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MASTER'S THESIS

Specialization African Geopolitics

How Climate Change Has Reshaped Competition Arenas in the Lake Chad Basin

An Analytical Study with LCE Platform Model for Monitoring and foresight

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Abstract

This study examines how climate change has reshaped the arenas of competition over resources, power and legitimacy in the Lake Chad Basin. Moving beyond reductionist environmental narratives, it argues that the retreat of Lake Chad has not produced conflict directly but through the collapse of institutional mediation. Drawing on the original analytical concept of "Drought Economies" the study demonstrates that environmental scarcity, in contexts of institutional fragility, becomes a mechanism for redistributing power and producing alternative legitimacy. Through an analytical, historical and critical methodology complemented by a structural foresight analysis (MICMAC) and a scenario matrix for the 2035 horizon, the research reaches four principal findings: governance quality, not the severity of the lake's retreat, is the decisive variable in the crisis; ISWAP has risen as an alternative governing actor by filling the functional vacuum left by fragile states; the four riparian states violate binding international legal obligations toward their populations; and climate change functions as a fragility multiplier rather than a direct cause of conflict. The study concludes with the LCE Platform, a sovereign digital monitoring tool that translates this analytical framework into a practical instrument serving national and regional decision-making.

Keywords: Lake Chad Basin, climate change, resource competition, governance vacuum, ISWAP, contested sovereignty, strategic foresight.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة كيفية إعادة التغير المناخي تشكيل ساحات التنافس على الموارد والسلطة والشرعية في حوض بحيرة تشاد. وتتجاوز الدراسة السرديات البيئية الاختزالية لتجادل بأن انحسار بحيرة تشاد لم ينتج الصراع بصورة مباشرة، بل عبر انهيار آليات الوساطة المؤسسية. واعتمادا على المفهوم التحليلي الأصيل «اقتصاديات الجفاف»، تبين الدراسة أن الندرة البيئية، في سياقات الهشاشة المؤسسية، تتحول إلى آلية لإعادة توزيع السلطة وإنتاج شرعية بديلة. ومن خلال منهج تحليلي وتاريخي ونقدي، مدعوم بتحليل بنيوي استشرافي (MICMAC) ومصفوفة سيناريوهات لأفق 2035 تتوصل الدراسة إلى أربع نتائج رئيسية: أن جودة الحوكمة، لا حدة انحسار البحيرة، هي المتغير الحاسم في الأزمة؛ وأن تنظيم ISWAP صعد كفاعل حوكمي بديل عبر ملء الفراغ الوظيفي الذي خلفته الدول الهشة؛ وأن الدول الأربع المشاطئة تنتهك التزاماتها القانونية الدولية الملزمة تجاه سكانها؛ وأن التغير المناخي يعمل كمضاعف للهشاشة لا كسبب مباشر للصراع. وتختتم الدراسة بمنصة LCE، أداة رقمية سيادية للرصد تترجم هذا الإطار التحليلي إلى أداة عملية تخدم صناعة القرار الوطنية والإقليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: حوض بحيرة تشاد، التغير المناخي، التنافس على الموارد، الفراغ الحوكمي، ISWAP، السيادة المتنازع عليها، اقتصاديات الجفاف، الاستشراف الاستراتيجي

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List of Abbreviations:

Abbreviation	Full Form
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AU	African Union
CAERT	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (OLD NAME)
AUCTC	African Union Counter Terrorism Centre
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
ISS	Institute for Security Studies (Africa)
ISWAP	Islamic State in West Africa Province
JAS	Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LCE	Lake Chad Economies (Platform)
MICMAC	Matrice d'Impacts Croisés à Multiplication Appliquée à un Classement
MID	Matrix of Direct Influence
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index

OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SAP	Strategic Action Programme (LCBC, 2023–2037)
SNMG	Salaire National Minimum Garanti (National Minimum Guaranteed Wage)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicators (World Bank)

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Presentation and General Context :

In contemporary international discourse on climate change, the African continent is frequently portrayed as a passive recipient rather than an active agent a landmass absorbing the consequences of a global phenomenon to which it has contributed comparatively little. Within this framing the Lake Chad Basin stands as one of the most potent illustrations of environmental crisis in Africa its name having become synonymous in much of the academic and policy literature with the dramatic story of a vast water body that has lost over 90 per cent of its surface area since the 1960s.

Yet to reduce what is happening in the Lake Chad Basin to a narrative of environmental victimhood is to engage in a form of analytical distortion that obscures the deeper political dynamics at work. The crisis is not simply a matter of shrinking water levels, it is fundamentally a story about the reshaping of political space, social organisation and structures of authority. Drought does not merely create a natural void: in fragile institutional contexts, it generates new configurations of power, produces novel patterns of competition over resources and dismantles traditional forms of social organisation while simultaneously enabling the emergence of alternative structures of governance.

The lands exposed by the lake's retreat, the dried out pastures, the diminishing access points to remaining water sources have become arenas of strategic competition over which maps of power, sovereignty and influence are redrawn on a daily basis. These resources are no longer neutral environmental features but they have been transformed into political and security assets contested by states, local communities, traditional authorities and non-state armed actors alike. In this context, climate change is no longer a backdrop to conflict but a structural factor that actively reshapes the very nature of competition.

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What is unfolding in the Lake Chad Basin therefore cannot be adequately explained within a reductionist environmental narrative. It demands an analytical political approach that transcends single factor explanation and treats climate change as a catalyst interacting with historical marginalisation, weak state institutions, fragile governance systems and the multiplicity of actors to produce a new reality in which environmental dimensions are inextricably entangled with questions of power, influence and the reconstruction of political legitimacy.

II. Research problem :

This study revolves around the following central research problem:

How has the accelerating retreat of Lake Chad, driven by climate change created and transformed forms of competition over resources, power and legitimacy among various actors (states, local communities and non-state armed groups) within the Lake Chad Basin?

This research problem arises from a foundational observation: the profound environmental transformations experienced by the Lake Chad Basin have not merely produced a humanitarian and ecological crisis but have fundamentally reshaped maps of power, sovereignty and influence within this cross-border space. The waters that have receded left behind not only a material void but also a governance and functional vacuum contested by multiple competing forces employing diverse means ranging from violent control to economic domination, social legitimacy and the provision of protection and services.

III. Sub-Questions :

The following sub-questions are derived from the central research problem in order to disaggregate the subject and analyse its different levels:

1. How has the lake's retreat transformed natural resources from a source of coexistence into an arena of existential conflict among different livelihood groups / occupational groups fishermen, pastoralists and farmers?

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2. Through what mechanisms has ISWAP succeeded in constructing an alternative legitimacy to that of the state through resource control and service provision?
3. How has water scarcity reshaped the relationship between the state society and non-state actors in the Lake Chad Basin?
4. What new forms of contested sovereignty have emerged as a result of the functional withdrawal of the state from vast areas of the Basin?
5. How do environmental factors interact with historical political and economic structures to produce new patterns of conflict?

IV. Research Hypothesis:

Central Hypothesis

The study posits that the accelerating retreat of Lake Chad, within a context of institutional fragility and accumulated historical marginalisation has transformed environmental scarcity from a natural factor into a central catalyst for the restructuring of competition arenas over resources, power and legitimacy generating alternative actors to the state and producing patterns of parallel and competing sovereignty within the Lake Chad Basin.

Sub-Hypotheses

First Sub-Hypothesis: As water scarcity intensifies in the Lake Chad Basin, patterns of competition among livelihood groups / occupational groups shift from traditional customary resource sharing mechanisms to violent existential conflicts as a result of the collapse of traditional arbitration mechanisms under the pressure of increasing scarcity.

Second Sub-Hypothesis: ISWAP derives its legitimacy and influence not only from violence but fundamentally from its capacity to fill the functional vacuum left by the state through the establishment of an alternative taxation system and judicial system that surpasses in certain respects, what the state itself provides.

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Third Sub-Hypothesis: The interaction between environmental degradation, historical marginalisation and the failure of good governance produces competing patterns of sovereignty (statist, jihadist, customary and militia-based) that share the governance space of the Lake Chad Basin in parallel and contested coexistence.

Fourth Sub-Hypothesis: Climate change does not constitute a single direct cause of conflict but rather a catalysing and accelerating factor that interacts with existing political, economic and social structures to produce complex conflict dynamics that cannot be understood through the logic of simplified environmental determinism.

V. Research Objectives:

The general objective of this study is to analyse the ways in which climate change and the retreat of Lake Chad have reshaped competition arenas over resources, power and legitimacy among the various actors of the Lake Chad Basin. The following specific objectives flow from this general aim: to identify and analyse transformations in patterns of competition over natural resources among different livelihood groups / occupational groups, to disaggregate the political economy of ISWAP and reveal the mechanisms through which it constructs an alternative legitimacy, to understand the dynamics of the reshaping of state society relations in a context of environmental scarcity to identify new forms of competing sovereignty that have emerged within the governance vacuum, and to critically challenge reductionist narratives that interpret the climate conflict relationship in simplistic terms offering a more nuanced analytical approach.

Beyond its analytical contribution this study carries an applied dimension. The conceptual framework developed here particularly the concept of Drought Economies and the multi variable structural analysis of the Basin's dynamics is operationalised in a practical monitoring instrument, **the LCE Platform presented in the Annex**. This platform translates the study's analytical findings

into a decision support tool ensuring that the research speaks not only to academic debate but to the practical needs of policy makers concerned with the Sahel and its implications for regional and national security.

VI. Conceptual Definitions :

1. Drought Economies

In the framework of this study, Drought Economies refers to the analytical approach that explains how water resource scarcity redistributes economic value, transforming scarce resources into political and strategic assets contested by various actors making drought not merely an environmental condition but a mechanism for reorganising productive and political relations and reconfiguring power balances.

2. Governance Vacuum

The concept of Governance Vacuum refers to spaces from which the state has functionally withdrawn even if its formal sovereignty nominally persists, thereby opening space for non-state actors to fill this vacuum by performing governance functions such as security provision, dispute resolution, resource management and basic service delivery.

3. Contested Sovereignty

Contested Sovereignty refers to the condition in which the state's capacity to monopolise legitimate violence and political decision-making is eroded, giving rise to alternative and parallel authorities that exercise de facto forms of control and governance. Sovereignty here is understood as a daily practice rather than a mere abstract legal attribute.

4. State Fragility

State Fragility is defined as the condition in which formal institutions are unable to provide basic services, protect citizens, enforce the law or manage public affairs with efficiency and fairness leading to the erosion of state legitimacy and

driving local actors to seek alternative forms of security, organisation and governance.

5. Non-State Armed Actors

Non-State Armed Actors refers to the various armed groups that operate outside the formal state framework and exercise varying degrees of control over territory, populations and resources entering into relations of competition, confrontation or co-optation with the state over governance functions and influence and control.

6. Hybrid Security

Hybrid Security refers to a security arrangement in which the state and non-state actors share some security and policing functions, whether formally or informally, and often outside a clear and defined legal framework.

CHAPTER ONE

The Historical and Environmental Context of the Lake Chad Basin: The Geography of Crisis and Its Dimensions

Chapter Introduction:

The dynamics of competition over resources and power in the Lake Chad Basin cannot be understood in isolation from the historical and environmental context that produced and continually reshapes them. What appears today as a conflict over water, land and sovereignty is not a sudden or recent phenomenon, rather, it is the product of accumulated interactions between inherited geographic realities, a colonial legacy that generated deep structural imbalances, a slow yet profoundly consequential environmental deterioration and escalating demographic and economic pressures. This chapter therefore constitutes the interpretive foundation from which the analytical chapters that follow are constructed.¹

The chapter aims to disaggregate three interrelated levels of analysis: the political geography of the Basin with its strategic specificities, colonial heritage and complex social fabric. The environmental transformation the Basin has undergone which calls for a critical reading that goes beyond the reductionist narrative of the disappearing lake toward a deeper understanding of multi-dimensional hydrological fluctuations and compound driving factors and the demographic and economic transformations that have rendered this fragile basin an intensely pressurised space in which growing population needs collide with diminishing resources.

Section I: The Political Geography of the lake Chad Basin

The Lake Chad Basin represents one of the most geopolitically complex spaces in sub-Saharan Africa, not because of its resource wealth or the strength of its states but because of the overlapping sovereignties, the fragility of its

¹ Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), Convention and Statutes Relating to the Development of the Lake Chad Basin (N'Djamena: LCBC, 1964, updated 2012). <https://www.lcbc-cblt.org>

institutions and the conflicting interests of its multiple actors. Within this vast basin, the environmental and the political intersect, the historical and the contemporary overlap in ways that render any partial understanding of any one of its dimensions fundamentally incomplete.

1

Figure (1): Geographic Location Map of the Lake Chad Basin within Africa



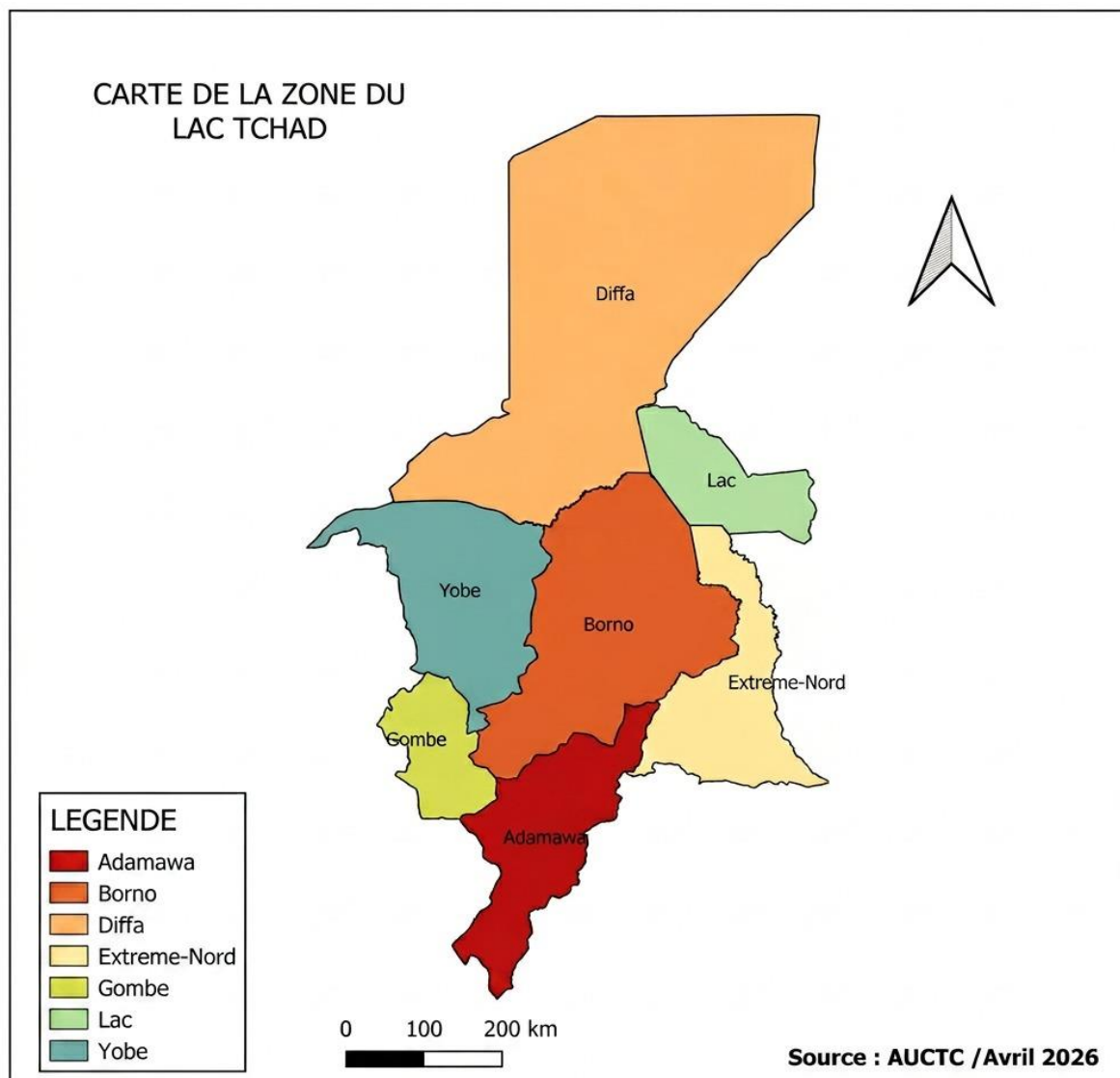
Sub–Section 1: Geographic Location and Strategic Significance

The Lake Chad Basin extends over an area exceeding 2.5 million square kilometres, approximately 8 per cent of the total surface area of the African continent encompassing eight countries: Chad, Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Libya, Sudan and Algeria. The lake itself, however, is shared by only four riparian states: Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon which bear the greatest burden of managing this shared resource.²

¹ Chitra Nagarajan et al., *Climate–Fragility Profile: Lake Chad Basin* (Berlin: Adelphi Research, 2018), 6–8.
<https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/climate-and-fragility-risks-lake-chad-region>

The Basin's strategic weight derives from its geographic position which makes it a meeting point between West Africa, Central Africa and North Africa. It sits at the intersection of historical trade routes running from the northern Saharan lands southward toward the savannah and at the convergence of seasonal human migration networks that have operated for thousands of years. The Basin was therefore never merely a water resource in historical terms; it was a civilisational space in which cultures met and trans-border economic and social networks were constructed.

Figure (2) :Hydrological Map of the Basin Chari–Logone River System and Lake Chad



From a hydrological perspective, Lake Chad is an endorheic water system with no outlet to the sea, fed principally by the Chari and Logone rivers, which together supply between 85 and 95 per cent of the lake's total water inputs, flowing northward from their sources in the Central African Republic through Chad. The Komadugu Yobe river, flowing from the west through Nigeria supplements this inflow. This trans-boundary character of the hydrological system means that any unilateral action in the upper riparian areas necessarily reverberates upon the downstream states.

Among the most telling geopolitical paradoxes of the Basin is the fact that the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), established in 1964 to coordinate the management of shared resources was the first regional African institution dedicated to transboundary water resource management yet over six decades it has remained more symbolic than functional, hampered by chronic underfunding, weak mandates and an inability to bind member states to common management policies. This reflects the structural tension between the logic of national sovereignty and the imperatives of shared resource governance.¹

Table 1–A: Sources of Water Inputs to Lake Chad

Water Source	Approximate Share	Note
Chari–Logone River System	~90%	Flows from Central African Republic through Chad
Direct Rainfall	~5%	Seasonal and irregular precipitation over the lake

Other tributaries (Komadugu–Yobe)	~5%	Nigerian river : limited and declining flow
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Source: Author's compilation based on Pham–Duc et al. (2020) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC).

The lake embodies a rare model of what the specialist literature terms Overlapping Sovereignty, where no governing mechanism exists capable of imposing unified and binding management of this shared resource. In the absence of such a mechanism, resource scarcity itself becomes a factor in the redistribution of power: whoever controls access points to water possesses significant political and security leverage. The Basin thus transforms the environment from a neutral backdrop into an active arena for the redistribution of influence reflected in the oscillating spectrum between cooperation and conflict that characterises relations among the four riparian states.¹²

Table 1–B: The Basin's Duality — Between Cooperation and Competition

Dimension	Manifestations of Cooperation	Manifestations of Competition
Water Resources	Joint irrigation projects and LCBC framework	Competition over water shares and unilateral irrigation
Security	Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)	Cross-border armed group activities
Politics	Regional agreements and diplomatic coordination	Conflicting national interests and weak enforcement

¹ Janani Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability: Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region* (Berlin: Adelphi Research, 2019), 38–44. <https://shoring-up-stability.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Shoring-up-Stability.pdf>

Economy	Trans-border trade and traditional networks	Smuggling and resource market competition
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Source: Author's compilation based on LCBC (2023) and Vivekananda et al. (2019).

Sub-Section 2: Colonial History, Border Demarcation and Its Legacy

Understanding the current patterns of fragility in the Lake Chad Basin requires a return to the foundational moment when European colonial powers redrew the map of the region according to the logic of influence and interests rather than the logic of social and cultural coherence. The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 did not merely partition Africa, it reinvented the relationship between people, territory and resources in ways that permanently altered patterns of resource access and systems of resource governance.¹

Before colonialism, the Lake Chad region was the heartland of the ancient Kanem–Bornu Empire which had extended over more than a thousand years and constituted one of the most enduring and institutionally robust political entities in African history. This empire shaped patterns of identity, loyalty and economic networks whose traces remain visible today in the social and identity bonds that transcend national borders. The Kanuri in particular continue to regard the city of Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria as the informal capital of a social space that extends far beyond any single national boundary.²

This historically cohesive space was partitioned among three colonial powers: Britain which took control of what became northern Nigeria, France which extended its influence over Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon and Germany which occupied Cameroon before being dispossessed of it following

² Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 21–29.

the First World War. This partition resulted in the Kanuri community being split among four different states, traditional Fulani pastoral migration routes being severed from their seasonal grazing lands by artificial borders and trade exchange networks being fragmented.¹

What makes this colonial legacy decisive in understanding the current crisis is what Jeffrey Herbst identified in his classic analysis of state-building in Africa: the colonial powers established states without building their actual institutions at the peripheries, leaving newly independent states with international legal legitimacy but lacking the functional capacity to reach and administer their geographic peripheries. The Lake Chad Basin, for each of the four riparian states represents the archetypal instance of these distant peripheries, abandoned to local communities to manage their affairs through whatever customary systems and traditional loyalty networks remained available.²

The four states also inherited different governance models: the French model applied in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon is a centralist model based on direct assimilation, whereas the British model applied in Nigeria is one of indirect rule based on delegation to traditional authorities. This institutional divergence has generated considerable difficulties in regional coordination, as each state administers its relationship with the Basin according to its own administrative and institutional logic.³

¹ Mulugeta, D., and A.-H. Wando. "Grassroots Pan-Africanism: Border Lives and Transnational Belonging in the Lake Chad Basin." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2025.2504891>

² Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 36–57. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835515>

³ Mulugeta, D., and A.-H. Wando, "Border Lives," 4–6.

Sub–Section 3: The Ethnic and Social Structure of the Basin

The Lake Chad Basin encompasses more than seventy ethnic and linguistic groups. This diversity constitutes an immense human and historical wealth yet under conditions of resource scarcity and governance weakness, it becomes a factor of complexity that makes collective resource management more difficult and multiplies the potential for friction. Understanding current competition patterns requires grasping the social structure of the Basin in both its identitarian and functional economic dimensions.¹

Five principal groups dominate the social landscape. The Kanuri are the indigenous population connected to the Kanem–Bornu Empire and represent the culturally central community even as they are today dispersed across the four riparian states. The Fulani (Mbororo) are pastoralists by vocation practising a form of transhumant herding that traverses the savannah seasonally in search of pasture and water with a presence that inherently transcends national boundaries. The Shuwa Arabs are a community in which traders, herders and farmers intersect, possessing historical economic influence linked to trans–Saharan trade networks.²

The Buduma stand out as the lake people par excellence, their existence ontologically bound to the aquatic environment of the lake practising traditional fishing techniques in a unique relationship with the lake's islands and submerged lands. The Hausa, meanwhile, constitute a trading and agricultural force occupying the centre of the local economy and exchange networks.³

¹ Géraud Magrin and Marc–Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, eds., *Crisis and Development: The Lake Chad Region and Boko Haram* (Paris: AFD, 2018), 14–22. <https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/crisis-and-development-lake-chad-region-and-boko-haram>

² Thurston, *Boko Haram*, 15–20.

³ Mulugeta, D., and A.–H. Wando, "Border Lives," 7–10.

Table 2: Functional Structure of Principal Communities in the Lake Chad Basin

Group	Primary Activity	Resource Relationship	Principal States
Kanuri	Agriculture and trade	Farmland and markets	Nigeria,Niger,Chad,Cameroon
Fulani/Mbororo	Transhumant herding	Pastures and seasonal water points	Cameroon,Chad,Niger,Nigeria
Shuwa Arabs	Herding and trade	Pastures and trade networks	Chad , Cameroon
Buduma	Fishing and cultivation	Lake environment and aquatic islands	Chad , Nigeria , Niger , Cameroon
Hausa	Trade and agriculture	Markets and farmland	Nigeria , Niger

Source: Author's compilation based on Nagarajan et al. (2018) and Thurston (2018).

Figure (3): Ethnic and Social Diversity of the Lake Chad Basin (Distribution of Principal Communities)



Nagarajan et al. (2018) / Thurston (2018)

What demands analytical emphasis is that these communities were not historically in a state of permanent competition but rather in a pattern of traditional functional complementarity built on exchange and seasonal adaptation. Herders drove their livestock to farmlands after harvest to feed on crop residues and fertilise the soil in return, fishermen supplied farmers with fish in exchange for grain and traders connected communities through marketing networks founded on trust and long-standing relationships. This integrative system began to erode as resource scarcity intensified a process that will be analysed in depth in Chapter Two.¹

Section II: Environmental Transformation –Data and Evidence :

The retreat of Lake Chad occupies an iconic place in global discourse on the climate crisis. Yet this very symbolic status has generated dangerous oversimplifications that have reduced a hydrologically complex phenomenon to a single iconic image. What the specialised scientific research reveals is that the environmental transformation experienced by the Basin is a compound phenomenon in which climatic, anthropogenic and hydrological factors are intricately intertwined and that reducing it to a “single dimensional” narrative leads to inadequate policies that fail to address the roots of the crisis.

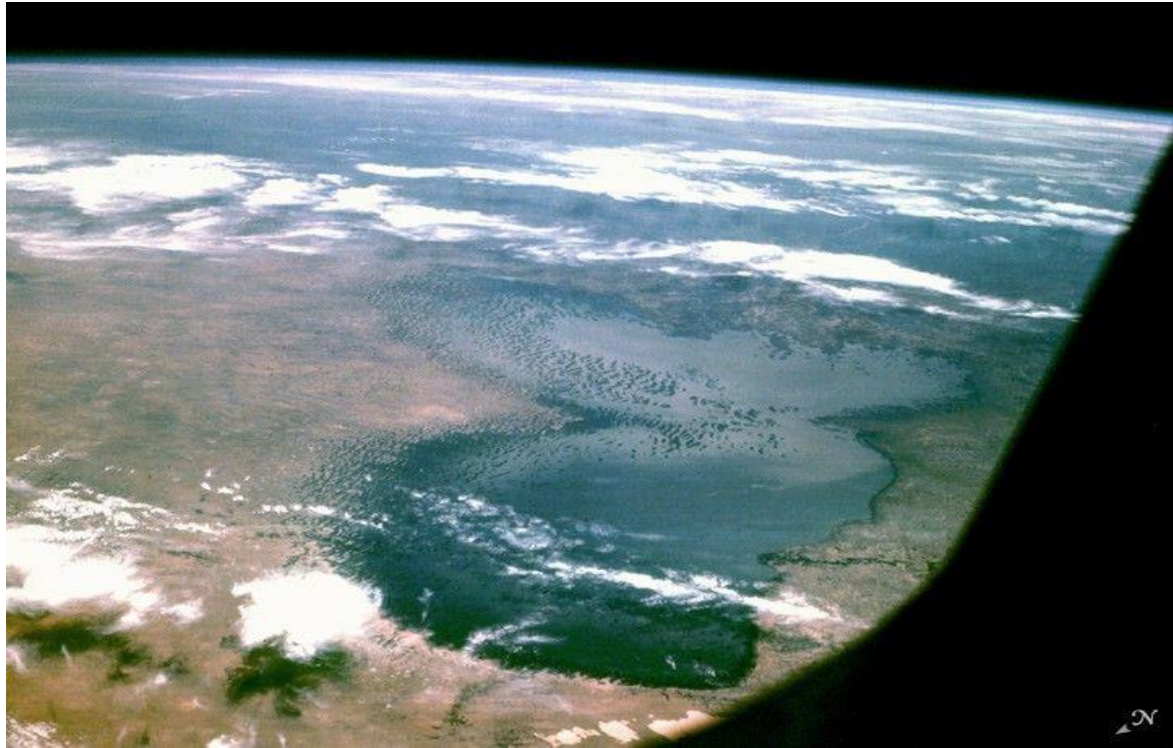
Sub-Section 1: The Great Retreat –Figures and Chronology–

At the opening of the 1960s, Lake Chad was among the ten largest lakes in the world covering a surface area ranging between 22,000 and 25,000 square kilometers and ranking as the fourth largest lake in Africa. Between 1963 and 1990, the lake lost over 90 per cent of its surface area in one of the fastest-documented cases of aquatic retreat in modern history. Satellite imagery from the American Corona programme and from Landsat satellites tracked this retreat

¹ Nagarajan et al., Climate-Fragility Profile, 12–14.

with precision, providing stark visual documentation of the scale of the transformation.¹

Figure (4) : Lake Chad Satellite Image (1966 — Apollo Programme) Lake at Maximum Extent



NASA Earth Observatory / USGS Landsat Archive

Three major temporal phases can be identified in the lake's retreat: the first phase (1963–1975) which saw the initial sharp retreat from approximately 25,000 km² to approximately 4,400 km², driven by the great drought that struck the African Sahel, the second phase (1975–1990) is the most severe, during which the surface area fell below 2,500 km² reaching its historical minimum around 1987 and the third phase (1990 to the present), characterised by partial and relative recovery with the surface area oscillating between 10,000 and

¹ Binh Pham-Duc et al., "The Lake Chad Hydrology under Current Climate Change," *Scientific Reports* 10, no. 1 (2020): 5498. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-020-62417-w>

17,000 km² with sharp seasonal fluctuations driven almost entirely by the Chari–Logone system.¹

Table 3: Evolution of Lake Chad's Surface Area over Time

Period	Approximate Area (km ²)	Key Event	Principal Consequence
1963	~25,000	Baseline reference–highest documented level	Full lake converging four zones
1966–1973	22,772 to 15,400	Onset of first Sahelian drought	Initial retreat in the northern pool
1975	~4,400	Peak of Great Drought 1972–1975	Lake splits into two pools
1983–1987	~2,500 (minimum)	Second drought and irrigation overuse	Maximum environmental crisis
1994	~1,756	Lowest historically documented level	Loss of 93% of original area
2000–2010	~10,000–16,800	Sahelian rainfall recovery and Chari flow	Relative stability in southern pool
2013–2016	~1,876 (average)	Accounting for wetlands	Sharp seasonal oscillation
2022–2024	~10,000–13,000	Unprecedented floods and instability	Bidirectional climatic extremes

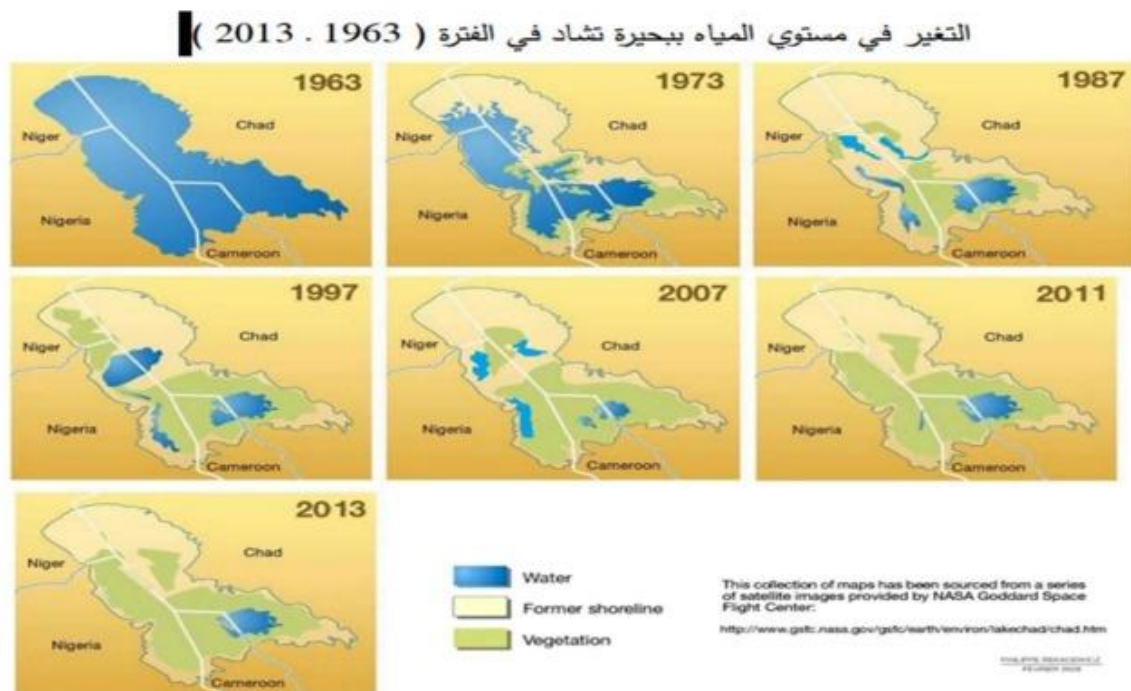
Source: Author's compilation based on NASA Earth Observatory (2017), Pham–Duc et al. (2020), and Abderraman et al. (2024).

A substantive scientific debate about the precise characterisation of the lake's current state warrants attention here. While the popular narrative portrays

¹ NASA Earth Observatory, "The Ups and Downs of Lake Chad" (Washington, DC: NASA, 2017). <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/91291/the-ups-and-downs-of-lake-chad>

the lake as an entity that is disappearing specialised hydrological research published in 2020 reveals that the aquatic system is more complex than this characterisation suggests: the southern pool is regularly fed by the Chari–Logone river and is in a state of relative stability, while the northern pool remains hostage to climatic and seasonal oscillation. Researchers writing in *Scientific Reports* concluded that the lake is not in a state of continuous contraction but rather in a condition of structural variability strongly linked to rainfall patterns in the headwaters.¹

Figure (5): Evolution of Lake Chad Surface Water Levels 1973–2018



NASA Earth Observatory (2017) / Pham-Duc et al. (2020)

Sub-Section 2: The Compound Factors of Retreat

Popular and political discourse presents the lake's retreat as a direct consequence of climate change not entirely incorrect but insufficient to capture the actual interaction among a set of deeply intertwined factors. Careful analysis reveals an interaction between two major categories of drivers each contributing

¹ Pham-Duc et al., "Lake Chad Hydrology," 2–4.

approximately 50 per cent of the total effect with each compounding the other in a non-linear fashion.¹

Climatic factors: Temperatures in the Sahel region have risen at a rate exceeding 1.5 times the global average, rainfall in the Chari-Logone catchment has declined markedly since the late 1950s, evaporation rates exceed 2,000 millimeters annually due to extreme heat and the West African monsoon system has experienced significant disruption.

Anthropogenic factors: Large-scale irrigation projects built unilaterally and without coordination by the riparian states have consumed hundreds of millions of cubic meters annually from the Chari and Logone rivers before they reach the lake and unregulated agricultural expansion and increasing pressure on groundwater reserves further diminish the Basin's water reserves.

Dynamics of Interaction: What makes this crisis distinctive is that the two sets of drivers do not operate independently. They interact in ways that multiply the total effect: drought reduces resources driving greater human extraction of what remains, the loss of vegetation cover due to drought and overgrazing reduces transpiration that normally feeds rainfall in the headwater zones generating a feedback loop that deepens the crisis. Research by Skah and Lyammouri confirmed that this dynamic makes reducing the crisis to a single cause a methodological risk that leads to inadequate solutions.²

Figure (6): Feedback Loop Diagram: Interactions between Climate Drivers and Anthropogenic Pressures

¹ Pham-Duc et al., "Lake Chad Hydrology," 3-5.

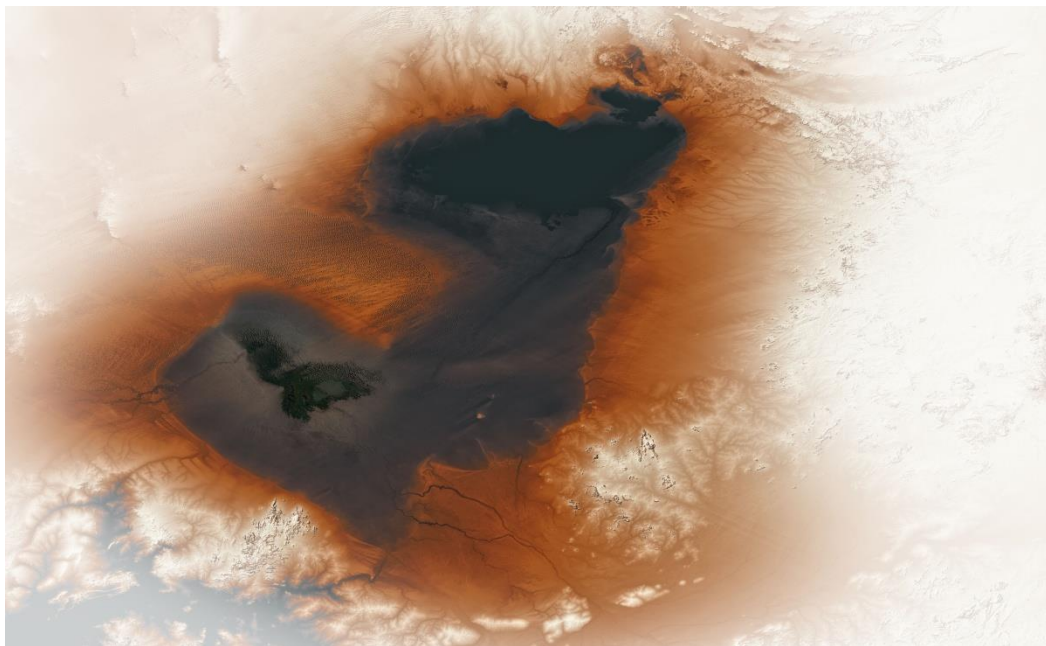
² Maha Skah and Rida Lyammouri, The Climate Change-Security Nexus: Case Study of the Lake Chad Basin, Policy Paper 20/08 (Rabat: Policy Center for the New South, 2020), 8-12. [https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/RP%20-%2020-08%20\(skah%20&%20Lyammouri\).pdf](https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/RP%20-%2020-08%20(skah%20&%20Lyammouri).pdf)



Author's compilation based on Nagarajan et al. (2018) and Skah & Lyammouri (2020)

Sub–Section 3: Future Scenarios and Large (Scale Projects)

Figure (7) : Lake Chad Satellite Image (2020) Current State of the Southern Pool



Source :NASA Earth Observatory / Landsat 8

The Ubangi–Shari Water Transfer Project, championed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission presents a paradigmatic case of how ambitious technical aspirations collide with geopolitical and environmental realities. The project involves diverting large volumes of water from the Ubangi River in the Central African Republic northward toward Lake Chad through a canal estimated to cost over 14 billion dollars. It has generated sharp scientific and political debate concerning its hydrological viability, its environmental impacts in the extraction zone and its implications for the Central African Republic which is itself mired in severe governance crises.¹

Among the most significant recent scientific developments reshaping the future outlook is what a 2024 study published in Scientific Reports revealed regarding the unprecedented 2022 floods in the Basin. The new hydrological data suggests that the Lake Chad Basin may be heading toward bidirectional climatic extremes: severe drought in some seasons and unprecedented flooding in others with increasing intensity of oscillation and shrinking predictability. The 2022 floods were the most severe in 60 years suggesting that the traditional model presenting the Basin as a region of linear continuous aridification requires fundamental revision.²

In light of global climate models linked to IPCC pathways, an escalation of climatic extremes in the region is projected implying an unprecedentedly volatile and extreme natural environment that will cast long shadows over fishing, herding and agricultural activities and intensify competitive pressures among communities. This reality renders locally adapted “small scale” climate adaptation

¹ Nagarajan et al., Climate–Fragility Profile, 16.

² Mahamat–Nour Abderraman et al., "Strengthening of the Hydrological Cycle in the Lake Chad Basin under Current Climate Change," Scientific Reports 14 (2024): 24799. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-024-75707-4>

projects more immediately viable than “large scale” engineering projects with long-term horizons.¹

The position that the researcher takes here is that the Ubangi Chari inter basin water transfer project despite its symbolic appeal as a definitive solution to the lake's retreat, is neither financially realistic nor strategically prudent under present conditions. Beyond its prohibitive cost exceeding fourteen billion dollars the project rests on a questionable assumption: that the crisis of the Lake Chad Basin is fundamentally hydrological and can therefore be engineered away. The argument advanced throughout this study is precisely the opposite that the crisis is principally one of governance. To invest such resources in a mega-engineering project while the institutional vacuum remains unaddressed would in this researcher's assessment, risk reproducing the very dynamics of elite capture and marginalisation that produced the crisis in the first place. Locally adapted small scale and community managed adaptation measures represent a more defensible allocation of resources.

Section III : Demographic , Economic and Humanitarian Transformations

If geography, history and environmental degradation constitute the structural conditions of the crisis, then demographics and economics are its actual drivers of intensity and acceleration. The Basin is experiencing a perilous equation: declining natural resources confronting relentlessly growing human densities within a context of economic fragility and the absence of viable alternatives. This equation does not produce only poverty but the objective conditions for intense competition over every drop of water and every square meter of land.

¹ Abderraman et al., "Strengthening of the Hydrological Cycle," 6–8.

Sub–Section 1: The Demographic Explosion and Resource Pressure

The population of the Lake Chad Basin quadrupled between 1960 and 2000, then doubled again in the first decades of the third millennium. From approximately 7 million inhabitants in the early 1960s to over 45 million today, at annual growth rates ranging between 2.5 and 3 per cent in most Basin areas among the highest demographic growth rates in the world. This means that every decade adds millions of new inhabitants requiring food, water and land in a context where resources are not expanding but contracting.¹

Perhaps the most alarming demographic dynamic is that the majority of the Basin's population is young: those under thirty years of age exceed 65 per cent across most of its territory. Labour markets are unable to absorb the growing demand for livelihoods and a large youth cohort finds itself confronting a fragile economic environment with scarce opportunities. Research has documented that this youth cohort facing unemployment in an unstable environment constitutes the primary source of recruitment for armed groups which offer what the state cannot: income, employment, identity and social status.²

Sub–Section 2: Economic Structure and Dependence on the Lake

The economic structure of the Lake Chad Basin is characterised by near total dependence on direct natural resources: fishing, herding and agriculture. This structural dependence renders the local economy highly fragile before any environmental shock, particularly in the absence of social protection networks and economic adaptation mechanisms.³

At its peak, the Lake Chad Basin was a source of animal protein for millions of people with lake and tributary fish constituting an indispensable dietary

¹ Jedwab et al., "Climate Change, Rural Livelihoods," 10–15.

² Jedwab et al., "Climate Change, Rural Livelihoods," 16–19.

³ Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 14.

staple. Fish production has declined by an estimated 60 per cent compared to 1970s levels depriving entire communities of their primary food source. Traditional pastoral migration routes represent the most environmentally sensitive of inherited cultural resources, built on a collective memory of pasture locations and seasonal water points. The lake's retreat also contributed to the destruction of the traditional flood recession agriculture system that exploited the fertility of lands exposed after seasonal floods transforming these newly exposed lands from a promising agricultural opportunity into contested arenas of dispute with undefined legal ownership.

The shrinkage of fishing areas has concentrated competitive pressure on the remaining southern portion of the lake generating intensifying competition over a diminishing space. Traditional pastoral routes have collapsed under the twin pressures of lake retreat and changing rainfall patterns, forcing herders to compete over narrower grazing land and generating collisions with farming communities over territories where economic functions have become deeply entangled.¹

Sub–Section 3: Displacement and Forced Migration –The Humanitarian Dimensions–

The Lake Chad Basin crisis is now classified among the world's most protracted humanitarian emergencies a crisis of the type scientifically defined as a Complex Emergency, in which environmental security and political causes are so intertwined as to resist separate treatment or resolution. According to the latest figures from OCHA (December 2024) the number of internally displaced

¹ Fati Nkuissi Kamta, Jan Schilling, and Jürgen Scheffran, "Water Resources, Forced Migration and Tensions with Host Communities in the Nigerian Part of the Lake Chad Basin," *Water* 13, no. 6 (2021): 834. <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4441/13/6/834>

persons in the region has exceeded 2.9 million with 2.3 million concentrated in Nigeria alone, in addition to over 266,000 refugees in neighbouring states.¹

On food security, the latest data from early 2025 indicate that over 4.9 million people in the Lake Chad Basin are living in acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) compared to 4 million in the previous year indicating a continuing deterioration. Most significant is that this figure represents the catastrophic failure of the traditional agro–pastoral economy to provide food for populations who historically relied on the surrounding natural environment for their sustenance.²

Displacement in the Lake Chad Basin is not a transient acute phenomenon but a structural and deeply embedded one. It is simultaneously a consequence of the crisis and a factor in its deepening, as it redistributes demographic pressure onto receiving areas that themselves suffer from resource scarcity, generating new flashpoints in areas that were relatively more stable. Research by Kamta and colleagues documented this dynamic in detail, showing how the influx of displaced persons into receiving communities generates new frictions over water, land and services, adding a further layer of tensions to an already existing conflict structure.³

In an integrative reading of the humanitarian dimension, the concept of humanitarian catastrophe remains inadequate when it is limited to counting the displaced and distributing aid. What is taking place in the Basin is a structural

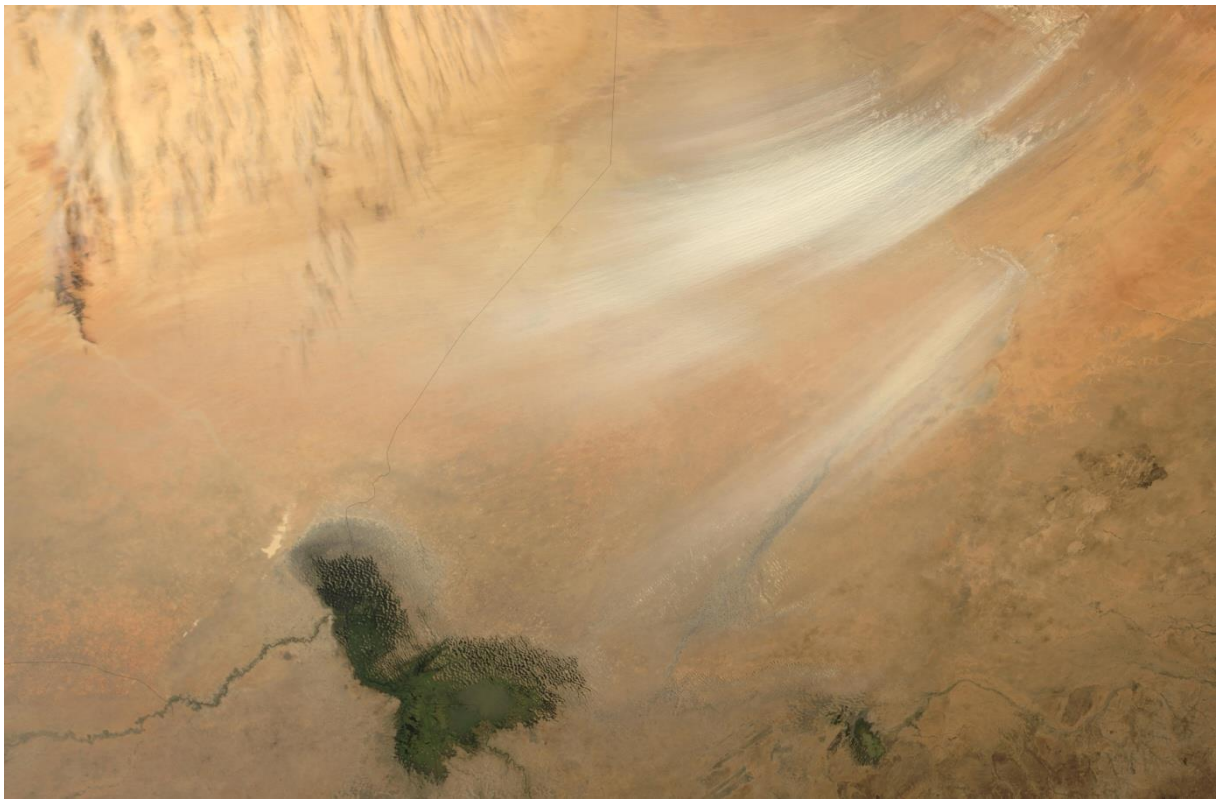
¹ OCHA, Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot, 30 December 2024 (Geneva: OCHA, 2024). <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-30-december-2024>

² OCHA, Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot, 3 March 2025 (Geneva: OCHA, 2025). <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/cameroon/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-3-march-2025>

³ Kamta, Schilling, and Scheffran, "Water Resources, Forced Migration," 5–8.

collapse of the traditional livelihood system that had enabled millions of people to maintain a balanced socio-economic ecology and a forced reorganisation of relations of production, consumption and exchange according to the logic of acute scarcity. This makes structural understanding of the humanitarian crisis a necessary precondition for any effective policy intervention.¹

Figure(8):Lake Chad Satellite Image (2023) : Hydrological Oscillation and Flood Aftermath



NASA Earth Observatory / Sentinel-2 (ESA)

¹ Nagarajan et al., Climate-Fragility Profile, 20–24.

Chapter Conclusion:

This chapter reaches a foundational analytical conclusion: the Lake Chad Basin is not a passive environmental victim but a geographic space harbouring deep structural contradictions between an integrated historical heritage and fragmenting colonial boundaries between shared natural resources and multiple national sovereignties and between a rising demographic pressure and a retreating resource base. These structural contradictions constitute the necessary explanatory condition for the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters of competition patterns and the reshaping of power and legitimacy in the Basin.

The trans-boundary geography of resources leads to overlapping sovereignties and weak shared governance. The colonial heritage explains the persistence of institutional fragility and the logic of historical marginalisation of peripheries. Environmental degradation transforms resources from elements of integration into objects of competition. And demographic pressure multiplies the intensity of this competition while depriving traditional arbitration mechanisms of their capacity to absorb shocks. These factors combined constitute the necessary analytical entry point for understanding why what was once functional coexistence has been transformed into an existential conflict over resources, power and legitimacy.

CHAPTER TWO

Transformations in Competition Arenas over Resources and Power: From Coexistence to Existential Conflict

Chapter Introduction:

Understanding what is happening in the Lake Chad Basin today cannot begin from the present moment alone, the depth of the crisis demands comprehension of the trajectory that led to it. Until relatively recently the Basin stood as a model of functional integration among multiple communities sharing a single water resource, managing that sharing through a system of customary norms and traditional institutions that absorbed partial scarcity and distributed access among coexisting professional communities. As the lake's retreat intensified and demographic pressure escalated, this equilibrium began to fracture, displacing the adaptive flexibility of customary regulation with sharper competitive patterns that traditional mechanisms could no longer absorb or contain.¹

Yet the issue does not reside in environmental pressure alone. The specialised literature on the Lake Chad Basin reveals that the transformation of scarcity into conflict is not automatic rather; it depends on a set of mediating variables that determine when local frictions escalate into organised collective violence. The most important of these variables are the nature of existing institutions and their arbitration capacity, the degree to which governing elites have penetrated the resource equation and the magnitude of the governance vacuum that creates the structural conditions for the emergence of new actors who invest in scarcity not to resolve it but to generate power and legitimacy from it.²

¹ Newman, Edward, Pegah Hashemvand Khiabani, and Remi Chandran. "Intercommunal Violence, Insurgency, and Agropastoral Conflict in the Lake Chad Basin Region." *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (2023). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09592318.2023.2248868>

² Chitra Nagarajan et al., *Climate-Fragility Profile: Lake Chad Basin* (Berlin: Adelphi Research, 2018), 22–27. <https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/climate-and-fragility-risks-lake-chad-region>

This chapter examines the transformations experienced by the Lake Chad Basin across four interrelated levels: the shift from the traditional pattern of functional coexistence to forms of existential conflict among livelihood groups / occupational groups, an anatomy of state fragility and the functional vacuum left by state withdrawal, an analysis of ISWAP's rise as an alternative governing actor exercising state functions in territories the state has abandoned and an investigation of the role of hybrid actors in shaping an overlapping and contested security order.¹

Table 1: The Evolutionary Trajectory of the Lake Chad Basin (From Coexistence to Existential Conflict 1960–2025)

Period	Lake Surface Area	Competition Pattern	State Condition	Armed Groups
1960–1970	~25,000km ²	Functional coexistence , customary sharing	Post–independence, fragile institutions	No organized armed groups
1970–1983	~10,000 km ²	Growing demographic pressure (~2.5%/yr)	Growing institutional weakness	Emergence of local militias
1983–2000	~2,500 km ² (90% loss)	~20M people , massive ressource pressure	Sharp governance deterioration	Cross–border smuggling, unorganized armed groups

¹ Janani Vivekananda et al., Shoring Up Stability: Addressing Climate and Fragility Risks in the Lake Chad Region (Berlin: Adelphi Research, 2019), 38–44. <https://shoring-up-stability.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Shoring-up-Stability.pdf>

CHAPTER THREE Competition for Legitimacy and Identity, and Critical Analysis: Beyond the Traditional Narrative

2000–2009	~13,000 km ² (relative stability)	~30M people	Negative rule of law index	Boko Haram founded 2002, first attacks 2009
2010–2015	Oscillation structural crisis	~35M people	WGI political stability negative in all four states	Boko Haram expands , Caliphate declared 2014
2015–2020	Still 90% below 1963	~40M people	Declining governance indicators	ISWAP splits from Boko Haram 2016
2025–2026	~10,000–13,000 km ²	~50M people	Effective governance : Chad –1,2 Niger – 1,0	BH/ISWAP island competition , >30,000 new monthly displacements

Source: Author's compilation. Data from: World Bank (WGI), UNFPA, OCHA/UNHCR, IPC/FEWS NET, and ACLED.

Section I: From Traditional Competition to Existential Conflict over Resources

Understanding the nature of the current conflict in the Lake Chad Basin requires beginning with an anatomy of the system that preceded it. The existential conflict did not emerge from a vacuum rather, it is the product of accumulated transformations in the structure of productive relations and resource access. What once constituted a flexible functional coexistence built on professional specialisation, economic exchange and customary arbitration has gradually become an arena in which multiple claims collide over diminishing

resources in the absence of effective mechanisms for managing scarcity and distributing resource access equitably.¹

Sub-Section 1: Traditional Patterns of Resource Competition – The Foundations of Functional Coexistence–

Before scarcity was transformed into conflict, communities in the Lake Chad Basin possessed a robust system of shared resource management resting on three integrated pillars. The first was structured functional specialisation: each professional community occupied a specific ecological niche. The Buduma fished in the heart of the lake and its islands, the Fulani grazed in the savannah along seasonally agreed-upon routes and the Hausa and Kanuri cultivated the lands adjacent to the shorelines. This specialisation did not imply absolute separation but functional differentiation that enabled economic exchange rather than sharp competition.²

The second pillar was the system of customary rules, documented in recent studies within the field of common pool resource management in the Ostromian sense: rules governing the timing of access to water points, fishing seasons, pastoral migration routes and compensation mechanisms for damages between farmers and pastoralists. These rules were inherently flexible and open to renegotiation in response to seasonal and annual shifts, making them an adaptive mechanism rather than a rigid structure.³

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Lake Chad Basin: Livelihoods under Pressure (Rome: FAO, 2017), 9–15.

² Chris Kwaja and Katie Smith, Transnational Dimensions of Conflict between Farmers and Herders in the Western Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (Washington, DC: SFCG/FFARN, 2020), 3–8. <https://www.sfcg.org/report/policy-brief-transnational-dimensions-of-conflict-between-farmers-and-herders-in-the-western-sahel-and-the-lake-chad-basin/>

³ Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807763>

The third pillar was the traditional arbitration institutions that represented an effective customary judicial system for managing resource disputes. Traditional leaders (Lawan) and tribal elders performed mediation and redress functions grounded in historical and cultural legitimacy far deeper than that of government institutions in the eyes of local populations. Research by Kwaja and Smith (2020) found that these institutions possessed genuine capacity to enforce compliance with settlements and deter violations, as long as scarcity conditions remained within limits the system could absorb.¹

What demands analytical emphasis is that this system was neither ideal nor free of tensions: conflicts always existed between herders and farmers and among fishermen and other groups. The fundamental difference, however, is that these conflicts were seasonal, limited in scope and managed through arbitration mechanisms that returned them to a level of equilibrium. This explains why the great drought years of the 1970s and 1980s despite their environmental severity did not produce the scale of organised armed conflict witnessed after 2009.

Sub-Section 2: The Escalation of Inter-Group Conflicts

The transition from managed friction to existential conflict is a structural phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained by water scarcity alone. The decisive difference between the 1980s conflicts, which remained locally limited, and the post 2009 conflicts which are more extensive and violent, is the structural shift in the nature of mediating mechanisms: the declining capacity of traditional institutions, the entry of governing elites as parties to the resource equation and the appearance of light weaponry within reach of the competing parties.²

ACLED data reveals a sharp rise in resource related violence events in the region between 2010 and 2022 an increase that follows a pace inconsistent

¹ Kwaja and Smith, *Transnational Dimensions*, 10–14.

² Newman, Edward, Pegah Hashemvand Khiabani, and Remi Chandran, "Intercommunal Violence," 290–295.

with the hydrological curve of the lake which saw relative recovery in some phases. This confirms that the primary catalyst is not water scarcity itself but the deterioration of institutional mechanisms for managing it. In an environment where access to water and newly exposed lands has become more competitive and strategic than at any previous point, every simple friction incident becomes a potential flashpoint when containment mechanisms are absent.¹

The incident at Logone Birni in northern Cameroon in December 2021 provides the clearest illustration of how this pattern shifts from local friction to a regional humanitarian crisis. Clashes erupted between herders and fishing/farming communities over diminishing water resources escalating with unprecedented speed to produce over 100,000 displaced persons according to UNHCR and UNICEF data with hundreds of houses, markets and farms burned. Most telling is that this incident occurred in a region not historically noted for violence, suggesting the spread of the new conflict logic into areas that were previously relatively shielded.²

In the view of the researcher, the recurrent framing of the herder farmer confrontation as an ancient or inevitable ethnic rivalry is analytically misleading. What the evidence suggests is that the competition between herders and farmers is not a cultural inevitability but a manufactured scarcity conflict: it became violent only when the institutions that once mediated it were hollowed out and when political actors found advantage in its perpetuation. The responsibility therefore, lies less with the communities themselves than with the institutional and political environment that converted a manageable seasonal friction into an existential struggle.

² UNHCR, "Nigeria/Cameroon: New Emergency at Lake Chad — Key Messages," December 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/africa/news/briefing-notes/cameroon-nigeria-new-emergency-lake-chad>

Table 2: Indicators of Displacement, Food Security and Armed Violence in the Lake Chad Basin

Period	Displaced and Refugees	Food Security Situation	Notes on Armed Attacks
2010–2015	~1.5–2M displaced in NE Nigeria, parts of Chad, Niger and Cameroon	Sharp food security deterioration , IPC Phase 3 pockets in conflict zones	Boko Haram rises as major armed actor , widespread violent insurgency begins
2015–2020	~2,5M directly affected , ~10M needing humanitarian assistance in the Basin	Entrenched food crisis , millions in Chad and Nigeria in acute food insecurity	ISWAP splits from BH, controls islands, attacks increase in geographic scope
2020–2025	Total ~3.5M (IDPs and refugees) one of Africa’s largest displacement crises	Over 6M in food insecurity, Chad among world’s most food–insecure	Continued BH/ISWAP competition , ACLED data shows persistently high violence

Source: Author's compilation based on OCHA, UNHCR, IPC/FEWS NET, and ACLED data.

A further driver of conflict is the phenomenon of Newly Exposed Lands: spaces revealed by the lake's retreat whose legal ownership remains undefined and ungoverned by any settled customary norms. These lands have been transformed into open competitive arenas contested by multiple overlapping claims. Farmers regard them as compensatory lands for the holdings they lost to flooding or desiccation, herders view them as natural extensions of their grazing territories and some groups construct new settlements upon them without legally settled entitlements. This legal vacuum within a fragile economic environment generates daily frictions capable of exploding at any moment.¹

¹ Kwaja and Smith, Transnational Dimensions, 15–18.

Sub-Section 3: The Role of Governing Elites in Intensifying Conflict

The relationship between governing elites and resource conflict in the Lake Chad Basin is among the most analytically neglected dimensions in the climate–security discourse which tends to portray violence as an environmental inevitability. Reliable field research has revealed that segments of governing elites in Chad and Cameroon have not merely failed to regulate equitable resource access but have actively entered the conflict equation as direct parties, deploying political resources to protect private economic interests. This manifests in government officials purchasing large livestock herds and employing armed herders who seize strategic water points by force transforming a social dispute amenable to settlement into a politically protected interest structure.¹

The International Crisis Group's 2024 report notes that customary resource sharing norms have become unable to absorb conflicts that are newer, more complex, more armed and more connected to political interest networks. Traditional arbiters have not disappeared but they have lost the capacity to enforce compliance with settlements in an environment saturated with light weapons where the interests of armed actors are intertwined with resource economics. The dual institutional failure — the collapse of customary arbitration alongside the absence of effective governmental arbitration — has created an organisational vacuum that constitutes the objective condition for the escalation toward organised violence.²

¹ Géraud Magrin and Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, eds., *Crisis and Development: The Lake Chad Region and Boko Haram* (Paris: AFD, 2018), 47–62. <https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/crisis-and-development-lake-chad-region-and-boko-haram>

² International Crisis Group, *JAS vs. ISWAP: The War of the Boko Haram Splinters*, Africa Briefing no. 196 (Brussels: ICG, March 2024), 4–7. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b196-jas-vs-iswap-war-boko-haram-splinters>

Section II: State Failure and Functional Withdrawal – The Roots of the Governance Vacuum –

The governance vacuum in the Lake Chad Basin is not a transient emergency or a circumstantial setback but the product of “long accumulated” structural dynamics encompassing the historical marginalisation of this peripheral space since the colonial era and the failure to translate independence into a national project that integrated the peripheries and made the state's presence functionally effective within them. What is known today as the governance vacuum is therefore not a sudden state absence but a cumulative functional withdrawal that has rendered the state formally present but functionally absent in the peripheral zones of the Basin.

Sub-Section 1: Historical Marginalisation of the Lake Basin

Human development indicators for the areas bordering Lake Chad reveal a stark paradox: these territories historically among the most resource-rich spaces in the Sahel, today record the lowest developmental indicators at the national level in each of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The paradox lies not only in the outcome but in the trajectory that led to it: geographic marginality became political marginality, political marginality generated developmental neglect and that neglect produced the institutional fragility that has rendered the region vulnerable to every form of tension generated by environmental change.¹

A further dimension typically absent from the analysis is that marginalisation was often not merely neglect but at times a deliberate political choice. Peripheral territories distant from the capitals were frequently extractive spaces producing fishery and agricultural wealth for urban economies without receiving equivalent public investment in infrastructure and services in return.

¹ Nagarajan et al., Climate-Fragility Profile, 38–42.

This explains why some local populations are bound by a profound emotional attachment to actors who provide what the state failed to provide for decades.

Sub–Section 2: Governance Failure Indicators and the Erosion of Legitimacy

According to the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for 2024 the four riparian states record consistently negative values across indicators of control of corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law and political stability. What makes these figures of particular analytical significance in the Basin context is that they do not merely reflect general administrative weakness but embody functional failure in the peripheral zones precisely — where local communities most need the state to confront the environmental challenge.¹

The failure extends beyond institutional weakness to something more dangerous: the actual complicity of some state security forces in violations against civilians in the course of security operations as documented by United Nations and human rights organisations. When local populations see that the state ostensibly meant to protect them constitutes an additional source of threat rather than a protective canopy, loyalty to the state erodes and the psychological and social space opens for alternative actors.²

Table 3: Governance Indicators for Lake Chad Riparian States — WGI 2024

Indicator (scale – 2.5 to +2.5)	Nigeria	Chad	Niger	Cameroon
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¹ World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) 2024 (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2024). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators>

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Conflict Analysis: Lake Chad Basin (New York: UNDP Crisis Bureau, 2018), 18–25. <https://www.undp.org/publications/lake-chad-basin>

Government Effectiveness	-1.08	-1.62	-1.39	-0.97
Control of corruption	-1.11	-1.56	-1.18	-1.18
Rule of law	-0.99	-1.62	-1.21	-0.77
Political Stability	-2.18	-1.87	-1.85	-0.74

Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), 2024.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/worldwide-governance-indicators>

Sub-Section 3: The Security and Governance Vacuum

The governance vacuum here refers to the condition of the state's progressive functional abandonment of specific territories without this implying a legal or symbolic absence. The islands scattered across Lake Chad estimated at over one thousand by some counts represent the clearest illustration of this vacuum: they have fallen entirely outside any effective government control, becoming secure bases for ISWAP launching pads for cross-border operations and sites for the informal economy and smuggling networks.¹

This vacuum is not a space of total anarchy, it is more precisely a space in which alternative forms of governance – more field-efficient than the formal state are exercised. Multiple UN studies and field reports indicate that inhabitants of these islands and peripheral areas live under a form of hybrid governance in which the influence of local traditional authorities overlaps with the pressures of armed groups and smuggling networks, in near total absence of any basic government service. This hybridity is precisely what makes the vacuum a source of crisis not merely a reflection of it.

¹ Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 54–58.

Section III: ISWAP's Rise as an Alternative Governing Actor, The Political Economy of the Organisation

The Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) represents a rarely-seen model in the trajectory of African armed organisations. It succeeded in transitioning from the pattern of violent insurgency that characterised its predecessor Boko Haram under Abu Bakr Shekau to the pattern of the governing actor that presents itself as a functional alternative to the state. This transition is embodied in its possession of a quasi-state organisational structure, a sustainable “economic fiscal” system and a carefully constructed legitimacy strategy that exploits state failure not to destroy the state but to serve the logic of replacing it.¹

Sub-Section 1: The Quasi-State Organisational Structure

ISWAP split from Boko Haram in 2016 under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Barnawi, announcing a break with Shekau's practice of targeting Muslim civilians. This split quickly attracted the support of the parent Islamic State organisation which saw in ISWAP a more strategically and governmentally sophisticated model. The dual alignment rupture with Shekau's violence and affiliation with ISIS's authority enabled the organisation to forge an institutional identity differentiated from its competitors.²

In terms of organisational structure, ISWAP employs a model combining strategic centralisation with operational decentralisation: the Wali (supreme emir) sets the broad strategic directions, while sector commanders administer different geographic areas with relative operational autonomy. This model enabled the

¹ International Crisis Group, Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), Africa Report no. 273 (Brussels: ICG, May 2019), 8–14. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/rpt/africa/nigeria/273-facing-challenge-islamic-state-west-africa-province>

² Alexander Thurston, Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 178–203.

organisation to spread across the borders of four states while maintaining strategic decision coherence, distinguishing it from fully decentralised insurgency models that typically lose coordination as their spread expands.¹

The organisation's functional structure encompasses specialised organs: a military apparatus conducting operations against governmental and military targets, an administrative apparatus managing daily affairs in controlled territories; a judicial apparatus applying an arbitration system grounded in religious authority and an economic apparatus overseeing the taxation system and resource management. This four part structure is what renders the security analysis that reduces it to an armed group analytically insufficient.

Sub-Section 2: The Political Economy of ISWAP: the Taxation and Services System

The economic system of ISWAP constitutes one of its analytically most compelling dimensions revealing a logic of authority more complex than mere war economy or plunder. The organisation has developed a regularised tax system encompassing fishing levies on fish production in the lake's islands, grazing taxes on pastoral activities in controlled territories, trade taxes on goods transiting its checkpoints and protection fees in exchange for guarantees of the safety of economic activities.²

Among the most significant findings of the International Crisis Group's field research is that this taxation is not merely disguised extortion. The 2019 study explicitly noted that levies in communities under the organisation's control are generally accepted by civilians who credit it for creating an environment where they can do business and compare its governance favourably to that of the

¹ Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly, eds., *Rebel Governance in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316182468>

² ICG, *Facing the Challenge of ISWAP*, Africa Report no. 273, 15–19.

Nigerian state itself. This assessment does not imply moral endorsement of the organisation but rather embodies an implicit critique of state failure to provide what would make its presence regarded as an advantage rather than a burden.¹

The organisation recognises that the sustainability of its authority depends on the sustainability of its implicit contract with the population and therefore its role extends beyond taxation to what resembles service provision: settling local disputes through a judicial system faster than the remote and costly formal courts, organising markets and protecting trade routes and providing a minimum of security in areas previously exposed to predation and attack from multiple directions.²

Table 4: Comparative Governance Patterns: The Formal State vs. ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin

Function	Formal State	ISWAP	Field Assesment
Security	Limited presence, documented abuses	Loyalty protection in exchange for taxation	ISWAP more reliable in the field
Justice	Distant courts, corruption, slow process	Fast, coercive religious arbitration	Accepted in the field despite its coercive character
Ressource	Weak or absent in peripheries	Regular taxation on fishing and herding	De facto regulation, though exploitative

¹ ICG, Facing the Challenge of ISWAP, Africa Report no. 273, 10. The report notes explicitly: "In the communities it controls, its taxation is generally accepted by civilians, who credit it for creating an environment where they can do business and compare its governance favourably to that of the Nigerian state."

² Fati Nkuissi Kamta, Jan Schilling, and Jürgen Scheffran, "Water Resources, Forced Migration and Tensions with Host Communities in the Nigerian Part of the Lake Chad Basin," Water 13, no. 6 (2021): 834. <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4441/13/6/834>

CHAPTER THREE Competition for Legitimacy and Identity, and Critical Analysis: Beyond the Traditional Narrative

Services	Scarce or non-existent	Minimum level in exchange for loyalty	Compensates for governmental absence
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Source: Author's compilation based on ICG Africa Report no. 273 (2019) and ISS Africa (2024).

Sub-Section 3: Legitimacy Strategy and Geographic Control

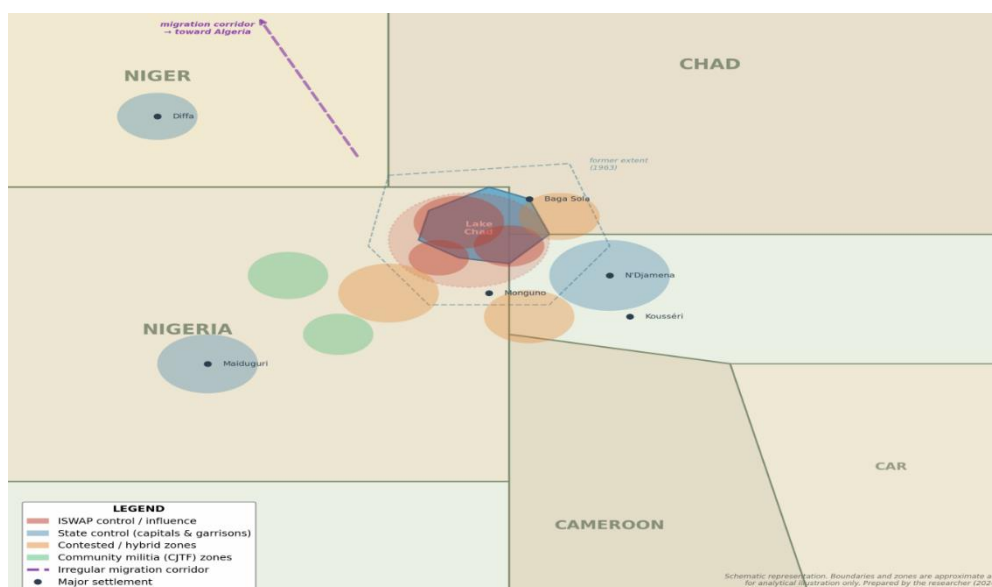
ISWAP's legitimacy-building strategy rests on three interlocking axes that together produce what may be called Functional Legitimacy: legitimacy derived not from democratic principles or ethnic affiliation but from the capacity to perform functions that the state fails to perform.¹

The first axis is the reformulation of violence. Unlike Boko Haram which became notorious for targeting Muslim civilians and attacking mosques and markets in ways that alienated any popular base, ISWAP distinguished itself through relative discipline in directing operations toward military and governmental targets. However, the ISS Africa report of September 2024 records a notable shift: as military pressure from the Multinational Joint Task Force increased, the organisation began abandoning its hearts and minds strategy escalating against civilians it accuses of providing information to security services raising fundamental questions about the durability of this strategic shift.²

Figure (1): Spatial Distribution of Control by Actor Type, Lake Chad Basin, 2024 Estimates

¹ ICG, Facing the Challenge of ISWAP, Africa Report no. 273, 15–19.

² ISS Africa, "The End of ISWAP's Hearts and Minds Strategy?" ISS Today, September 6, 2024. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-end-of-iswap-s-hearts-and-minds-strategy>



Source: Conceived and prepared by the researcher. The spatial parameters, actor categories, control zones and data inputs were defined by the researcher based on ICG (2019, 2024), CAERT (2024) and ACLED data, an AI-assisted design tool (Claude, Anthropic) was used to render the final visual layout according to the researcher's specifications.

The second axis is strategic geographic control. The organisation is concentrated intensively on Lake Chad's islands and its north eastern shorelines areas that provide strategic depth and operational flexibility difficult for regular armies to penetrate. Its supply networks connect the territories under its control in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon, constituting a cross-border model of an actor exploiting the structural fragility of national control systems.¹

Figure (2): Map of CAERT/AUCTC 2024 Terrorist Attack Distribution by Country– Lake Chad Basin

¹ ICG, JAS vs. ISWAP, Africa Briefing no. 196, 8–11.

Sample data for 2024 (January -December 2024).

Situation in the Lake Tchad		
Country	Attacks	Deaths(Attacks)
Chad	9	19
Nigeria	230	1127
Niger	41	123
Cameroon	94	102
	374	1371

Centre Africain d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme (CAERT), 2024 [Primary field source]

According to data from the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) for 2024, this multi polar geographic spread is empirically confirmed: the recorded terrorist attacks in the Basin were distributed across the four states with Nigeria bearing alone over 62 per cent of all attacks and 82 per cent of all deaths a share that correlates inversely with governance indicators (WGI: -2.18), reinforcing the analytical relationship between state functional weakness and the intensity of organised violence.

The third axis is the deployment of the region's historical narratives. ISWAP presents itself not as an external Islamic movement but carefully invokes the legacy of the ancient Kanem–Bornu Empire and the religious and cultural identity of the Kanuri and other Basin communities, framing itself as the restorer of a historical political project that colonialism aborted and independence betrayed. This framing grants it a mobilisation capacity that extends well beyond mere economic or security motives.

Section IV: Other Actors, Community Militias and Regional Institutions

The landscape of actors in the Lake Chad Basin cannot be reduced to the binary of the formal state and ISWAP. A broad spectrum of hybrid actors occupies the grey space between the two poles, complicating the map of power and security in the Basin. Foremost among these are community protection

groups that emerged as a field response to the state's inability to protect the population, alongside regional institutions attempting to manage a crisis that exceeds the capacity of any single state. Both types of actors simultaneously present part of the solution and part of the problem.

Sub–Section 1: The Rise of Community Protection Groups and Hybrid Security Challenges

The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged in Borno State in north eastern Nigeria in June 2013 as a spontaneous response by local youth to Boko Haram threats taking on neighbourhood security and providing intelligence to the military. This spontaneous beginning constituted a remarkable exception in the African security landscape a militia arising from the bottom rather than the top and from collective threat perception rather than governmental directive. Research by Agbiboa in the Oxford Development Studies (2020) documented how these groups rapidly transformed from local surveillance units into quasi–regular fighting forces exceeding 26,000 fighters in Borno and Yobe states with only 1,800 receiving a monthly salary of 50 dollars.¹

Available research reveals the fundamentally ambiguous nature of this force. On one hand, it contributed effectively to containing Boko Haram's expansion in urban areas provided critical intelligence to the military and helped reclaim areas from armed groups. On the other hand, the International Crisis Group and human rights organisations have documented serious abuses committed by CJTF elements including extrajudicial killings, diversion of

¹ Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "Vigilante Youths and Counterinsurgency in Northeastern Nigeria: The Civilian Joint Task Force," Oxford Development Studies 48, no. 4 (2020): 354–368. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13600818.2020.1837093>

humanitarian aid and retaliatory operations targeting civilians. These two contradictory faces constitute the essence of hybrid security.¹

The 2025 study by Nilsen and Schia, under the title *Children of the Soil* offers a striking ethnographic comparison between CJTF and Boko Haram behaviour in local governance, noting that both groups developed patterns of land appropriation, authoritarian violence and resource access regulation that are structurally similar even if they differ in formal legitimacy. This finding raises a fundamental academic question about whether the hybrid security model can serve as a sustainable solution to a structural governance crisis without leading to the reproduction of the same logic of violence in a legitimised form.²

The phenomenon of hybrid actors further encompasses other community militias such as the Shuwa Arab militias (Kesh) in Chad and Cameroon, armed Mbororo pastoral groups and village self-defence networks surrounding the lake. Together these constitute what may be described as a hybrid security ecology in which the formal state intersects with non-state actors in relations of cooperation, competition and complicity simultaneously.

Sub-Section 2: The Lake Chad Basin Commission (Regional Institutional Weakness)

The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) was established in 1964 as one of post-independence Africa's earliest regional cooperation structures, carrying a mandate to coordinate the management of the Basin's shared water resources a vision ahead of its time, acknowledging that the trans-boundary

¹ International Crisis Group, *Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram*, Africa Report no. 244 (Brussels: ICG, February 2017). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/244-watchmen-lake-chad-vigilante-groups-fighting-boko-haram>

² Marte Nilsen and Niels Nagelhus Schia, "Children of the Soil: Parallels Between Vigilantes and Boko Haram in Hybrid Security-Governance of the Lake Chad Basin Region," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (2025). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19392206.2025.2598168>

nature of the hydrological system demanded regional governance transcending the narrow logic of national sovereignty. Yet the gap between this founding vision and operational reality has remained wide throughout its history.¹

The limits of the Commission's effectiveness manifest in two dimensions. The first is failure in its original mandate: it has been unable to halt the hydrological retreat, coordinate divergent irrigation policies among member states or build an effective shared water management system despite decades of existence and international support through multiple programmes. The second is a forced shift toward securitisation: as the threat from armed groups escalated, the Commission's centre of gravity shifted toward the security role through facilitation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) established in 2015, making the crisis approach primarily security–military in substance at the expense of the developmental/environmental approach for which the founders established it.²

Niger's withdrawal from the Multinational Joint Task Force in 2025, in the aftermath of the military coup and the rise of sovereignist discourse under the ruling military council represents the most telling indicator of the fragility of the regional cooperative edifice. The withdrawal of a key member state from the collective security mechanism under circumstances of extreme regional danger reveals that regional cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin lacks the institutional robustness and mutual political commitment needed to confront an ongoing structural crisis.

¹ Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), Strategic Action Programme for the Lake Chad Basin 2023–2037 (N'Djamena: LCBC, 2023), 14–20. <https://www.lcbc-cblt.org>

² Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 60–65.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter reveals a trajectory of transformation of profound complexity at the intersection of three analytical threads: the thread of local socio-economic structure which fractured under a fragile equilibrium built on environmental conditions that have collapsed the thread of institutional fragility, which transformed the equilibrium's collapse into a governance crisis rather than a manageable shock and the thread of political agency which has invested in the vacuum to reshape the map of power.

Perhaps the most important conclusion is that ISWAP's rise as an alternative governing actor is not primarily a religious-ideological phenomenon but is, at its core, a response to governance failure in providing the state's essential functions. Where the state withdraws functionally alternative governance systems emerge that reproduce the logic of governance taxation, justice, security outside legal legitimacy. These alternative systems do not resolve the crisis, they entrench and reproduce it in ways that render any narrowly security-focused approach structurally deficient.

The analysis reaches a firm conclusion: what the Lake Chad Basin is experiencing is neither a wave of terrorism reducible by military operations, nor an environmental crisis awaiting large scale irrigation projects but a deep restructuring of the system of power, legitimacy and sovereignty in a cross-border space where the fragile state, the jihadist actor, the community militia and the exhausted regional institution collide in an equation that cannot be resolved by any single variable.

CHAPTER THREE

Competition for Legitimacy and Identity, and Critical Analysis: Beyond the Traditional Narrative

Chapter introduction

If the first two chapters were devoted to an anatomy of the context and field dynamics of the Lake Chad Basin crisis, this chapter constitutes a critical reading of the interpretive frameworks themselves. The crisis does not only produce facts but it also produces competing narratives, concepts and accounts, the acceptance or rejection of some of which plays a decisive role in determining the nature of the policy response. Rigorous academic critique of these narratives is therefore not a theoretical luxury but a methodological necessity: a faulty diagnosis leads inevitably to a faulty prescription.¹

This chapter addresses three ascending levels of analysis: it begins with the competition for legitimacy as the deepest stage upon which the struggle over the Basin takes place the real battle is not only over resources but over the right to govern and define the just order, it then proceeds to a systematic critique of prevailing narratives that exert their grip over the international understanding of the crisis without deserving the trust placed in them and it concludes with a prospective reading that identifies probable future scenarios and offers multi level policy recommendations that break with limited single approach responses.

¹ David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 15–25.

Section I: Competition for Legitimacy: Who Has the Right to Govern?

Legitimacy in any political context is neither a fixed given nor an abstract legal attribute but a continually renewed social process constructed and reconstructed according to the actor's capacity to fulfil the demands through which it justifies its authority. David Beetham, in his foundational work *The Legitimation of Power* distinguished three integrated dimensions of legitimacy: conformity with established rules, the justifiability of these rules in light of shared beliefs and the expressed consent of those subject to authority. When legitimacy is measured by these three criteria against the actors of the Lake Chad Basin, the picture appears far more complex than official discourse suggests.¹

Sub-Section 1: The Crisis of Governmental Legitimacy

The four riparian states of Lake Chad possess full legal legitimacy in its constitutional and international sense: they are recognised within the United Nations system, possess constitutions, formal elections and diplomatic representation. Yet this formal legal legitimacy is not automatically translated into practical legitimacy in the eyes of the local populations of the Basin's territories who measure the state by a different standard: its actual capacity to protect, deliver services and redress grievances. This gap between legal legitimacy and functional legitimacy is what opens the door to alternative actors who fill the space the state has abandoned.²

What deepens the governmental legitimacy crisis is that the state at times exercises additional violence rather than providing protection: security operations targeting armed groups sometimes end with civilian casualties and abuses attributed to some government forces are documented in reports of the United

² ICG, *Facing the Challenge of ISWAP*, Africa Report no. 273, 10–14.

Nations and human rights organisations. The International Crisis Group has identified this dynamic as one of ISWAP's leading recruitment drivers: youth who have witnessed governmental security abuses find in the organisation's retributive discourse an echo of their personal experience.¹

On the developmental level, the Basin's territories continue to rank at the bottom of human development indicators nationally in each of the four states transforming marginalisation from an inherited historical factor into a daily reality that is repeatedly renewed. When populations observe that the natural wealth of their region is being extracted for the benefit of distant urban economies without returning to them in any meaningful services, this entrenches the conviction that the state is not a unifying entity that represents them but an extraction mechanism to which they are subjected.²

A difficult question that this study cannot avoid is whether the state could under any circumstances engage rather than merely confront ISWAP. Our position here is carefully qualified. Direct political negotiation that would confer legitimacy upon an organisation responsible for grave violations against civilians is neither defensible nor advisable. However, the binary of total military confrontation versus political recognition is a false one. The analysis of this study suggests a third path: rather than engaging ISWAP as an actor the state should compete with it on the terrain where it has succeeded the provision of governance. If the structural finding of this thesis is correct, that ISWAP's power derives from filling a functional vacuum then the most effective response is not to negotiate with the organisation but to render it unnecessary by restoring the state's own functional legitimacy in the territories it has abandoned. Engagement in this sense, should

² Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 50–56.

be directed not at ISWAP but at the populations whose acquiescence it currently commands.

Sub–Section 2: Competing Narratives: Government, Terrorism, Local Communities

The Lake Chad Basin witnesses a war parallel to the military war the war of narratives: competition to define reality, to frame its causes and to name its actors. Each party offers a narrative that confers legitimacy on its position and justifies its practices.

The government narrative frames the crisis as a terrorism crisis: extremist armed groups exploiting fragile communities to spread a destructive ideology. This narrative calls primarily for a security–military response and attracts international funding and support. It renders invisible the environmental and developmental context, reduces deep structural roots to an ideological phenomenon amenable to security containment and thereby exempts governments from accountability for decades of developmental neglect at the peripheries.¹

ISWAP's counter–narrative presents the conflict as a confrontation between a corrupt state and just Islamic governance, invoking the memory of historical caliphates and the model of the Kanem–Bornu Empire and the Sokoto Caliphate. It is a narrative with potent mobilisation capacity that deploys historical and contemporary grievances simultaneously. Yet it conceals, behind the claim of religious legitimacy a project fundamentally political in nature: control of resources and management of space outside state authority.²

The narrative of local communities most absent from international discourse is the narrative of strategic survival: populations moving between

¹ Thurston, *Boko Haram*, 204–230.

² Thurston, *Boko Haram*, 25–42.

loyalties not out of ideological conviction but out of existential pragmatism. Research by Kwaja and Smith documented how local households interact with all actors: the state, armed groups, traditional authorities according to what secures for them the minimum of safety and food. This makes any analysis that classifies the population as allied with a particular party a simplistic analysis that misses the essence of the current dynamic.¹

Table 1: Competing Narratives on the Lake Chad Basin Crisis

Actor	Crisis Definition	Claimed Source of Legitimacy	Persuasion Tools
Riparian States	Terrorism and religious extremism	International legal legitimacy	Security apparatus and sovereign discourse
ISWAP	State corruption and absence of justice	Sharia and historical heritage	Alternative services, judiciary and protection
Local Communities	Livelihood crisis and survival competition	Customary heritage and tribal bonds	Customary norms, arbitration and traditional networks
International Community	Humanitarian crisis and regional terrorism	International law and human rights	Humanitarian aid and security support

Source: Author's compilation based on ICG (2019, 2024), Vivekananda et al. (2019), and Thurston (2018).

Sub-Section 3: The Role of Identity and Religion in Shaping Competition

Identity in the Lake Chad Basin represents an analytically highly sensitive dimension neither a simple cause of conflict that a mere reference suffices to explain, nor a secondary factor that can be safely disregarded. The correct reading is that it is a dynamic intermediary that translates environmental and economic pressure into a language amenable to mobilisation and politicisation. The Kanuri do not fight because they are Kanuri, but their Kanuriness constitutes the symbolic framework that confers on economic and security grievances a

¹ Kwaja and Smith, Transnational Dimensions, 15–20.

collective and historical meaning that goes far deeper than individual calculations.¹

ISWAP has deployed this identity dimension with care, invoking the legacy of the ancient Kanem–Bornu Empire and the Sokoto Caliphate, framing its existence as the restoration of a historical political project aborted by colonialism and betrayed by independence. Within this framing, joining the organisation becomes, in the consciousness of some members an act of identity rather than merely an economic–security calculation. Research by Thurston noted that some Kanuri see in the organisation's symbols an extension, however distorted, of their collective historical self–image.²

Yet this analysis requires a methodological caution: the conflict in the Basin is neither religious in origin nor ethnically driven in the reductionist sense. Field research reveals that what appears as a religious or ethnic conflict is often underpinned by economic, political and security variables. Classifying the conflict as religious or ethnic relieves the analyst from the burden of investigating structural roots, but leads to prepackaged policy responses that do not correspond to the complexity of the reality encountered on the ground.³

Sub–Section 4: The International Legal Framework for the Basin Crisis (between Legal Legitimacy and the Implementation Gap)

A reading of the legitimacy crisis in the Lake Chad Basin cannot be complete without examining the formal international legal obligations governing the states' relationships to their shared resources, their displaced populations

³ Newman, Edward, Pegah Hashemvand Khiabani, and Remi Chandran, "Intercommunal Violence," 300–308.

and civilians in conflict zones. The four riparian states have ratified most of these international instruments creating a notable structural tension: states formally bound by standards of good governance, human rights and shared resource management, yet failing to honour these commitments at the operational field level. This gap between formal legal commitment and actual compliance is itself one of the fundamental drivers of the legitimacy crisis afflicting the political order of the Basin.

First: International Water Law and the Problem of the Shared Basin

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non–Navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997 constitutes the primary international reference for regulating rights and obligations related to cross–border water bodies. The Convention rests on two pivotal principles: the principle of Equitable and Reasonable Use (Article 5), which obliges riparian states to share cross–border water resources equitably taking all needs into account and the principle of No Significant Harm (Article 7), which prohibits any state from using its share of shared waters in a manner that causes appreciable harm to neighbouring states. The fundamental paradox is that the large scale irrigation projects built unilaterally and without coordination by the riparian states contributing to a reduction of hydrological flows into the lake exceeding 40 per cent, constitute a potential violation of the harm principle. Yet the absence of a regional judicial mechanism with binding authority leaves this theoretical legal violation creating what may be termed an enforcement gap.¹

¹ United Nations, Convention on the Law of the Non–Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (New York: UN, May 21, 1997), art. 5–7. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/8_3_1997.pdf

Second: The Right to Environment as a Human Right: Article 24 of the African Charter

Article 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) explicitly states that all peoples shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favourable to their development. This text acquires exceptional legal importance in the Lake Chad Basin context establishing an obligation on riparian states to protect the natural environment upon which their communities depend for survival. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights set a significant legal precedent when it decided in Communication No. 155/96 (SERAC v. Nigeria, 2001) that the environmental destruction visited upon the Ogoni communities constitutes a direct violation of the African Charter. This legal precedent applies directly to the situation of Lake Chad Basin communities: the collapse of the Basin's ecological system raises legally framed questions about human rights violations rather than merely technical environmental issues.¹

Third: The Kampala Convention (2009) and the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons “ the Kampala Convention of 2009 “ represents the most directly relevant legal instrument to the Basin's humanitarian reality. It defines internal displacement more comprehensively than preceding international conventions, covering displacement resulting from natural disasters and environmental degradation alongside armed conflict a conceptual expansion of exceptional significance in the Basin context where environmental and security-driven displacement are so intertwined as to resist separation. The four riparian states have ratified this Convention, creating specific legal obligations including prevention of arbitrary displacement, protection and humanitarian assistance for

¹ Organization of African Unity, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Nairobi: OAU, June 27, 1981), art. 24. <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights>

the displaced and guaranteeing their right to voluntary return, local integration or resettlement. With total displacements in the Basin exceeding 3.2 million according to the latest OCHA figures, the application of the Kampala Convention remains uneven and irregular across the four states, entrenching the implementation gap that weakens the functional legitimacy of states in the eyes of their displaced citizens.¹

Fourth: International Humanitarian Law and the Responsibility to Protect

International humanitarian law, particularly Common Article 3 of the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949 sets the minimum standards for the treatment of civilians in non-international armed conflicts the precise legal characterisation of the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. These minimum standards apply to all parties to the conflict: government forces, ISWAP and other armed groups alike. Human Rights Watch and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have documented serious violations committed by multiple parties, including violations attributed to units of the Nigerian military and security forces in Chad alongside documented ISWAP violations against civilians. These governmental violations constitute an additional vector of the legitimacy crisis: a state ostensibly meant to protect not only complicates the situation of civilians but contributes to eroding their trust in it, pushing some toward the search for alternative protection.²

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit in paragraphs 138–139 of its Outcome Document adds a further international dimension: if a state fails to protect its citizens from serious

¹ African Union, African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) (Kampala: African Union, October 23, 2009). [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-sl-
AFRICAN_UNION_CONVENTION_FOR_THE_PROTECTION_AND_ASSISTANCE_OF_INTERNALLY_DISPLACED_PERSONS_IN_AFRICA_KAMPALA_CONVENTION.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-sl-
AFRICAN_UNION_CONVENTION_FOR_THE_PROTECTION_AND_ASSISTANCE_OF_INTERNALLY_DISPLACED_PERSONS_IN_AFRICA_KAMPALA_CONVENTION.pdf)

² International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions (Geneva: ICRC, August 12, 1949). <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-3>

international crimes, responsibility shifts to the international community. Its application to the Lake Chad Basin reveals that the humanitarian and governance failure of the riparian states has reached the threshold that demands serious discussion of international community responsibilities toward the Basin's populations.¹

Table 2: International Legal Framework for the Lake Chad Basin Crisis — Obligations and Implementation Gap

Legal Instrument	Year of Effect	Core Obligation	Compliance Status in the Basin
UN Watercourses Convention	1997	Equitable water use, no significant harm	No effective coordination unilateral irrigation, potential Article 7 violation
Art. 24 African Charter	1981 (effect 1986)	Peoples' right to a satisfactory environment	Sharp environmental deterioration without adequate state response
Kampala Convention (AU)	2009 (effect 2012)	Protection of IDPs including those displaced by environmental causes	3.2M displaced, uneven and irregular application
Common Art. 3 Geneva Conventions	1949	Protection of civilians in internal armed conflicts	Documented violations by multiple parties including government forces
Responsibility to Protect (R2P)	2005	State responsibility to protect citizens or shift to international community	Partial activation via MNJTF, no complete international mechanism

Source: Author's compilation based on the referenced United Nations and African Union instruments.

¹ United Nations General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome, A/RES/60/1 (New York: UN, October 24, 2005), paras. 138–139. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n05/487/60/pdf/n0548760.pdf>

The review of this legal framework reveals that the Lake Chad Basin crisis is not merely a governance crisis in the administrative sense but a systematic international legal compliance crisis. The four riparian states formally acknowledge fundamental legal obligations toward their shared resources, displaced populations and civilians, yet fail to translate these obligations into lived reality. This gap between formal legal commitment and actual field failure generates what may be termed a dual legal legitimacy crisis: on one hand, states lose their functional legitimacy in the eyes of the population on the other, international legal responsibilities accumulate against them without effective accountability.¹

Section II: Critical Analysis: Deconstructing the Prevailing Narratives

No serious academic analysis of the Lake Chad Basin crisis is complete without a critical confrontation with three prevailing narratives that dominate internationally produced knowledge about this space bearing within them non-neutral epistemic and political assumptions: the narrative of climate determinism which reduces the crisis to a linear environmental causality, the narrative of Environmental Orientalism, presenting Africa as a passive and helpless victim and the narrative that blinds us to the role of the international political economy in producing the crisis and sustaining fragility.

Sub-Section 1: Critiquing Climate Determinism: The Limits of Linear Causality

Thomas Homer-Dixon established in his influential work *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (1999) a form of analysis linking environmental scarcity to armed conflict in a near-direct causal chain. While he contributed to placing the environmental dimension within security analysis, the political and media version of his thesis slid toward a determinism that makes environmental degradation a

¹ LCBC, Strategic Action Programme 2023–2037, 50–56.

direct cause of violence. This tendency is precisely what academic critique has targeted with empirical refutation.¹

Peluso and Watts, in their joint work *Violent Environments* (2001), offered a radical critique of the neo-Malthusian tendency embedded in this analytical pattern, affirming that the slide toward environmental determinism conceals the political and structural causes of conflict and confers a naturalistic character upon violence as if it were an inevitability rather than a political choice. The empirical evidence from the Lake Chad Basin directly challenges this determinism: the most severe phases of aquatic retreat (1983–1994) did not produce the scale of organised armed conflict that emerged after 2009, when the lake had partially recovered.²

On a broader academic level, Mike Hulme showed how prevailing climate discourses produce climate reductionism: the subordination of complex social and political phenomena to a single factor climatic explanation. Jan Selby demonstrated that quantitative research on the climate–conflict relationship suffers from fundamental methodological problems relating to establishing causality rather than mere correlation. The 2025 study by Okpara and Yunus confirmed that the pivotal decisive variable in the Lake Chad Basin context is not hydrological scarcity per se, but the quality of governance and institutions.³

Research by Skah and Lyammouri argued that securitising climate change — directly linking it to military security — distorts the policy response: when climate change is presented as a cause of conflict the response shifts toward

¹ Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity, and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12–44.

² Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts, eds., *Violent Environments* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 3–38.

³ Mike Hulme, "Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism," *Osiris* 26, no. 1 (2011): 245–266. <https://doi.org/10.1086/659425>

military intervention rather than addressing governance failure and millions of civilians become a security problem rather than communities deserving development and protection.¹

Table 3: Comparative Analysis (Deterministic Model vs. Complex Model for the Lake Chad Basin Conflict)

Criterion	Climate Determinism Model	Complex Study (This Study)
Causal relationship	Environment to conflict (linear)	Environment with institutions, history and agency (interactive)
Key variable	Severity of environmental scarcity	Quality of institutions and governance
Role of actors	Groups responding to scarcity	Groups producing and politically exploiting scarcity
Policy response	Environmental and security intervention	Governance reform with environmental adaptation and integrated development
Empirical evidence	Challenged by 2009–2022 Basin data	Explains empirical contradictions

Source: Author's compilation based on Homer-Dixon (1999), Peluso and Watts (2001), and Okpara and Yunus (2025).

Sub-Section 2: Deconstructing Environmental Orientalism: Rehabilitating Local Agency

The concept of Environmental Orientalism refers to the analytical and media frameworks that present the Global South and Africa in particular as passive victims of environmental crises, incapable of initiative, adaptation and resistance. These frameworks implicitly construct an image of the African as a

¹ Maha Skah and Rida Lyammouri, The Climate Change–Security Nexus: Case Study of the Lake Chad Basin, Policy Paper 20/08 (Rabat: Policy Center for the New South, 2020), 18–24. [https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/RP%20-%2020-08%20\(skah%20&%20Lyammouri\).pdf](https://www.policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2021-01/RP%20-%2020-08%20(skah%20&%20Lyammouri).pdf)

recipient of external assistance and solutions, rather than acknowledging the traditional knowledge and local agency that developed effective systems of shared resource management over centuries.¹

Rob Nixon's thesis on Slow Violence offers a complementary critical angle: the violence visited upon Global South communities as a result of climate change is slow and cumulative, receiving none of the media and political attention accorded to immediate violence. This media absence transforms local victims into statistics in humanitarian reports rather than political actors demanding climate and social justice.²

In practice, Lake Chad Basin communities developed over generations integrated systems of adaptation: fishing techniques suited to shallow waters, alternative pastoral migration routes and diversification of livelihood sources. This local agency is precisely what is rendered invisible when international humanitarian and security discourse reduces the Basin to a crisis. A striking paradox is that the most influential reports and studies on the Basin are produced by research centres in industrial states which are themselves historically and currently responsible for the largest share of the climate emissions destroying the Basin, while the communities who bear the heaviest consequences contribute to global carbon emissions at a vanishingly small proportion.³

A methodological acknowledgment must be included regarding the source base of this study. The most authoritative and frequently cited analyses of the Lake Chad Basin including the reports of Adelphi Research, the

¹ Greg Bankoff, *Cultures of Disaster: Society and Natural Hazard in the Philippines* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1–20.

² Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1–44.

International Crisis Group, the World Bank and various United Nations agencies are produced predominantly by institutions based in and funded by Western states and donors. This concentration of analytical authority in externally funded institutions is not analytically neutral. It shapes which questions are asked which actors are rendered visible and which framings of the crisis acquire legitimacy. The very dependency this study critiques the reliance on foreign produced knowledge about the Basin is reproduced within its own bibliography, a limitation this researcher acknowledges openly. This recognition is itself part of the argument: the scarcity of sovereign locally produced strategic analysis of the Sahel is precisely the gap that the applied component of this study, the LCE Platform is designed to begin addressing.

Sub–Section 3: The Role of the International Political Economy (Hidden Interests in the Crisis)

Understanding the persistence of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin is difficult without a critical reading of the roles of international actors. The oil discovered in north eastern Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad Basin inserts the region into the map of international strategic interests, making stability desirable enough to guarantee resource extraction but not requiring genuine structural reform that might threaten existing interest networks.¹

On the French dimension, the traditional *Françafrique* policy reveals a priority interest in the stability of allied regimes over genuine governance reform. French military presence through Operation Barkhane and then the withdrawal provided security support to local regimes without generating pressure to address the structural causes of fragility. The withdrawal that followed the military coups

¹ Ahmadou Aly Mbaye and Landry Signé, *Climate Change, Development, and the Conflict–Fragility Nexus in the Sahel* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2022). <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/climate-change-development-and-the-conflict-fragility-nexus-in-the-sahel/>

in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger redraws the map of international presence in the region without resolving its root challenges.¹

On the dimension of international humanitarian aid, research reveals a structural paradox: emergency humanitarian assistance sometimes contributes to sustaining informal economies and indirectly nourishes the networks of armed actors who control its distribution channels. This makes the humanitarian response part of the war economy rather than a solution to it. Most significant in this context is that the Basin's communities contribute to global carbon emissions at a fraction of a per cent while bearing alone the heaviest cost of its consequences.²

Section III: Foresight for the Lake Chad Basin : A Dual Methodological Approach

In the field of strategic studies and geopolitics, academic analysis is incomplete without systematic foresight that moves beyond impressionistic speculation toward constructing composite scenarios based on structural variable analysis and rigorous assessment of uncertainties. For this purpose, this study employs a dual methodological approach combining two complementary tools: a simplified structural analysis inspired by the MICMAC method as a first stage to identify key variables scientifically, then construction of a 2x2 scenario matrix as a second stage to derive probable future trajectories.³

¹ Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 252–267. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400835515>

² ICG, JAS vs. ISWAP, Africa Briefing no. 196, 11–15.

³ Michel Godet, *Manuel de prospective stratégique*, Tome 2: L'Art et la méthode, 3rd ed. (Paris: Dunod, 2007), 112–138.

Sub-Section 1: Simplified Structural Analysis — Identifying the Key Variables

I. The MICMAC–Inspired Methodology

Michel Godet and colleagues at the French school of strategic foresight developed a structural analysis tool known as MICMAC (Matrice des Impacts Croisés Multiplication Appliquée à un Classement), designed to reveal the hidden variables most influential in a given system by measuring mutual influences among its variables in ways that go beyond apparent direct influences toward indirect and ramified effects. This study employs a simplified version of this method consistent with its qualitative analytical nature, resting on three steps: identifying the eight main variables drawn from the analysis of the three chapters, constructing the Matrix of Direct Influence (MID) to assess each variable's influence on the others on a scale from 0 to 3 and deriving the key variables by classifying them according to their influence and dependence scores.¹

Table 4: The Eight Principal Variables in the Lake Chad Basin System

Code	Variable	Operational Definition	Source Chapter
V1	Climate change intensity	Level of drought and lake resource decline with rainfall extremes	Chapter One
V2	Governance quality	State capacity to deliver services and exercise functional authority	Chapters Two and Three
V3	Demographic pressure	Population growth rate and escalating resource demand	Chapter One

¹ Michel Godet and Philippe Durance, *La prospective stratégique: pour les entreprises et les territoires* (Paris: Dunod/UNESCO, 2011), 55–78.

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V4	State functional capacity	Effectiveness of security and administrative apparatus in Basin areas	Chapters Two
V5	Armed groups activity	Scale of ISWAP and other groups' spread and level of field control	Chapter Two
V6	Regional cooperation	Effectiveness of LCBC and the shared regional security architecture	Chapters Two and Three
V7	International development funding	Volume of international financial and technical support for adaptation and development	Chapter Three
V8	Livelihood fragility	Level of population dependence on natural resources and its degree of vulnerability	Chapters One and Two

Source: Author's compilation based on the theoretical and field analysis of the study's chapters.

Table 5: Matrix of Direct Influence (MID) — Lake Chad Basin

Variable	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	Influence
V1 Climate change	—	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	11
V2 Governance	0	—	1	3	3	2	1	2	12
V3 Demographics	1	1	—	2	2	0	0	3	9
V4 State capacity	0	2	1	—	3	2	2	2	12
V5 Armed groups	0	2	0	2	—	1	0	2	7

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V6 Regional cooperation	1	2	0	2	2	—	2	1	10
V7 International funding	0	2	0	2	1	2	—	2	9
V8 Livelihood fragility	1	1	2	1	3	0	0	—	8
Dependence	3	11	6	13	16	8	6	15	

Source: Author's compilation based on the structural method inspired by MICMAC (Godet and Durance, 2011).

Table 6: Classification of Variables by Influence and Dependence

Variable	Influence	Dependence	Analytical Position	Interpretation
V1 Climate change	11	3	Primary driver (Moteur)	High influence with low dependence independent axis
V2 Governance	12	11	Pivotal relay variable (Relais)	High influence and dependence system's core
V3 Demographics	9	6	Secondary driver	Moderate influence with low dependence
V4 State capacity	12	13	Pivotal relay variable (Relais)	High influence and dependence combined
V5 Armed groups	7	16	Outcome variable (Résultante)	Low influence with very high dependence resultant

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V6 Regional cooperation	10	8	Secondary relay variable	Moderate influence and dependence
V7 International funding	9	6	Support variable	Moderate influence with low dependence
V8 Livelihood fragility	8	15	Outcome variable (Résultante)	High dependence, influenced without influencing greatly

Source: Author's compilation, reading of Matrix of Direct Influence (MID) results.

The structural analysis results reveal that the two variables with the highest influence and the lowest dependence those most capable of shaping the system's trajectory are V1 (climate change intensity) and V2 (governance quality). These are also the most uncertain variables in the horizon of 2035, as the trajectory of neither can be predicted with certainty. This scientifically grounded methodological choice supports the study's Fourth Hypothesis: climate change alone is insufficient and governance alone is insufficient it is their interaction that determines the Basin's trajectory.¹

Sub–Section 2: The 2x2 Scenario Matrix (Horizon 2035)

Drawing on the structural analysis results, the scenario matrix is built on the two strategic axes V1 and V2 generating four scenarios that cover the space of probable futures for the Lake Chad Basin in the horizon of 2035. This construction draws inspiration from the approach employed by major strategic institutions such as RAND, Adelphi and ICG in their futures analyses for fragile regions.²

² Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 3–30.

Figure (1): 2x2 Scenario Matrix – Lake Chad Basin 2035–

	Weak Governance	Strong Governance
Severe Climate Change	Scenario 1 'Accelerated Collapse'	Scenario 2 'Forced Adaptation'
Moderate Climate Change	Scenario 3 'Fragile Stability'	Scenario 4 'Integrative Transformation'

Source: Author's compilation based on simplified structural analysis (MID) and scenario construction methodology (Schwartz, 1991; Godet, 2007).

Scenario 1: Accelerated Collapse (Severe Climate Change with Weak Governance): This scenario embodies the condition in which climatic extremes in the Sahel intensify at a pace exceeding the median expectations of IPCC models, while the governance system in the four states remains incapable of structural reform. The result is an environment in which pressures combine that existing fragile institutions cannot absorb: additional lake surface area losses, sharp agricultural production declines, collective displacement exceeding regional absorption capacity and a marked expansion of armed group activity exploiting the widening governance vacuum.

Table 7: Key Indicators for Scenario 1 “Accelerated Collapse”

Indicator	Current Status	2035 Projection
Lake surface area	~10,847 km ²	Below 8,000 km ² with sharp oscillation
Food insecurity	4.9M (IPC Phase 3+)	Over 8M risk of famine
Internal displacement	3.2M	5–6M exceeding absorption capacity
ISWAP territorial scope	Islands and peripheries	Expansion into marginal urban areas

Functional governance	Fragile, negative WGI	Further collapse in peripheries
Estimated probability	—	High most probable absent intervention

Source: Author's compilation based on Nagarajan et al. (2018) and OCHA (2025).

Scenario 2: Forced Adaptation (Severe Climate Change with Improved Governance): This scenario assumes tangible improvement in governance quality in some of the four states but in the face of more severe climate change than the optimistic scenarios anticipate. The result is what may be termed forced adaptation: more capable states but operating under immense environmental pressure, managing to limit the worst outcomes while unable to achieve comprehensive stability. This scenario features more systematic international engagement in climate adaptation programmes and relative improvement in displaced persons' protection services under the Kampala Convention.¹

Scenario 3: Fragile Stability (Moderate Climate Change with Weak Governance): This scenario unfolds within a framework of relative environmental pressure stabilisation but with the governance system remaining incapable of structural reform. The result is what analysts have termed a frozen conflict: a ceasefire rather than genuine peace, security containment rather than real development. Armed groups remain active though diminished in activity, governance vacuums persist without structural treatment and humanitarian crises multiply without reaching the point of complete collapse. What makes this scenario dangerous despite its apparent stability is that it entrenches structural fragility and normalises it rather than addressing it.

Scenario 4: Integrative Transformation (Moderate Climate Change with Improved Governance): This scenario represents the most positive and most

¹ Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 70–80.

difficult to achieve trajectory, requiring a rare convergence of wills: genuine governance reform in all four states; real activation of LCBC with binding mandates for shared resource management, sustained international funding for local climate adaptation programmes and engagement of local communities in development planning. In this scenario, armed groups gradually retreat as the functional vacuum they fill is progressively reduced. This scenario is neither inevitable nor impossible it is achievable given sufficient political will and adequate international funding. It is the scenario toward which policy recommendations should be oriented.¹

Table 8: Comprehensive Comparison of the Four Scenarios (Horizon 2035)

Criterion	Scenario 1 Collapse	Scenario 2 Forced Adaptation	Scenario 3 Fragile Stability	Scenario 4 Integration
Governance	Weak/collapsing	Improving noticeably	Weak/static	Radically improving
Climate	Severe	Severe	Moderate	Moderate
Displacement 2035	+ 5 to 6M	3.5 to 4.5M	3 to 4M	Below 2M
ISWAP	Expanding	Partially contracting	Frozen in the field	Structurally declining
Food security	Extremely acute crisis	Managed crisis	Chronic crisis	Gradual improvement
Probability	Very high	Moderate	Moderate to high	Low to moderate

Key condition	Absence of any intervention	Strong international will	Security containment without reform	Genuine governance reform
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Source: Author's compilation based on Vivekananda et al. (2019), UNDP (2018), and ISS Africa (2024).

The foresight methodology developed in this section is not a purely theoretical exercise. The eight structural variables identified through the structural analysis and the scenario logic derived from them form the analytical backbone of **the LCE Platform** presented in the Annex of this study. The platform operationalises these variables as monitorable indicators, allowing the trajectory of the Basin to be tracked in real time against the four scenarios elaborated here. In this sense, the scenario matrix is both an analytical conclusion and a design specification for the applied tool.

Sub–Section 3: Policy Recommendations: Grounded in the Scenarios

The policy recommendations of this study are not presented as a wishlist of ideal aspirations, but as necessary conditions for shifting the Basin's trajectory from the red and yellow scenarios toward the orange and green ones. The recommendations are distributed across four integrated levels whose effectiveness requires simultaneity, not sequentiality. The study presents its recommendations within a multi–level framework that rejects any single axis approach, proceeding from a foundational principle: a complex structural crisis cannot be resolved by a single variable. The four levels of intervention (local, national, regional and international) are not mutually exclusive options but an integrated system whose success depends on simultaneity rather than sequencing.¹

¹ Vivekananda et al., *Shoring Up Stability*, 70–80.

At the local level: the necessity of rehabilitating traditional institutions for resource and dispute management stands out not as an archaic tribal heritage but as local social capital bearing historical legitimacy and applicational capacity that government institutions lack. This requires supporting customary arbitration systems among fishermen, pastoralists and farming groups building livelihood diversification programmes that reduce exclusive dependence on water resources and empowering local communities to participate in designing climate adaptation plans.¹

At the national level: addressing the historical marginalisation of the lake basin constitutes the primary policy priority. Investment in the infrastructure of peripheral areas is not expenditure on luxury but a precondition for restoring the state's functional legitimacy. This is supplemented by security sector reform to guarantee human rights in security operations accountability for government officials implicated in fuelling resource conflicts and the formulation of agricultural and pastoral policies that respect the seasonal trans-boundary character of livelihoods.²

At the regional level: effective cooperation requires restructuring the LCBC along three axes: granting it binding rather than advisory water governance mandates establishing clear water use quotas from each state of shared water resources under its 2023–2037 Strategic Action Programme and progressively separating its original developmental/environmental mandate from the subsequently added security mandate that has weakened the former.³

² UNDP, Conflict Analysis: Lake Chad Basin, 30–38.

³ LCBC, Strategic Action Programme 2023–2037, 24–36.

At the international level: the transition from the emergency humanitarian response model to the long-term strategic development partnership model is necessary. What is required is genuine international funding for local climate adaptation programmes, read within the framework of climate justice rather than humanitarian charity given that Basin communities bear the consequences of emissions they have not contributed to. Ethical transparency also demands acknowledgment of the contradiction between the discourse of support for stability and the policies of supporting fragile regimes at the expense of governance reform.¹

Table 9: Multi-Level Policy Recommendations – Grounded in the Scenarios–

Level	Core Recommendation	Scenario Purpose	Expected Effect
Local	Revive customary arbitration and diversify livelihoods	Reduces the fuel feeding Scenario 1	Decline of inter-professional group conflicts
National	Real investment in Basin peripheries with security reform	Shifts governance from weak V2 to stronger V2	Enhanced state functional legitimacy
Regional	LCBC with binding authority over shared water management	Maximises the effect of V6 toward Scenario 4	Actual shared Basin management
International	Fund climate adaptation under climate justice framework	Mitigates V1 or compensates for its effects	Shifts Scenario 2 toward Scenario 4

Source: Author's compilation based on the study's analytical framework and scenario methodology.

¹ Mbaye and Signé, Climate Change, Development, and the Conflict-Fragility Nexus, 12–18.

From Legal Obligation to Justiciable Claim: The Kampala Convention as a Litigation Tool

The analysis of the international legal framework would remain incomplete if it treated these instruments solely as declarative obligations without practical force. The Kampala Convention in particular, possesses a latent dimension that has been insufficiently explored in the context of the Lake Chad Basin: its potential to transform a moral and political obligation into a justiciable legal claim.

Unlike many international instruments that depend entirely on state self reporting the Kampala Convention establishes binding obligations whose breach can in principle, ground legal action before national courts and regional bodies such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice. The Convention obliges states to prevent arbitrary displacement, to protect and assist the displaced and to provide durable solutions. Where a riparian state demonstrably fails these obligations as the persistent figures of over three million displaced persons suggest affected communities and the civil society organisations representing them acquire a potential standing to litigate.

The precedent of the African Commission's decision in *SERAC v. Nigeria* demonstrates that African human rights bodies are willing to hold states accountable for failures of environmental and socio economic protection. This study therefore advances the argument that the Kampala Convention should be understood not merely as a protective framework but as a potential instrument of legal accountability a means by which the displaced populations of the Basin may move from being passive objects of humanitarian concern to active claimants of enforceable rights. This reframing carries significant implications for the agency of local communities a theme central to the critical analysis of this study.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter and with it the study as a whole arrives at a foundational analytical conclusion: what is unfolding in the Lake Chad Basin is neither a transient environmental conflict nor a wave of ideological terrorism nor a temporary humanitarian crisis but a comprehensive restructuring of the system of power, legitimacy and sovereignty in a cross-border space at the intersection of structurally accumulated forces since colonialism escalating environmental pressures and prolonged institutional failure.

The study has contributed to the development of the concept of Drought Economies as an analytical framework revealing how environmental scarcity in contexts of fragility is transformed into a mechanism for redistributing power and producing legitimacy. The resources that have diminished did not create a passive vacuum, they created an active arena of competition over which parallel patterns of sovereignty (statist, jihadist, customary and militia-based) contest with one another.

On the methodological level, the study has demonstrated that any single variable explanation whether environmental, security based or economic fails to capture the complexity of the phenomenon and produces inadequate policy responses. Genuine solutions to the crisis require a simultaneous and integrated treatment of historical, institutional, environmental and political structures within a framework that recognises local agency and grants it a central role in charting the course of recovery. What remains present at the close of this study is the acknowledgement that the real crisis in the Lake Chad Basin runs deeper than a shrinking lake more dangerous than an expanding armed organisation and more complex than any single approach can perceive or address.¹

¹ Peluso and Watts, *Violent Environments*, 25–38.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Synthesis of Principal Findings

This study set out to interrogate the mechanisms through which the accelerating retreat of Lake Chad driven by climate change has reshaped the arenas of competition over resources, power and legitimacy among the multiple actors of the Lake Chad Basin. The analysis conducted across four chapters yields a set of findings whose cumulative weight sustains a clear and theoretically grounded thesis: what is unfolding in the Basin is not a simple environmental crisis, nor a straightforward security problem amenable to military solution, nor a humanitarian emergency awaiting a donor response. It is a structural reconfiguration of political order within a cross-border space where the combined force of environmental deterioration, institutional fragility, historical marginalisation and purposeful political agency has generated entirely new patterns of sovereignty, governance and contestation.

The findings may be organised around four principal axes that correspond to the four research sub-questions and the four hypotheses advanced at the outset.

First Finding: The Transformation of Environmental Scarcity into a Mechanism of Power Redistribution

The first and most foundational finding of this study is that environmental scarcity in the Lake Chad Basin has not produced conflict through a linear or inevitable causal chain but rather through the collapse of institutional mediation. The traditional system of resource governance built on professional specialisation, flexible customary rules and respected arbitration mechanisms functioned effectively for generations as a buffer between environmental stress and social conflict. What changed after 2009 was not primarily the severity of environmental scarcity which had been worse in the 1980s but rather the capacity of mediating institutions to absorb it. The

collapse of customary arbitration, compounded by the entry of governing elites as direct parties in the resource equation and the proliferation of light weaponry, transformed ordinary resource friction into existential inter group conflict. This finding offers a methodologically significant corrective to reductionist accounts: the Lake Chad Basin crisis is a political crisis that expresses itself through environmental registers not an environmental crisis that inevitably produces political consequences.

Second Finding: ISWAP as a Functional Alternative Governance System

The second major finding concerns the nature of ISWAP and its relationship to the governance vacuum. This study demonstrates that ISWAP cannot be adequately understood through the analytical lens of the terrorist organisation or the violent non-state actor categories that describe its form without explaining its persistence. ISWAP has constructed a quasi-state apparatus that performs, in territories where the formal state has functionally withdrawn the essential governance functions of taxation, adjudication, market regulation and physical protection. The International Crisis Group's own fieldwork confirms that this governance is often preferred by local populations not because of ideological conviction but because of its operational reliability relative to state absence. This finding advances the concept of Functional Legitimacy as analytically distinct from legal legitimacy: an actor can accumulate practical authority and popular acquiescence without possessing constitutional mandate when the constitutional mandate holder has abandoned its responsibilities. The implication for counter terrorism policy is far reaching: ISWAP cannot be defeated militarily while the governance vacuum it fills remains unaddressed.

Third Finding: The International Legal Framework as an Additional Dimension of the Legitimacy Crisis

The third finding, which constitutes a distinctive contribution arising from the author's dual academic training in law and political science, is that the Lake

Chad Basin crisis has a neglected international legal dimension that deepens rather than merely describes the legitimacy crisis of riparian states. The four riparian states have formally committed through ratification of the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention, Article 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Kampala Convention (2009) and the Geneva Conventions to legal obligations covering equitable water sharing, environmental rights, protection of internally displaced persons and civilian protection in armed conflict. Their systematic failure to honour these commitments in practice creates what this study terms a dual legal legitimacy crisis: a crisis of functional legitimacy before their own populations and an accumulation of international legal responsibility without effective accountability. This legal dimension strengthens the analytical case for understanding the crisis not as a natural disaster but as a compound governance failure with assignable responsibilities.

Fourth Finding: The Primacy of Institutional Variables over Environmental Variables

The fourth finding directly tests and empirically validates the study's Fourth Hypothesis: that climate change functions as a catalyst and accelerating factor in conflict dynamics rather than as a direct cause. The MICMAC inspired structural analysis conducted in Chapter Three demonstrates that governance quality (V2) and state functional capacity (V4) carry higher combined influence scores than climate change intensity (V1) in the Basin's system of variables. More tellingly, the empirical evidence documents that the most severe phase of the lake's retreat (1983–1994) predated the most intense period of organised armed conflict (2009 to the present) by two full decades. The partial hydrological recovery of the lake between 2010 and 2022 coincided with rather than preceded the sharpest escalation in ISWAP's territorial expansion. These data points confirm that the deterministic climate–conflict causal chain, advocated in the influential but oversimplifying neo

Malthusian tradition fails the empirical test in the Lake Chad Basin. Institutional variables are the decisive mediating factors.

Verification of the Research Hypothesis

The four hypotheses advanced in the introduction may now be assessed against the evidence assembled across the three analytical chapters.

The first sub hypothesis proposed that intensifying water scarcity transforms competition among livelihood groups from customary resource sharing into violent existential conflict through the collapse of traditional arbitration mechanisms. **This hypothesis is confirmed.** The evidence presented in Chapter Two, particularly the Logone Birni episode of December 2021 which displaced over one hundred thousand people together with the ACLED data documenting the rise of resource related violence between 2010 and 2022 demonstrates that the breakdown of customary arbitration rather than scarcity alone is the decisive driver of escalation.

The second sub hypothesis held that ISWAP derives its legitimacy and influence primarily from filling the functional vacuum left by the state rather than from violence or ideology alone. **This hypothesis is confirmed.** The field research of the International Crisis Group establishes that ISWAP's regularised taxation system is broadly accepted by local populations who compare its governance favourably to that of the formal state. This finding supports the analytical concept of functional legitimacy developed in this study.

The third sub hypothesis proposed that the interaction of environmental degradation, historical marginalisation and governance failure produces competing patterns of sovereignty statist, jihadist, customary and militia based in parallel and contested coexistence. This hypothesis is confirmed throughout Chapter Two and Chapter Three where the analysis of the governance vacuum, the Civilian Joint Task Force, and the institutional weakness of the LCBC together reveal a fragmented and contested sovereignty landscape.

The fourth sub hypothesis maintained that climate change is not a direct cause of conflict but a catalysing factor interacting with existing political, economic and social structures. This hypothesis is confirmed and constitutes the study's principal analytical contribution. The empirical paradox is decisive: the most severe phase of the lake's retreat between 1983 and 1994 preceded the most intense period of armed conflict from 2009 onward by two decades while the partial recovery of the lake between 2010 and 2022 coincided with escalating violence. Climate change, therefore operates as a fragility multiplier rather than a direct cause a conclusion consistent with the findings of Okpara and Yunus (2025).

Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

Beyond its empirical findings, this study makes three contributions to the theoretical and methodological literature in International Relations and African Geopolitics.

The Concept of Drought Economies

The concept of Drought Economies, developed in this study as an analytical framework extends the existing literature on environmental scarcity and conflict by focusing not on the objective measurement of resource decline but on the political economy of scarcity: how scarce resources are transformed into instruments of power, how their control generates legitimacy and how their distribution becomes a site of political contestation. This framework bridges the environmental security literature, the political economy of resource conflict and the theory of governance vacuums in fragile states offering an integrative lens that none of these literatures provides individually. It is proposed as a transferable concept applicable to other resource scarce institutionally fragile and conflict affected environments beyond the Lake Chad Basin.

The Dual Methodological Approach “MICMAC and Scenario Matrix”

By combining a simplified structural analysis inspired by the MICMAC method with a 2x2 scenario matrix, this study demonstrates the applicability of strategic foresight methodologies to qualitative doctoral and master's level research in political science and geopolitics. The methodological innovation lies in using the structural analysis not as a black box software output but as a theoretically transparent procedure that justifies the selection of scenario axes through publicly auditable criteria. The resulting four scenarios (Accelerated Collapse, Forced Adaptation, Fragile Stability and Integrative Transformation) offer a rigorous framework for evaluating policy interventions against their structural preconditions rather than their stated intentions.

The Legal Dimension as an Analytical Layer

The systematic integration of international legal analysis (encompassing watercourse law, environmental human rights, forced displacement law and international humanitarian law) into a geopolitical study of resource conflict and governance fragility represents a methodological bridge rarely crossed in the existing African security literature. This integration demonstrates that the legitimacy deficit of riparian states in the Lake Chad Basin is not merely a political or developmental failure but a legally constituted failure with attributable responsibilities under binding international instruments. This framing opens pathways for legal advocacy, international accountability mechanisms and rights based policy design that security centred analyses overlook.

Finally, the applied contribution of this study deserves emphasis. **The LCE Platform**, presented in the Annex embodies the practical translation of the entire analytical framework. It demonstrates that the concept of Drought Economies and the structural analysis of competing sovereignties are not only explanatory devices but can be operationalised into a sovereign monitoring instrument serving national and regional decision making.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study carry direct implications for policy at four levels, each addressing a specific dimension of the crisis and its structural drivers.

At the local level, the evidence for the effectiveness of customary arbitration institutions in managing resource competition and for their erosion under conditions of heightened scarcity and weapons proliferation, argues strongly for institutional investment in traditional governance mechanisms as a complement to formal state institutions. Community level livelihood diversification programmes that reduce dependence on a single diminishing resource base are equally urgent not as welfare measures but as structural preconditions for reducing conflict intensity.

At the national level, the study's evidence on historical marginalisation as a constitutive driver of governance failure and legitimacy deficit argues for a reorientation of national development priorities toward the Basin's peripheral territories. The delivery of public infrastructure, healthcare, education and security in these territories is not optional expenditure but the minimum threshold for rebuilding the state society compact that the last decades of neglect have eroded. Security sector reform to guarantee human rights compliance in counter insurgency operations is equally essential: documented state abuses are measurably contributing to ISWAP's recruitment success.

At the regional level, the Lake Chad Basin Commission requires a fundamental institutional redesign that restores its developmental environmental mandate while granting it binding rather than merely advisory authority over shared water resources. The progressive securitisation of the Commission “driven by legitimate short-term security imperatives “ has come at the cost of its foundational mandate and must be reversed. Niger's 2025 withdrawal from the MNJTF is a warning signal for the fragility of the entire regional architecture.

At the international level, the most important policy implication is the imperative of a climate justice framework for development finance in the Basin. Communities contributing a fraction of one per cent to global carbon emissions are bearing the greatest burden of climate induced resource stress. Development finance should be framed as restorative obligation rather than charitable assistance, unlocking larger, more sustained funding flows than conventional humanitarian budgets permit.

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations that constrain the scope and certainty of its conclusions.

First, the qualitative nature of the methodology places inherent limits on the precision of causal attribution. While the empirical evidence strongly challenges simplified climate determinism and supports the primacy of institutional variables, the study does not provide the statistical power to quantify the relative weight of individual causal factors. This is an inherent limitation of qualitative geopolitical analysis that can only be partially addressed by methodological pluralism.

Second, the study's analysis of ISWAP's internal governance structures relies necessarily on secondary sources principally field reports from the International Crisis Group and ISS Africa given the practical impossibility of direct fieldwork in ISWAP controlled territories. The picture of ISWAP's governance that emerges is therefore filtered through the methodological choices and institutional perspectives of these sources.

Third, the financial projections contained in the LCE Platform project component are indicative estimates based on available data at the time of writing. Real operational costs, market uptake rates and revenue trajectories will necessarily diverge from these projections as the project progresses through implementation.

Fourth, the four country scope of the study, while allowing for a comprehensive regional analysis, inevitably involves trade offs between depth at the national level and breadth at the regional level. Some country specific dynamics particularly those relating to Chad's evolving political transition and Niger's post-coup institutional reshaping would merit deeper treatment than was possible within the bounds of this study.

Perspectives for Future Research

The findings of this study open several productive avenues for future academic inquiry that could extend and deepen its contributions.

The concept of Drought Economies developed here would benefit from systematic comparative testing in other resource scarce, conflict affected environments the Nile Basin, the Niger River Basin, the Lake Turkana region and the Darfur Sahel interface all present potentially useful comparative cases. Such comparative work would allow the concept's claims to be tested against the specificity of different historical, institutional and ecological configurations.

The role of women and gender dynamics in the Basin's resource competition and conflict ecology deserves dedicated scholarly attention. Existing literature on the Lake Chad Basin is largely silent on the gendered dimensions of displacement, resource competition and community resilience dimensions that are analytically important for understanding both conflict escalation and adaptation capacity.

The political economy of cross-border smuggling networks in the Basin their relationship to ISWAP's financing, their intersection with formal trade and their role in the Basin's informal economic ecology represents a relatively underexplored dimension that would benefit from dedicated field based research.

Finally, a longitudinal study of the LCE Platform's institutional uptake and policy impact, once operational would provide valuable evidence on the relationship between data driven monitoring tools and policy behaviour in fragile institutional contexts, a question of growing relevance across the broader climate–security field.

Closing Remarks:

The Lake Chad Basin defies easy categorisation. It is at once a site of civilisational heritage and contemporary humanitarian catastrophe of environmental fragility and remarkable human adaptability of state failure and alternative governance innovation. Understanding it demands analytical frameworks that honour this complexity rather than reducing it to a single explanatory logic whether that logic is climatic, security based or economic. It demands, above all, an honest accounting of the political choices, institutional failures and structural inequities that have transformed a shrinking lake into an arena of existential competition.

This study has sought to provide such an accounting. The concept of Drought Economies captures the core dynamic: in contexts where institutions are too weak to absorb environmental stress scarcity does not merely create hardship, it creates opportunity for those willing to exploit the governance vacuum it opens. Understanding this mechanism is not only an intellectual exercise, it is a precondition for the policy responses that the people of the Lake Chad Basin urgently and rightfully deserve.

End of Thesis

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LIST OF ANNEXES :

This section contains the supporting documents of the study. It includes four annexes: first, the ministerial project template of the LCE Platform second, an official letter from the African Union Counter–Terrorism Centre (AUCTC) confirming that the researcher studied the legal dimension of the crisis and completed an internship on the armed groups active in the region third, the interview guide designed for the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

And fourth, a file containing an article based on AUCTC data concerning ISWAP and the LCBC.

These documents support and complete the analysis presented in the body of the thesis.



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
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Entrepreneurship Development Centre of ENSSP



Faculty / Institute: ENSSP
Department: International Relations
Level and Specialisation: Master 2-African
and Sahel Geopolitics

**GRADUATION THESIS FOR THE AWARD OF THE UNIVERSITY
DEGREE — ECONOMIC INSTITUTION PROJECT**

Project Title:

LCE Platform — Sahel Intelligence Monitor:

A Sovereign Digital Platform for Strategic Monitoring of the Sahel–Saharan Region and
the Lake Chad Basin

In Service of Algerian National Interest and Decision–Making

*Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the University
Degree (Small Economic Institution Project)*

Under Ministerial Decision No. 1275, as amended and supplemented by
Ministerial Decision No. 008 dated 23 February 2025

LCE Platform

LCEPM

Academic Year: 2025 / 2026

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Section I: Team and Supervision

1- Project Team

Project Team	Specialisation	Faculty / Institute	Expertise / Competence in the Project Domain
Student:	Master 2 International Relations — African Geopolitics Specialisation	ENSSP	Sahel geopolitics, climate–security nexus field experience through internship at the Ministry of Environment LCE Platform concept originator

2- Supervision Team

Supervisor	Specialisation	Faculty
Principal Supervisor:	P.MOUSTAPHA KHOUAS	The Higher National School of Political Sciences
Assistant Supervisor:	/	/

Section II: Project Definition

The activity is defined in accordance with the codes establishing the list of activities for each registration body (National Commercial Registry Centre CNRC, Agriculture, Traditional Industry and Crafts).

Activity Identification	Activity Sector	Activity Code (CNRC code)
Development, hosting and commercialisation of a sovereign digital intelligence	Information Technology , Strategic	6201 — Computer programming and consultancy 7020 —

platform for strategic monitoring of the Sahel Saharan region providing geospatial data analysis, security threat assessment, migration flow mapping and decision/support intelligence to governmental and institutional clients at national and international level	Intelligence and Geospatial Analytics , Research and Consulting Services	Management consultancy 7490 , Other specialised professional activities (intelligence research)
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- ❖ *Note: In the event that the platform provides services to foreign governmental entities or international organisations, applicable provisions of Algerian foreign exchange legislation and inter-governmental data-sharing agreements shall apply. No specific licence or accreditation is required beyond standard CNRC commercial registration for the domestic operation of the platform.*

Section III: Description of the Project Idea

What are my products or services:

The LCE Platform — Sahel Intelligence Monitor provides four integrated service lines:

1. Strategic Monitoring Dashboard (SaaS): A continuously updated web-based intelligence dashboard integrating six thematic data layers specific to the Sahel-Saharan region: (a) climate and environmental indicators (drought severity, water resources, NDVI vegetation cover), (b) security and threat indicators (armed group activity, terrorist incident mapping, weapon flows), (c) migration and displacement flows (irregular migration corridors toward Algeria, internally displaced persons, transit routes and crossing points on Algeria's southern border), (d) governance and state fragility indicators (WGI scores, ungoverned spaces, parallel authority zones), (e) economic and livelihood

indicators (food insecurity, commodity prices, pastoral economy stress), and (f) geopolitical dynamics (interstate tensions, regional institutional posture, foreign military presence).

2. Periodic Strategic Intelligence Reports: Quarterly and annual reports synthesising platform data into actionable intelligence briefings tailored to the decision-making needs of Algerian ministerial clients and regional institutions.

3. Field Data Collection Service: Deployment of trained field researchers and survey teams in partnership with Algerian universities and embassy networks to gather primary data surveys, interviews and field observations in areas where open source data is incomplete or unreliable. This component directly addresses Algeria's current dependency on foreign produced analysis of its own strategic neighbourhood.

4. International Data Subscription: Commercial sale of anonymised and aggregated Sahel intelligence data packages to foreign governments, international organisations (UN agencies, EU, African Union) and research institutions. Algeria becomes a producer and exporter of strategic intelligence rather than a buyer of foreign analysis of its own neighbourhood.

Who will buy my products / services:

Primary segment: Algerian governmental institutions: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department for Africa and the Sahel), Ministry of National Defence (Strategic Analysis Directorate), Ministry of Interior (Directorate General for National Security, border intelligence), Ministry of Environment (climate risk monitoring origin of the internship that inspired this project), Ministry of Energy and Mines (Saharan and trans-border resource mapping). These institutions currently purchase or commission strategic analyses of the Sahel from foreign research centres at significant cost a dependency this platform is designed to end.

Secondary segment : Regional and international institutions: The Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the African Union's Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT, Algiers), the G5 Sahel Secretariat, UNDP

and OCHA regional bureau, and Algerian diplomatic missions in Sahel states requiring regular geopolitical briefings.

Tertiary segment : International data market: Foreign governments and international organisations seeking Sahel intelligence (European Union institutions, Gulf Cooperation Council states with interests in African stability, US AFRICOM-linked research institutions, and multilateral development banks financing Sahel programming). This segment constitutes the platform's international revenue stream and positions Algeria as a sovereign intelligence hub for the Sahelo-Saharan region.

Where will my project be established and how will my products / services reach customers:

The platform management, data processing and field coordination office will be located in Algiers, Algeria. This location is justified on five strategic grounds: first, Algiers is the headquarters of the African Union's Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT/AUCTC), a natural partner providing access to primary security data, second proximity to the Algerian Ministry of Environment, which informed the project's inception through a field internship and represents the platform's first institutional client, third is Algiers' geographic position as the northernmost gateway to the Sahel places it at the natural convergence of migration corridors, trade routes and security dynamics that the platform monitors, fourth the access to Algeria's network of diplomatic missions across the Sahel region facilitates cost effective field data collection and fifth, the strong Algerian university research ecosystem provides a pool of qualified and cost effective field researchers and data analysts. Customer access is delivered digitally via a secure subscription portal for domestic clients and a commercially licensed international API for foreign subscribers.

How will my project operate: The platform will be managed by a core team of four: a Project Director and Chief Intelligence Analyst (geopolitics specialist, platform founder), a Lead Developer responsible for platform architecture, data visualisation and API management, a Field Research Coordinator managing

partnerships with Algerian universities and embassy networks for primary data collection, and a Commercial and Institutional Relations Officer responsible for client acquisition and subscription management. Field data collection will be conducted through agreements with Algerian universities (geography, political science and international relations departments); whose final year students conduct supervised field surveys in the Sahel as part of their academic requirements providing high quality primary data at minimal additional cost to the platform. This model transforms academic research into commercially valuable intelligence, aligning national educational investment with national strategic needs.

Justifications for the choice of my project idea :

Three strategic observations, drawn directly from field experience at the Algerian Ministry of Environment, justify this project with particular force. First, Algeria currently purchases strategic analysis of its own neighbourhood from foreign entities research centres, consultancies and intelligence providers at significant financial and sovereignty cost. The Sahel is Algeria's immediate strategic environment: seven of Algeria's neighbours are Sahelian states, Algeria's southern borders are directly exposed to irregular migration, terrorist infiltration and cross border resource competition, and yet the primary producers of intelligence on these phenomena are overwhelmingly non-Algerian. The LCE Platform terminates this dependency by building a domestic sovereign intelligence capacity and converting Algeria from a buyer to a seller of Sahel strategic data.

Second, the migration corridors leading from the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin toward Algeria's southern borders are among the least monitored and most consequential security dynamics for Algerian national security. The platform's dedicated migration corridor mapping layer tracking irregular movement patterns, transit points, human trafficking networks and seasonal crossing dynamics fills a critical intelligence gap with direct operational value for the Ministry of Interior and the border security apparatus.

Third, this project contributes directly to the Ministry of Higher Education's entrepreneurship objective of generating economically productive innovation from academic research. The platform translates a rigorous Master's thesis into a commercially viable digital product that generates revenue, creates skilled employment and exports Algerian intellectual value internationally a model that the Ministry of Entrepreneurship Development explicitly seeks to encourage through this project framework.

Section IV: Market Study

1. Nature and Intensity of Competition:

Competitors	Nature of Competition		Intensity of Competition		
	Direct	Indirect	Strong	Moderate	Weak
ACLED (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project — international)		✓		✓	
International Crisis Group (ICG) — foreign research centre		✓		✓	

Adelphi Research (Germany) climate– security analysis		✓		✓	
ACLED / Sahel Data platforms	✓			✓	
No domestic Algerian equivalent platform exists	—	—	—	—	Nil

Competitive Strategy: The LCE Platform occupies a structurally uncontested domestic market segment **no equivalent sovereign Algerian intelligence platform for the Sahel currently exists**. All existing competitors are foreign based and sell their analysis to Algerian institutions from outside. The platform's competitive advantage rests on four pillars: sovereign Algerian data ownership, geographic proximity to the monitored region, lower operational costs through university field partnerships and a business model that generates revenue internationally rather than spending it abroad.

3- Target and Potential Market Size:

Target Market (Domestic Algeria): An estimated 8–12 direct institutional clients are identifiable at launch within the Algerian government principally the four ministries with direct Sahel security and environmental mandates (Foreign Affairs, National Defence, Interior, Environment) plus CAERT. At annual subscription rates of

80,000–150,000 DZD per institution, the immediate domestic revenue potential is conservatively estimated at 640,000–1,800,000 DZD annually from Year 1.

-Potential Market Size: The international market for Sahel intelligence is substantial and growing. The European Union's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa alone disbursed over 5 billion euros for Sahel programming between 2015 and 2023, with significant analytical procurement embedded in these programmes. Gulf Cooperation Council states increasingly require Sahel intelligence for their African investment and security strategies. The platform's international subscription product targets this market, positioning Algeria as the preferred regional data provider for Sahel intelligence an entirely new export revenue category for the Algerian economy.

2. **SWOT Analysis:** strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of my project:

اللائحة **SWOT Analysis Table** للمتابعة

SWOT	Factors Helping to Achieve Objectives	Factors Hindering Achievement of Objectives
Internal Factors	Strengths 1. Pioneer domestic product no Algerian competitor exists 2. Grounded in original academic research and validated field internship (Ministry of Environment) 3. CAERT partnership and access to primary security field data 4. Low cost field data model through university research partnerships	Weaknesses 1. Small founding team requiring phased recruitment 2. Initial brand recognition limited requires institutional endorsement 3. Sensitive data classification may limit some government data sharing

External Factors	Opportunities	Threats
	1. Algeria currently pays foreign entities for analysis of its own neighbourhood massive substitution market 2. Growing Algerian national security demand for southern border and Sahel intelligence 3. Large and growing international market for Sahel intelligence (EU, Gulf states, international organisations) 4. Algeria's strategic geographic position as natural Sahel intelligence hub	1. Political instability in Sahel states may interrupt field data collection 2. Regulatory sensitivity around security intelligence data classification 3. Risk of larger foreign platforms expanding specifically into Algerian market

اللجنة الوطنية التنسيقية لمتابعة
الابتكار وريادة الأعمال الجامعية
NCCFIUE

3. Business Model Canvas (BMC) of My Project:

Customers Primary: Algerian ministries (Foreign Affairs, Defence, Interior, Environment) Secondary: CAERT, LCBC Tertiary (international): EU, Gulf states, UN agencies, international research institutes	Customer Relationships Institutional subscriptions with dedicated account management Quarterly intelligence briefings	Value Proposition Algeria's first sovereign Sahel intelligence platform eliminating dependence on foreign-produced analysis of Algeria's own strategic neighbourhood Real-time migration corridor and security threat mapping for national decision-makers Transforms Algeria from intelligence buyer to intelligence exporter	Key Activities Platform management and data updates Field data collection (university teams) Intelligence report production International data licensing	Key Partners CAERT (Algiers) Ministry of Environment Algerian universities (geography, political science) Algerian diplomatic missions in Sahel ACLED, NASA, World Bank (open data)
	Distribution Channels Secure government portal International commercial API Ministerial presentations and conferences		Key Resources Web platform and secure servers Field research network Geopolitical and analytical expertise	
Revenues Domestic institutional subscriptions (Algerian ministries and agencies): 80,000–150,000 DZD/year per institution Periodic intelligence reports (on-demand): 50,000–120,000 DZD per report International data licensing (foreign governments and organisations): 200,000–500,000 DZD/year per licence			Costs Cloud hosting (secure Algerian server): 48,000 DZD/year Staff salaries (4 persons): 900,000 DZD/year Field surveys (university partnership low cost): 120,000 DZD/year Software and data subscriptions: 60,000 DZD/year	

Field survey mandates (commissioned primary research): 80,000– 200,000 DZD per mandate	
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Section V: Technical Study

1. Human Resource Requirements of the Project: specify precisely the human resource needs of your project

Nature of Employees	Number	Qualifications / Credentials
Manager / Project Director and Chief Intelligence Analyst	1	Master 2 International Relations / African Geopolitics, field internship at Ministry of Environment, LCE Platform founder
Executives : Lead Developer and Data Engineer	1	Bachelor's or Master's in Computer Science, proficiency in cloud platforms, geospatial APIs, data visualisation
Control Staff Field Research Coordinator	1	Master's in Geography, International Relations or Political Science, experience managing university field survey teams in Algeria and the Sahel
Execution Staff Commercial and Institutional Relations Officer (from Year 2)	1	Bachelor's in business administration, communications or public affairs, experience with governmental procurement processes

Note: All salary levels comply with the applicable minimum guaranteed wage (SNMG). Field survey teams are recruited through university partnership agreements and compensated at academic mission rates rather than full

employment rates, substantially reducing labour costs while maintaining research quality.

1. Location of the Project and Justification for Its Choice:

The LCE Platform management and intelligence production office will be located in Algiers, Algeria. This choice is justified on five grounds: (1) geographic proximity to AUCTC the African Union Counter terrorism Centre, which constitutes the platform's primary field intelligence partner, (2) the location of the Algerian Ministry of Environment the institutional origin of this project's inspiration through the founding researcher's internship and the platform's anchor domestic client, (3) Algiers' position at the convergence of the Mediterranean and Sahelian spheres places it optimally to monitor both the source regions of migration and security threats and their Algerian impact, (4) proximity to Algerian government ministries facilitates in-person intelligence briefings and rapid response to client needs and (5) Algeria's network of consular and diplomatic missions across the seven Sahel countries bordering or neighbouring Algeria provides a cost effective foundation for the platform's field data collection infrastructure.

Section VI: Estimation of Costs and Revenues of My Project

1- Estimation of My Project Costs

1.1 Estimation of the Total Investment Amount: (Project Cost)

Description	Amount (DZD)
IT equipment (computers, secure workstations, external storage)	150,000
Office premises _ shared research space (first year, university incubator)	0
Office furniture and equipment	40,000
Computer server infrastructure (cloud — first year hosting deposit)	50,000
Audiovisual and presentation equipment (ministerial briefings)	25,000
Communications and secure data transmission equipment	20,000
Platform development (web architecture, dashboard build)	200,000
General establishment expenses (CNRC registration, legal, insurance)	35,000
Working capital — operational (Year 1 data subscriptions, field surveys)	180,000
TOTAL INVESTMENT AMOUNT (Project Cost)	700,000

2. Operating Inputs of My Project

Input/Service		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Input / Service 1: Cloud hosting and secure server costs	Quantity (months)	12	12	12
	Unit price (DZD/month)	4,000	4,500	5,000

Input/Service		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	Total hosting costs	48,000	54,000	60,000
Input / Service 2: Field survey operations (university team mandates)	Number of survey mandates	3	5	8
	Cost per mandate	20,000	20,000	20,000
	Total field survey costs	60,000	100,000	160,000
Input / Service 3: Software and data subscriptions (ACLED, mapping tools)	Annual licences	3	4	5
	Cost per licence (DZD)	10,000	10,000	10,000
	Total software costs	30,000	40,000	50,000
TOTAL OPERATING INPUTS		138,000	194,000	270,000

1.3 Estimation of Labour Costs

Post Title	Number of Employees			Salary Value		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Project Director / Chief Analyst	1	1	1	28,000/mo	32,000/mo	36,000/mo

Post Title	Number of Employees			Salary Value		
Lead Developer / Data Engineer	1	1	1	24,000/mo	27,000/mo	30,000/mo
Field Research Coordinator	1	1	1	20,000/mo	22,000/mo	25,000/mo
Commercial and Institutional Relations Officer	0	1	1	N/A	18,000/mo	20,000/mo
ANNUAL TOTAL				864,000	1,188,000	1,332,000

Note: Field survey researchers are engaged through university mission agreements (conventions de stage or accords de recherche) at academic mission indemnity rates (typically 5,000–8,000 DZD per week) significantly below full employment costs. This model is both legally compliant and operationally efficient.

4.1 Estimation of External Costs of My Project

Description	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Electricity / Gas / Water expenses	10,000	12,000	14,000
Maintenance and repair costs	8,000	12,000	15,000
Rental costs	0	48,000	48,000
Equipment and machinery insurance expenses	6,000	8,000	10,000
Marketing expenses (advertising and promotion)	20,000	35,000	50,000

Description	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Training and development costs	10,000	12,000	15,000
Other general expenses (other external charges)	12,000	15,000	18,000
TOTAL	66,000	142,000	170,000

1.5 Estimation of Investment Depreciation Costs

Description	Depreciation Period (years)	Annual Depreciation Charge (DZD)
Production machinery and equipment : IT equipment	3	50,000
Office furniture and equipment	5	8,000
Server infrastructure and communications equipment	5	14,000
Audiovisual equipment	5	5,000
Platform development (intangible asset)	3	66,667
TOTAL AMOUNT	143,667	

❖ Note: Linear depreciation method applied in accordance with the Ministerial Order of 14 April 2025 (Official Gazette No. 29, 2025).

Estimation of My Project Revenues

1.3 Estimation of Annual Sales Volume

Description		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Service 1: Domestic	Number of subscribers	5	8	12

Description		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Institutional Subscriptions (Algerian ministries and agencies)	Price per subscription (DZD/year)	100,000	100,000	120,000
	Total Service 1 revenue	500,000	800,000	1, 440,000
Service 2: Intelligence Reports (on-demand, commissioned)	Number of reports	4	8	12
	Price per report (DZD)	60,000	70,000	80,000
	Total Service 2 revenue	240,000	560,000	960,000
Service 3: International Data Licences (foreign governmental and institutional subscribers)	Number of licences	1	3	6
	Price per licence (DZD/year)	200,000	250,000	300,000
	Total Service 3 revenue	200,000	750,000	1,800,000
	Number of mandates	2	4	6

Description		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Service 4: Field Survey Mandates (commissioned primary research)	Price per mandate (DZD)	60,000	70,000	80,000
	Total Service 4 revenue	120,000	280,000	480,000
TOTAL SALES (Turnover)		1,060,000	2,390,000	4,680,000

1. 2Calculation of the Annual Result

Description	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Turnover (Sales) ... (1)	1,060,000	2,390,000	4,680,000
Consumed Purchases (raw materials) ... (2)	138,000	194,000	270,000
External Charges ... (3)	66,000	142,000	170,000
VALUE ADDED ... (4) = (1)-(2)-(3)	856,000	2,054,000	4,240,000
Wages and Social Charges ... (5)	864,000	1,188,000	1,332,000
GROSS OPERATING SURPLUS ... (6) = (4)-(5)	-8,000	866,000	2,908,000
Depreciation and Provisions ... (7)	143,667	143,667	143,667
OPERATING INCOME = (8) = (6)-(7)	-151,667	722,333	2,764,333

Description	Year 01	Year 02	Year 03
Corporate Tax / IFU ... (9)	0	137,243	525,223
NET INCOME (10) = (8)-(9)	-151,667	585,090	2,239,110
REVENUE GROWTH	Launch year	+125%	+96%

Analysis: The marginal deficit of Year 1 reflects platform development investment and initial market penetration. The platform reaches profitability in Year 2 driven by expanding domestic institutional subscriptions and the first international data licence revenue. By Year 3, with twelve domestic subscribers and six international licences alongside a robust field survey mandate pipeline net income exceeds 2.2 million DZD a net margin of 48 per cent consistent with the economics of a scalable intelligence platform. Critically, the growing international revenue stream (Service 3) represents a net foreign currency inflow for Algeria, an unusual and strategically significant economic contribution from a start-up enterprise.

Conclusion:

The LCE Platform , Sahel Intelligence Monitor addresses a strategic gap that carries direct implications for Algerian national security, economic sovereignty and foreign policy effectiveness. Algeria's southern neighbourhood is the most consequential and most underdocumented strategic environment for Algerian

national interests: it is the origin of irregular migration flows pressing on Algerian southern borders, the theatre of terrorist activity that has historically sought to exploit Algerian territory as a transit corridor and a resource competition zone whose dynamics directly affect regional stability and Algeria's ability to project influence across the African continent.

Yet Algeria currently relies on foreign produced analysis of this environment purchasing intelligence from European and international research centres that have no comparable proximity, field access or strategic alignment with Algerian national interests. This dependency represents both a financial cost and a sovereignty deficit: Algeria pays to understand its own neighbourhood through foreign eyes and foreign analytical frameworks.

The LCE Platform terminates this dependency. By building a sovereign domestic intelligence platform grounded in original academic research, sustained by a cost effective university field research network and commercially designed to export data internationally, the project serves three national interests simultaneously: it strengthens Algerian security decision making, it contributes to economic diversification through a high value knowledge export product and it advances Algeria's positioning as the premier intellectual and strategic hub for the Sahel–

Saharan region a role that Algeria's geography, history and diplomatic weight uniquely qualify it to occupy.

The expected value added to the local and national economy is threefold: direct employment creation in the high-skill digital and research sectors, substitution of foreign analytical expenditure with domestic production, and generation of international subscription revenue that constitutes a new category of knowledge economy exports for Algeria one with the potential to grow significantly as international demand for Sahel intelligence continues to increase in line with the region's growing strategic salience for European, Gulf and global actors.

Academic Year 2025 / 2026

AFRICAN UNION
الاتحاد الإفريقي



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The African Union Counter Terrorism Centre (AUCTC)
Le Centre de l'Union Africaine pour la Lutte Contre le Terrorisme (CUACT)
B.P 141 Bureau Poste El-Mohammadia Alger, Algérie
Tel/Fax: +213 23 82 09 44/46
www.caert-ua.org

Ref : AUCTC/ADMIN/030/02.26

À QUI DE DROIT

Le Centre de l'Union Africaine pour la Lutte Contre le Terrorisme (CUACT), atteste par la présente que **Madame Hachmia Jihane BELLEMOU** effectue un stage de six (06) mois au sein de notre Centre depuis le mois de Septembre 2025.

Durant toute la période de son stage, **Madame Hachmia Jihane** a fait preuve d'un grand sérieux, d'assiduité et de dynamisme. Elle dispose de bonnes compétences dans le domaine juridique, qu'elle met en œuvre avec rigueur, professionnalisme et sens des responsabilités dans l'exécution des missions qui lui sont confiées.

La présente attestation n'implique aucune obligation financière ou légale au Centre, elle est délivrée à l'intéressée.



Hussain Usman

Chief d'Unité d'Administration

Alger, le 10 février 2026

SCIENTIFIC INTERVIEW GUIDE

With Experts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

Remote Semi Structured Interview

(Research Instrument — Master's Thesis 2 / 2025-2026)

Methodological Note:

This interview guide is a research tool that the researcher designed herself.

Its inclusion documents the semi structured methodology designed for the planned collection of primary data.

I. Interview Information

Researcher: Bellemou Hachmia Jihane | Specialisation: Master 2 in International Relations

— African Geopolitics

Thesis Title: « How Climate Change Has Reshaped Competition Arenas in the Lake Chad Basin: An Analytical Study with the LCE Platform Model for

Monitoring and Foresight »

Institution: ENSSP | Supervisor: D.Moustapha Khouas

Type of Interview: Semi structured — Remote | Proposed Duration: 30 to 45 minutes

Host Institution: Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)/N'Djamena, Republic of Chad

Interviewee's Position: General Secretary , Experts

II. Opening Statement

Peace be upon you.

I would like to begin by thanking you sincerely for agreeing to take part in this scientific

interview. My name is Bellemou Hachmia Jihane, and I am preparing a Master's thesis in

African Geopolitics at ENSSP, under the supervision of Professor Moustapha Khouas.

My research studies the transformations caused by the environmental crisis in the Lake

Chad Basin and their effect on patterns of resource competition and governance in the

region. The purpose of this interview is to benefit from your specialised institutional experience in

understanding dimensions that published reports do not fully cover especially your analytical view of the future of the Basin and the mechanisms of regional cooperation.

I confirm that this interview follows the ethical standards of academic research. The information will be used only within the framework of this academic study. With your permission, may I record the interview for the purpose of scientific transcription only?

III. First Axis : Institutional Identity and General Vision

Q1. How does the Lake Chad Basin Commission define its role today, in light of the transformations the Basin has experienced since its establishment in 1964?

- Has the Commission's mandate evolved from water resource management toward broader roles?
- How does the Commission balance its developmental and environmental priorities with its security responsibilities?

Q2. From the perspective of your specialised Commission, how do you read the nature of the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin: is it primarily an environmental crisis, a governance crisis, a security crisis or are these dimensions too intertwined to separate?

- In your view, which factor will most decisively shape the trajectory of the crisis over the medium term?

IV. Second Axis : Vision for Solutions and Future Outlook

Q3. As a specialised regional body, does the Commission have a clear strategic vision for addressing the Basin's crisis? What are its broad lines?

- Do you consider the 2023 - 2037 Strategic Action Programme a sufficient framework, or are complementary approaches needed?

- What are the most significant practical challenges the Commission faces on the ground?

Q4. In your view, does the way out of the crisis lie in strengthening the four states

and reforming their national governance, in building more binding regional

governance mechanisms or in both approaches together?

- Which do you prioritise: strengthening the national state, or enhancing regional cooperation?

- What value would there be in transforming the LCBC's mandate from advisory to binding?

Q5. How do you assess the feasibility of the proposed solutions in practice given the

current political and economic circumstances of the four states?

- What conditions are necessary to move solutions from paper into practice?
- Which success models does the Commission use as a reference?

V. Third Axis : Implementation Mechanisms and Democratic Legitimacy

Q6. Do you consider that solutions should be implemented individually by each state

according to its national priorities, or do they require a collective coordination

framework led by the Commission?

- How are conflicts between national interests and shared regional objectives managed?
- What decision- making model does the Commission use: consensus or majority vote?

Q7. Is the Commission's solution framework exclusively governmental, or does it

integrate the participation of civil society and community organisations in building the solution?

- What mechanisms does the Commission use to include non- state actors in its processes?

- How do you balance governmental legitimacy with the need for community participation?

VI. Fourth Axis : Local Communities and Their Genuine Participation

Q8. Given that local communities (fishermen, pastoralists and farmers) are the first to suffer from the crisis, how does the Commission ensure their genuine inclusion in designing programmes and solutions?

- Does this inclusion go beyond formal consultation toward real empowerment in decision making?
- What practical challenges do you face in ensuring the representation of these communities?

Q9. Does the Commission use mechanisms to incorporate traditional local knowledge customary norms and inherited resource management systems into its programmes? If so, how do they integrate with formal governance frameworks?

- How effective do you consider traditional institutions in managing resource conflicts, compared to formal institutions?

VII. Closing Foresight

Q10. Drawing on your institutional experience in following the Lake Chad Basin, how do you envision the future of the Basin by 2035? What is the single essential condition without which genuine stability cannot be achieved?

- What message would you wish to convey to international decision-makers through an academic research platform such as this one?

VIII. Closing Statement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the time and effort you have given to this

interview. The insights and information you have shared will greatly enrich this academic research. This interview will be cited in the thesis as a primary source with full respect for any reservations you may wish to note. Should you wish to see the research findings once completed, I would be glad to send them to you. Thank you very much.

A. The Sahelo-Saharan region and West Africa observations related to terrorist incidents in 2015

i. Etat de la menace terroriste :

Dans le Sahel et dans le Bassin du Lac Tchad

- **Le Sahel**

Les incidents terroristes dans le Sahel sont imputables à deux types de groupes (les groupes djihadistes et les groupes armés) :

- ***Les groupes djihadistes :***

Malgré la présence des forces internationales : Force Barkhane et la MINUSMA, et surtout les revers imposés à eux par l'opération Serval, les groupes terroristes demeurent toujours actifs au Sahel, en particulier au Mali, dont le nord constitue l'épicentre de la menace terroriste dans la partie sud du Sahel. Parmi ces groupes figurent Al-Qaïda au Maghreb Islamique (AQMI) ; El-Mourabitoune ; Ansar Dine ; Front de Libération du Macina.

(allié d'Ansar Dine). Durant la période sous examen, ces groupes terroristes ont ciblé les militaires maliens ; les représentants du Gouvernement et les casques bleus de la MINUSMA. Ils attaquent les cibles précitées par des raids ; utilisent des IEDS pour entraver leur circulation et assassinent ou brûlent des camions de ravitaillement de la MINUSMA pour empêcher leur ravitaillement. Pour 2015 nous pouvons retenir 2 faits nouveaux :

1. **Extension géographique des attentats terroristes sur toute l'étendue**

du territoire malien : l'année 2015 a été marquée par la perpétration d'actes terroristes au Centre du Mali, et au Sud, notamment : les attaques du 7 Mars 2015 ; celles contre l'hôtel le Radisson Blu à Bamako et l'attaque contre un poste de Police à Sikasso, une région frontalière de la Côte d'Ivoire. Au regard de ces incidents terroristes, nous pouvons constater une volonté des groupes terroristes (Ansar Dine et El-Mourabitoune) d'étendre leur zone d'opération, initialement limitée aux 3 régions du Nord du Mali, vers le Centre et le Sud du Mali. Pour arriver à cette fin le groupe Ansar Dine a noué des alliances avec le Front du Libération du Macina et a même créé une Katibat au Sud (Ansar Dine du Sud).

2. **Renforcement structurel d'AQMI** : après avoir connu une traversée du désert suite à la diminution des capacités par l'opération serval et les conflits de leadership internes qui se sont suivis, AQMI semble se renforcer et nourrit l'ambition de redevenir le groupe terroriste le plus puissant de la région. A cet effet, AQMI a intégré le groupe El-Mourabitoune dirigé par Mokhtar Belmokhtar en son sein et a même nommé ce dernier comme Emir d'Al-Qaïda en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Au regard de l'expulsion par AQMI de Belmokhtar, il paraissait très improbable de s'intéresser à nouveau à ce dernier. Toutefois, la relative diminution d'AQMI et la montée en puissance d'El-Mourabitoune, qui s'est illustré par des attentats spectaculaires (In-Aménas, La terrasse puis le Radisson Blu de Bamako) a certainement obligé les leaders d'AQMI à récupérer Belmokhtar, d'autant plus qu'une partie d'El-Mourabitoune avait

prêté allégeance à l'Etat l'Islamique, une initiative rejetée par Belmokhtar lui-même.

- **Dans le bassin du Lac Tchad :**

La virulence de Boko Haram à travers les actes terroristes, s'est répétée en 2015. Toutefois, l'évolution majeure concernant ce groupe a été son intégration dans la mouvance de l'Etat Islamique, suite à l'acceptation de la demande d'allégeance par Baghdadi. Le 07 Mars 2015, dans un message audio, Shekau annonçait ladite allégeance¹. La conséquence la plus visible de l'allégeance de Boko Haram à l'Etat Islamique a été le changement de nom du groupe, qui s'appelle dorénavant : la province Ouest Africaine de l'Etat Islamique. Ce qui laisse présager un élargissement de la zone d'action du terrorisme. En effet, initialement, l'objectif stratégique de Boko Haram consistait à établir un Etat théocratique au Nord-Est du Nigéria, une partie des Etats suivants : Niger, Cameroun et Tchad. En devenant la province ouest africaine de l'Etat Islamique, il ressort que désormais, toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest est considérée comme champ d'action terroriste avec comme nouvel objectif stratégique : l'établissement d'un Etat théocratique dirigé par l'Etat Islamique. Ainsi, en devenant une province de l'Etat Islamique, Boko Haram transporte la guerre contre ce groupe au cœur de l'Afrique. Désormais, il est loisible de considérer que deux coalitions multinationales

¹ Centre Africain d'Etudes et Recherche sur le Terrorisme, Note d'alerte (ACSRT/Incident-Alert-002-2015) [en ligne] disponible sur :

<http://caert.org.dz/incident-reports/note%20d'alerte%20Boko%20Haram.pdf>

sont en guerre contre l'Etat Islamique, et que le bassin du Lac Tchad, à l'instar de la Syrie et du Liban, constituent sans équivoque des théâtres d'opération de ce conflit.

En outre, Boko Haram en prêtant allégeance à l'EI pourrait obtenir un appui opérationnel de sa part et ceci dans un contexte où le groupe a subi une diminution très importante de son potentiel opérationnel, grâce à l'intervention de la Force Multinationale Mixte, qui regroupe le Cameroun, le Niger, le Nigéria et le Tchad.

ii. Caractéristiques générales de la menace terroriste en Afrique de l'Ouest

(a) *Caractéristiques des modes d'action au Sahel :*

Les groupes terroristes évoluent suivant un mode asymétrique fait de tirs de harcèlement à l'aide de lance-roquettes et de mortiers. En outre, ils utilisent des engins explosifs improvisés et des mines antipersonnel contre des convois militaires et des convois de logistiques de la MINUSMA.

Les cibles des groupes terroristes sont les casques bleus de la MINUSMA ; les forces armées et de sécurité Maliennes et la force Barkhane. A titre de rappel, les actes terroristes contre les casques bleus ont fait de la MINUSMA la mission la plus meurtrière des Nations Unies. Les attaques terroristes ciblent également les Etats voisins comme le Niger, ou plus récent encore le Burkina Faso.

(b) *Caractéristiques des modes d'action de Boko Haram :*

L'entrée en action de la Force Multinationale Mixte a obligé Boko Haram à changé de posture, passant ainsi d'une approche symétrique avec des possessions territoriales à une approche asymétrique. En effet, les attaques massives de Boko Haram contre les militaires et les populations civiles ont

considérablement baissé. En revanche, les terroristes ont excellé dans les incursions et raids rapides visant des villages isolés, situés au Nigéria et dans les autres Etats riverains du Bassin du Lac Tchad : Cameroun, Niger, Tchad.

Boko Haram a multiplié, au cours de la période sous examen, des attentats suicides dans des lieux publics, en utilisant des femmes et des enfants pour mieux échapper à la vigilance des forces de sécurité.

iii. Tendances générales de la menace dans la région

1. Au Sahel :

- Les actions des groupes terroristes se poursuivront certainement dans un mode asymétrique.
- Après l'incident au Burkina Faso, il est important de craindre une volonté des groupes terroristes d'élargir leurs zones d'action.

2. Dans le Bassin du Lac Tchad :

- Tout en reconnaissant l'utilité de l'intervention de la FMM qui a réduit les possessions territoriales de Boko Haram ainsi que ses capacités opérationnelles, il n'en demeure pas moins que ledit groupe s'inscrira dans une logique asymétrique pour fuir les affrontements directs avec les militaires et perpétrer des attaques sanglantes contre les populations civiles.

الجمهورية الجزائرية الديمقراطية الشعبية

وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي

وزارة اقتصاد المعرفة والمؤسسات الناشئة
والمؤسسات الصغيرة



الوكالة الوطنية لدعم وتنمية المقاولاتية



المدرسة الوطنية العليا للعلوم السياسية - الجزائر

الرقم: CDE-ENSSP/EC8M4P74

شهادة تكوين في المقاولاتية

سلمت هذه الشهادة الى السيد (ة): هاشمية جيهان بلمو الحامل (ة) للرقم التعريفي الوطني الوحيد: 110041463000670008

إثباتا لتابعته (ها) للدورة التكوينية في المقاولاتية وإنشاء المؤسسات الصغيرة، المنظمة خلال الفترة الممتدة من 15/04/2026 الى 05/05/2026.

في 10/05/2026

حرره الجزائر

عن المدير العام للوكالة الوطنية لدعم وتنمية

المقاولاتية

عن مدير المؤسسة الجامعية



حوت هذه الشهادة لأصحتها في إطار القرار الصادر من وزير الاقتصاد المعرف والمؤسسات الناشئة والمؤسسات الصغيرة المؤرخ في 29 رجب عام 1444هـ الموافق 20 تمير سنة 2023. يحدد تنظيم وسير تقنية النظام والاعتماد وتحويل المشاريع الاستثمارية المنددة على مستوى الوكالة الوطنية لدعم وتنمية المقاولاتية وكذا كفاءات معتمدة ومضمون القاعات المتعلقة بهذه المشاريع.