They criticised his non-obedience to IS, his greed, the failure of his strategy and his readiness to use violence against Muslims. They accused him of ordering the execution of critics within Boko Haram.98 This faction, which is more cosmopolitan and aware of

96 “Boko Haram in Nigeria: Abu Musab al-Barnawi named as new leader”, BBC News, 4 August 2016. The recent arrest of Barnawi is not yet confirmed. He may have been confused with a jihadi of the same name, Khaled al-Barnawi, arrested in April 2016.
97 However, a credible security source mentioned there were recent traces of money transfers from the Arabian Peninsula to the Nur/Barnawi faction, although the amounts were not mentioned. Crisis Group interview, Western security expert, Abuja, January 2017.
98 Crisis Group interviews, individuals from Nguigmi and Mainé Soroa, Diffa, October 2016. “[Shekau] changed the religious precepts. For example, he said that if, in the event of force majeure, a Muslim finds himself on non-Muslim land, he de facto becomes an infidel. This was his response to Mallam Moustapha, who had asked him this question. This is the case of residents in some
other jihadist movements’ difficulties, is apparently trying to rethink its combat methods and break with Shekau’s strategy of extreme violence. It has avoided attacking civilians and carrying out suicide attacks. In 2016, it conducted a series of audacious operations, notably the attack on Bosso in June and the counteroffensives against Mallam Fatori in September and Gashagar in October, which caused panic among MNJTF soldiers.\(^9\) This faction reportedly also made a new push toward the west, along the Komadougou, in the Nigerian state of Yobe. But like Shekau, who has been harassed by Nigerian troops in the Sambisa forest, it has suffered regular bombardments from the MNJTF.\(^10\)

A dynamic new group, capable of tactical innovations, has thus emerged around the lake, on territory that is difficult to control, conducive to trafficking and in Niger’s immediate neighbourhood. Moreover, its rhetoric, which is different to that of Shekau, could attract local people. Many of them are tired of Boko Haram excesses but remain open to its religious message, especially when it criticises corruption and calls for the introduction of the Sharia to clean up society.
V. Moving on From Counter-insurgency

The Nigerien government, with the aid of its partners, must ensure that its counter-insurgency strategy is able to deal with a crisis that is going to last for a long time. Boko Haram’s military retreat, although real, does not mean it has been defeated. The surrender of about fifty Boko Haram members at the end of December 2016 is encouraging.101 As in neighbouring Chad, dozens of the movement’s militants may follow this example, especially those who were forced to join the insurrection or who saw it as a chance to get rich.102 However, the most radical elements remain determined to fight, as demonstrated by the 31 December 2016 attack on the military post of Barwa, on the Lake Chad shore, 90km from Diffa.103

The jihadist insurrection, defeated or not, is going to have a lasting impact on the region. It has profoundly disrupted the economy, forced massive population displacement, changed intra and intercommunal balances of power and widened the gap between the government and some communities, especially those along the shores of Lake Chad. The government must start to develop an ambitious strategy that aims to consolidate its military advantages and remedy the conflict’s negative impact on the Diffa region.

A. A Security and Political Approach

1. Increased supervision of the security forces

The government should improve the management of the funds allocated to the fight against Boko Haram. It should encourage the High Authority for the Fight against Corruption and Assimilated Offences (HALCIA), created by President Issoufou, who chairs its consultative council, to investigate the use of these funds and take steps to prevent any wheeling and dealing by the military. Relations between political leaders and senior military officers are a particularly sensitive question in Niger, which affects the stability of the country.104 Political leaders understandably hesitate to discuss this issue. However, they need to gradually extend their efforts to control the use of public funds to include the military, as the spending on defence is increasing. The credibility and consolidation of the Nigerien Seventh Republic depends on it.

In return for transparency, Niger’s partners should increase financial aid and contribute directly to lightening the burden of a war that the country cannot finance on its own. They should also encourage the AU to accelerate the disbursement of European Union aid to countries participating in the MNJTF. The defence forces

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101 They contacted the Nigerien authorities near Gashagar, on the Nigerian border, around 21 December, and negotiated their surrender. Crisis Group email correspondence, security officer, 21 December 2016 and “Niger: des jeunes combattants de Boko Haram se sont rendus”, Jeune Afrique, 28 December 2016.

102 Since October and November 2016, humanitarian sources have noted the surrender of small groups of insurgents in the Diffa region. Crisis Group email correspondence, humanitarian official, December 2016.

103 In January 2017, Boko Haram insurgents killed two civilian mediators in the Diffa region after pretending they wanted to negotiate their surrender. Crisis Group email correspondence, security officer, January 2017.

104 Crisis Group Report, Niger: Another Weak Link ..., op. cit.
would increase their credibility if they accepted greater supervision of their management. Troops deployed in Diffa could receive greater logistical support, notably in the field of war medicine and assistance to the families of soldiers killed in action.105

The defence forces have committed abuses against civilians suspected of collaborating with the insurgents but, in the opinion of most specialists consulted by Crisis Group, the Nigerien army has behaved better than its counterparts in the MNJTF. The authorities must strengthen their supervision and combat these abuses by initiating disciplinary procedures in cases of violence and criminal procedures in the case of serious crimes.106 The appointment in June 2016 of a civilian governor in Diffa region, who also has a PhD in law and is an expert on decentralised management, is a positive sign that indicates the authorities in Niamey do not want to leave Diffa only in the hands of the defence forces.107

Moreover, although vigilante committees in Niger are not as widespread as in Nigeria and Cameroon, there is a real temptation to arm them in difficult times, such as after the attack on Bosso in June 2016. Niger security forces should resist this temptation and restrict the use of vigilante committees. They act as useful auxiliaries in gathering intelligence but should not play an active role in counter-insurgency operations. Efforts must also be made to ensure that these groups’ actions and the intelligence they provide do not increase tension either within or between communities. If it is confirmed that Boko Haram is losing strength, these groups should be demobilised, and some of their members could be integrated into local security forces. This would require the provision of professional training, as these committees are mainly comprised of untrained volunteers.

2. A political approach to local conflict resolution

The detention of hundreds of Nigerien residents and returnees who have supported Boko Haram in one way or another is not tenable in the long term. Just as it is not possible to eliminate the tens of thousands of Nigeriens who have expressed support for the movement at some point or another or have joined it under duress. Niger can take inspiration from the recent example of Chad and help citizens who want to leave Boko Haram to return to their country, by creating a demobilisation site and introducing reconciliation and pardoning policies for all those who are not suspected of involvement in blood crimes. Such a program is being prepared and could boost demobilisations, especially of those who joined Boko Haram in the hope of easy money. It would benefit from drawing on the intra and intercommunal dialogue

105 Several military sources highlight deficiencies in the Nigerien army’s care for war casualties. Crisis Group interviews, Nigerien and Western military officers, Zinder and Niamey, May and September 2016.

106 As was the case recently with the transfer of an officer who was in charge of Diffa prison. Crisis Group interview, official from Diffa, Niamey, October 2016.

107 There were misgivings in Diffa about the appointment of this governor, who is not from the region and is drawn from Niamey’s inner political circles. Crisis Group interviews, individuals from the Diffa region, Niamey and Diffa, October 2016.
developed by Diffa University with the support of regional authorities, government representatives and international partners.\textsuperscript{108}

On a visit to Diffa on 27 December 2016, after the surrender of about 30 insurgents, the interior minister, Bazoum Mohamed, announced an amnesty and reintegration program for former Boko Haram combatants.\textsuperscript{109} Niger’s partners should support this step, especially the establishment and supervision of one or more of the transit camps announced by the minister. A well-designed and funded pardon and reintegration policy could encourage a wave of demobilisation and disarmament of insurgents and help to heal wounds on a lasting basis.\textsuperscript{110} But it must not neglect the movement’s victims, who may feel frustrated if they see the government helping people who they view as aggressors.\textsuperscript{111} The government must also ensure that it maintains a coherent policy: it cannot pardon deserters from Boko Haram while continuing to detain hundreds of suspects who have only a tenuous connection with the insurrection.

Plans to demobilise Boko Haram militants should also take into account the diversity of the Diffa region. Along the Komadougou River, in Kanuri territory, where many young people joined the movement due to a taste for adventure and a desire for wealth more than conviction, it is necessary to put an end to the atmosphere of denunciation and suspicion that divides villages. The authorities should design demobilisation, pardon and reintegration policies that make a distinction between individuals depending on the reasons why they joined the insurrection. They should involve local chiefs and religious leaders in the mediation and pardon process and consult them on how best to implement it. Such a contribution would make them more valuable than gathering intelligence or informing on others.

In the lake area, a demobilisation plan will not be enough if it is not accompanied by measures to calm intercommunal tensions generated by conflicts over access to resources. Boko Haram managed to establish itself by exploiting these tensions and has, in turn, exacerbated them, just as the counter-insurgency policies have done by turning a blind eye to the formation of ethnically-based militias. It is first necessary to support the governor’s mediation efforts, whose effects are hardly being felt on the ground.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{108} Crisis Group interviews, Diffa University researchers and teachers, member of the Diffa regional council, Diffa, May, September 2016.
\textsuperscript{109} The minister said: “We will guarantee their security, we will not send them to prison, we will remove any threat of prosecution from them. And we will find a way of looking after them”. “Le Niger lance un programme d’amnistie pour les déserteurs de Boko Haram”, RFI, 29 December 2016.
\textsuperscript{110} This policy should not be improvised. The first Boko Haram members who surrendered to the authorities in Diffa were reportedly accommodated in a house rented using funds provided by the governor of Diffa. If this is true, the central government and its partners should quickly take over. Security document consulted by Crisis Group, January 2017.
\textsuperscript{111} Child soldiers could be temporarily entrusted to host families whose costs would be covered by the government. Such a transfer of resources could facilitate local acceptance of those who joined Boko Haram as children.
\textsuperscript{112} At the end of 2016, members of the Buduma and Fulani communities lamented the renewed tension in the lake basin that has emerged despite the mediation efforts undertaken a few months earlier. In fact, the fundamental issues, notably around the peaceful sharing of resources, were not addressed. Crisis Group interviews, members of the Fulani and Buduma communities, Diffa, October 2016.
In the long term, the government must demonstrate its capacity to peacefully regulate the tensions that the coveted lands of the Lake Chad basin generate. To avoid any perceptions that it favours one group against another, it must not impose its vision in an authoritarian way, but offer a framework for peaceful mediation in which the communities concerned can discuss how to regulate access and share resources. It will then be up to the authorities to guarantee continuity and compliance. They must reconcile the interests of different communities that require access to the lake’s resources. A reform of local governance could be considered to ensure representation of the Buduma. Pacifying the area and ensuring equitable access to natural resources will do more to reduce Boko Haram’s influence than policies to promote “deradicalisation” or prevent “violent extremism”.

B. Relieve the Pressure on the Justice System and Reintegrate Former Insurgents

The increase in arrests since February 2015 has put pressure on the judicial and prison system. In the prisons, where inmates await a hypothetical trial, suspects arrested on the basis of denunciation mingle with hardline jihadists. They may therefore become a recruitment hotbed for armed groups that reject the state’s authority. The authorities need to do more than isolate the most fervent preachers to counter this threat.

Niger should increase the resources allocated to the judicial system to improve the processing of Boko Haram-related cases. In particular, judges must insist that the security services provide sufficient evidence before transferring to Niamey suspects arrested on the basis of an accusation. The government should increase the resources available to the services responsible for conducting investigations in the Diffa region and encourage civil society organisations and their partners to provide legal aid to detainees to ensure a quicker and more equitable treatment of their cases. This would speed up the release of wrongly arrested individuals and of those who have only committed minor offences, for example, small-scale smuggling deals with the insurgents.

Finally, while the government deserves support in its battle against Boko Haram, it must resist the temptation to indulge in the political manipulation of the tools used to fight violent extremism. The laws against terrorism should not be used to

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113 In August 2016, the announcement of a plan to lease 120,000 hectares of land to a Saudi company, decided without much consultation, provoked fierce criticism of the regional council and central government. Crisis Group interviews, members of civil society originally from Diffa, Niamey and Diffa, October 2016 and video consulted by Crisis Group.

114 The creation of a new chefferie to improve representation of the Buduma would not be an end in itself but a way of helping to ensure access to resources; it should therefore be negotiated with all the communities involved in the management of the lake and should not exclude non-native populations to the advantage of supposedly indigenous groups.

115 In 2016, the prison administration placed at least one Boko Haram preacher in isolation. Crisis Group interview, prison official, Niamey, May 2016.
curtail the debate about the current situation in the south east and the impact on the population of the armed struggle against Boko Haram.\textsuperscript{116}

C. \textit{Revive the Region’s Economy}

The restrictive economic measures introduced in February 2015 have had dramatic consequences for the population. Some people are tempted to return to the fertile areas that Boko Haram still controls on Lake Chad, while others must soon resolve to undertake a hazardous journey and migrate to Nigeria or Libya. However, the Diffa region has relatively good economic prospects. The authorities should quickly recognise the limits of the economic weapons they are using to curb the insurrection and suspend these restrictive measures. At the very least, they should authorise the conditional sale of fish as they have already done for peppers. They could take this opportunity to make Diffa a commercial crossroads for produce exported to Nigeria. The four main LCBC countries affected by Boko Haram, all of which are willing to launch development plans in the Lake Chad region, should share their plans and, for example, design a joint customs policy.

In Diffa, the authorities and aid agencies also face the classic dilemma of choosing between short-term aid and long-term development. In theory, all actors support the idea of a continuum from emergency aid to development. In practice, resources are limited and decisions have to be made about spending priorities. To respond to this dilemma, the government should not wait for the hypothetical end of the military phase and publish a strategic plan to end the crisis in the region. Although NGOs and Niger’s partners have an important support role to play, the government should entrust the management of the plan to specialised bodies like the HACP as well as Diffa’s regional and local authorities and civil society. These bodies and their partners should ensure the good management and equity of reconstruction plans, especially with regard to the delicate issue of access to land.

The HACP has taken the initiative and is currently preparing a plan to end the crisis in Diffa. It has the advantage of long experience in post-conflict areas, which could be useful to everyone. However, the authorities must recognise that Diffa needs specific responses and that solutions implemented in the north will not necessarily work there. The approach should be participatory, with the local population playing a role to design a plan that takes account of their needs, according to their age, gender and social origin. Unless this happens, the region’s inhabitants could feel that the local elites, or worse, the Niamey elites, are trying to get their hands on the aid.

Such a plan, driven by the aim of stamping out the Boko Haram insurrection, should not use development initiatives to try to prevent violent extremism, which would impose blinkers on reconstruction policies. Similarly, development cannot be considered a miracle solution. It must be accompanied by a political process designed to reconcile communities affected by the insurrection and make a precise assessment of the reasons why people turned against the state and, sometimes, their

\textsuperscript{116} In May 2015, the counter-terrorism unit arrested Moussa Tchangari, a leading member of the non-governmental organisation Alternatives Espaces Citoyens, which criticises the human rights violations that took place during the state of emergency in the south east. He was arrested while visiting detainees in the Diffa region, where he was born, and detained for about ten days.
own society. Otherwise, development plans will flounder, miss their targets and may even foment new tensions and frustrations.

In this context, the central and local authorities, community chiefs and civil servants must recognise their share of responsibility for the crisis. The Diffa region will not be able to make the most of supplementary funding if the authorities do not first show their capacity to peacefully and equitably regulate the many conflicts over access to agropastoral and fishing resources. The government must also demonstrate its utility by guaranteeing more equitable access to social services (education, health, justice) in a region that has more in common with Nigeria. Local recruitment of civil servants and the temporary payment of bonuses to civil servants deployed in the regions affected by the insurrection could help revive basic services.

However, all that has a cost. If the war against Boko Haram went on for a long time, the government could face an even more difficult budgetary situation. Niger’s partners, especially those who have encouraged it to play a role in the fight against Boko Haram, should help the government to avoid having “to prioritise security spending to the detriment of those who are building the country’s future”.¹¹⁷ The year 2016 was an election year, which also put a lot of strain on public finances. The fight against Boko Haram does not of course explain all the current cash flow problems and cannot exempt the government from a good management of public expenditure.

VI. Conclusion

In the fight against Boko Haram, the Nigerien government must go beyond the military approach that it has taken so far. Niger, which initially viewed Boko Haram as a Nigerian problem, went to war with the jihadist movement a little more than two years ago. With the support of its allies and not without suffering losses, it has contained the war in the south of the Diffa region, which has been under a state of emergency since February 2015. But the military option places a heavy burden on the stability of the government, public finances and the army. Although the economic restrictions imposed on Diffa and the Lake Chad region have weakened the logistics of the jihadists, they have also had a major impact on the population, especially young people. The increase in intercommunal tensions and the temptation to create militias around Lake Chad give cause for concern.

There is no easy or short-term solution to the crisis provoked by Boko Haram: time will be needed to restore a lasting peace to the Diffa region. The reconciliation and reintegration policies announced by the government at the end of December 2016 following the first surrenders of insurgents were an encouraging sign but the authorities must continue to make progress in the months to come. Above and beyond these efforts, the attention focused on this long-neglected region must be the occasion for the government to take greater responsibility for its role as protector of the population and peaceful regulator of local conflicts. Niger’s partners, who encouraged it to take action against Boko Haram, must also provide practical assistance so that it is better able to deal with the threat.

Brussels/Dakar, 27 February 2017
Appendix A: Map of Niger
Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group’s approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes CrisisWatch, a monthly early warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group’s reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord Mark Malloch-Brown. Its Vice Chair is Ayo Obe, a Legal Practitioner, Columnist and TV Presenter in Nigeria.

Crisis Group’s President & CEO, Jean-Marie Guehenno, served as the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations from 2000-2008, and in 2012, as Deputy Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States on Syria. He left his post as Deputy Joint Special Envoy to chair the commission that prepared the white paper on French defence and national security in 2013. Crisis Group’s international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in nine other locations: Bishkek, Bogota, Dakar, Islamabad, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington DC. It also has staff representation in the following locations: Bangkok, Beijing, Beirut, Caracas, Delhi, Dubai, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Kabul, Kiev, Mexico City, Rabat, Sydney, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German Federal Foreign Office, Irish Aid, Principality of Liechtenstein, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and U.S. Agency for International Development.


February 2017
Appendix C: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2014

Special Reports

Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic).

Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.


Central Africa

Fields of Bitterness (I): Land Reform in Burundi, Africa Report N°213, 12 February 2014 (only available in French).

Fields of Bitterness (II): Restitution and Reconciliation in Burundi, Africa Report N°214, 17 February 2014 (only available in French).

The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa, Africa Report N°215, 1 April 2014 (also available in French).


Cameroon: Prevention Is Better than Cure, Africa Briefing N°101, 4 September 2014 (only available in French).

The Central African Republic’s Hidden Conflict, Africa Briefing N°105, 12 December 2014 (also available in French).

Congo: Ending the Status Quo, Africa Briefing N°107, 17 December 2014.

Elections in Burundi: Moment of Truth, Africa Report N°224, 17 April 2015 (also available in French).


Burundi: Peace Sacrificed?, Africa Briefing N°111, 29 May 2015 (also available in French).

Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism, Africa Report N°229, 3 September 2015 (also available in French).


Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility, Africa Report N°233, 30 March 2016 (also available in French).


The African Union and the Burundi Crisis: Ambition versus Reality, Africa Briefing N°122, 28 September 2016 (also available in French).

Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The “Street” and Politics in DR Congo, Africa Briefing N°123, 13 October 2016.

Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram, Africa Report N°241, 16 November 2016 (also available in French).

Horn of Africa


South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name, Africa Report N°217, 10 April 2014.


Eritrea: Ending the Exodus?, Africa Briefing N°100, 8 August 2014.


South Sudan: Jonglei – “We Have Always Been at War”, Africa Report N°221, 22 December 2014.

Sudan and South Sudan’s Merging Conflicts, Africa Report N°223, 29 January 2015.


The Chaos in Darfur, Africa Briefing N°110, 22 April 2015.


Somaliiland: The Strains of Success, Africa Briefing N°113, 5 October 2015.


Ethiopia: Governing the Faithful, Africa Briefing N°117, 22 February 2016.


South Sudan’s South: Conflict in the Equatorias, Africa Report N°236, 25 May 2016.

Kenya’s Coast: Devolution Disappointed, Africa Briefing N°121, 13 July 2016.


Southern Africa

A Cosmetic End to Madagascar’s Crisis?, Africa Report N°218 (also available in French), 19 May 2014.


Appendix D: International Crisis Group Board of Trustees

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