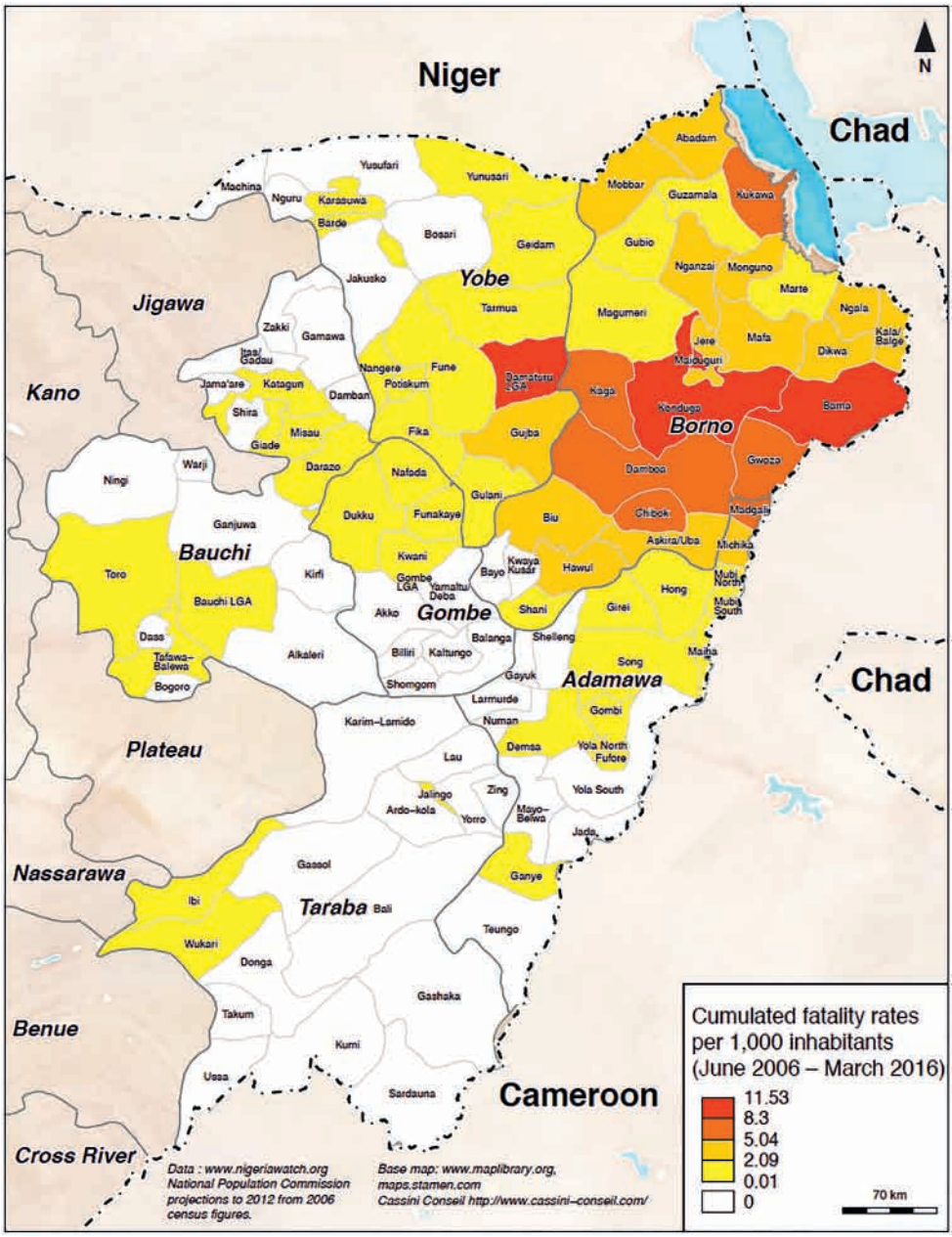
Chapter 3.
Emergence of Boko Haram and gradual spread of the conflict

KEY POINTS

Boko Haram, an Islamist sect turned armed movement, first developed in Nigeria with rear bases in neighbouring countries. In 2014–2015, the insurgents expanded their theatre of operations into Cameroon, and then into Niger and Chad, as an anti-terrorist coalition was set up. The highly fragmented group then retreated into the region's bush but continued to carry out attacks, particularly suicide bombings. Its capacity for resilience raises questions about the causes of the insurgency. Climate change is hardly a convincing explanation for the conflict, no more than is the theory of Salafist indoctrination, which has played a very marginal role in the ongoing hostilities. Nor is it an ethnic liberation front, although the majority of Boko Haram are Kanuri speakers. Given the immense poverty in the area, it is worth looking instead into the social and political conditions behind the group's emergence and radicalisation. Corruption, state dysfunctions, a brutal military crackdown, and the suffering it has caused to the civilian population are key factors behind the insurgency and its continuation.

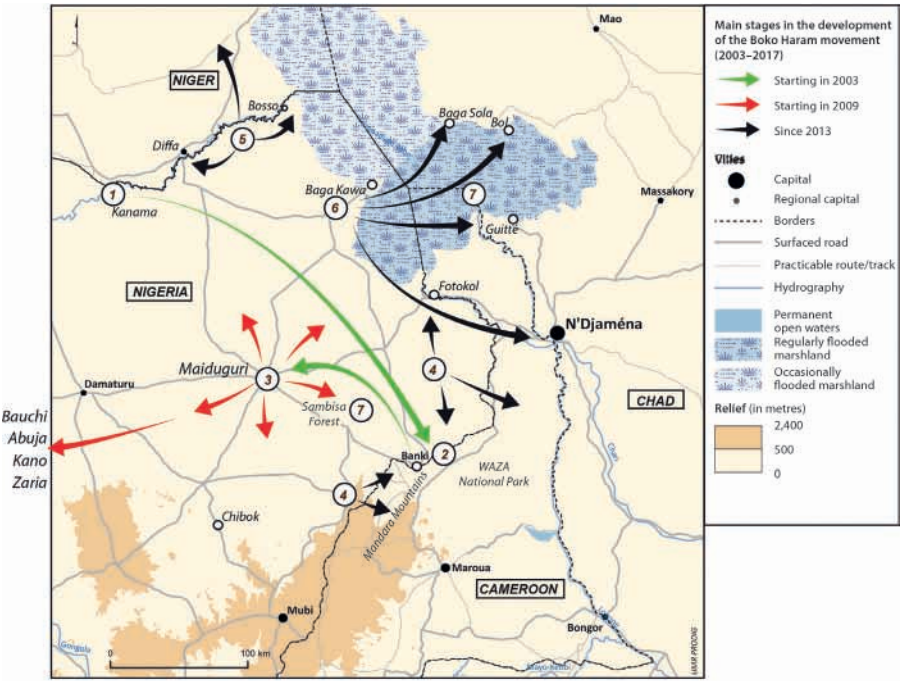
In an already highly vulnerable region, the insurgency waged by Boko Haram since 2009 has revealed the weakness of the governments of the four countries bordering the lake. It has not evolved in a linear manner and really started to spread from Nigeria to Cameroon and then Niger and Chad in 2014–2015. The conflict has had disastrous impacts on the population and economic activities. It has also fuelled major controversies over the causes of the insurgency, with debates that have sometimes had a major influence on the international community's military and humanitarian response agendas.

Map 10. Cumulative fatality rates per 1,000 inhabitants resulting directly from clashes between Boko Haram and security forces in Nigeria's North East (2006–2016)



Sources: M.-A. Pérouse de Montclos, IRD, http://www.nigeriawatch.org

Map 11. Main stages in the development of the Boko Haram movement (2003–2017)



Sources: M.-A. Pérouse de Montclos, IRD, http://www.nigeriawatch.org

The main military stages in the development of the Boko Haram movement (2003–2017)

① 2003: Based in Kanama on the Niger border, the 'Nigerian Taliban' attack police stations and then flee from the army toward the Mandara Mountains in Cameroon.

② 2004: Pursued by the army, the 'Nigerian Taliban' join the most radical preacher in Maiduguri, Mohammed Yusuf, and form the most extremist core of a sect that does not yet have a name and will come to be mocked by the disparaging title of Boko Haram ('Western education is sacrilege').

③ 2009: Following skirmishes with the police, Mohammed Yusuf calls for jihad and is summarily executed by the police. The army intervenes and the crackdown leaves a thousand dead in Maiduguri, mostly civilians. Under its new leader, Abubakar Shekau, the group goes underground and extends its sphere of action to Nigeria with terrorist attacks and spectacular strikes in Bauchi in 2010, Abuja in 2011, Kano in 2012, and Zaria in 2014.

④ As of 2013: As the declaration of a state of emergency exacerbates the violence in the countryside in Nigeria's Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, the mutual non-aggression pact that held on the border with Cameroon is broken when a French family is kidnapped on the Waza nature reserve. The hostages are exchanged for Boko Haram commanders held by the Cameroonian forces. The insurgents soon scale up their attacks in the Mandara Mountains.

⑤ As of 2015: With the formation of an antiterrorist coalition, the situation deteriorates in Niger where Boko Haram targets mainly Diffa, Bosso, and small villages along the Yobe River.

⑥ As of 2015: Chad is in turn hit by the sect. Already operational on the lake's islands, Boko Haram fighters mount suicide bombings in N'Djaména, Guitté, Bol, and Baga Sola.

⑦ In 2017: The sect continues to fragment. Its two main factions operate from Sambisa Forest and the marshlands of Lake Chad.

1. Development and spread of the conflict: 2003–2017

The Boko Haram jihadist conflict has had various impacts in time and space. Borno in north-east Nigeria has clearly been the state the hardest hit by the violence (Map 10). Chad is the least affected of the four countries bordering the lake, hit two years after Cameroon and then Niger. Box 8 sums up some of the characteristics of the Boko Haram sect since it went underground and morphed into a terrorist group.

Boko Haram's history began in 2003–2004, in Kanama along the border with Niger and then in the Mandara Mountains in Cameroon with jihadists called the "Nigerian Taliban" (Map 11). Pursued by the Nigerian army, the group joined a radical Maiduguri-based preacher, Mohammed Yusuf. This native of Yobe subsequently developed the movement known today by the name of Boko Haram, a nickname coined by the indigenous people in 2006 and taken up by local journalists reporting on the first major clash with Nigerian security forces in 2009. The violence then escalated into a form of civil war with the declaration of a state of emergency in the BYA states (Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa) in 2013, followed by the deployment of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) coalition troops in 2015.

Note, however, that Boko Haram had some followers in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon right from the group's beginnings. Nigeria's neighbouring countries were spared the fighting until 2014, since they served as a rear base for the insurgents, who had made a sort of mutual non-aggression pact with the local governments. Hence in 2015, Boko Haram extended its reach of military operations but not the influence of the sect itself. This extremely important point suggests that the group managed very early on to infiltrate the lake's bordering countries' populations and conflicts to recruit followers. Behind the media stories of the sect's fragmentation over ideological divisions, it would therefore seem that there is not one Boko Haram, but at least four, corresponding to the different local dynamics that have determined the development of the insurgency in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

Box 8

Boko Haram, from sect to terrorist movement

Born in Kanuri country in the border region of Borno in the north-eastern tip of Nigeria bordering the Republic of Niger, Lake Chad, and northern Cameroon, Boko Haram started out as a nameless sect intolerant of other Muslims. Located in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri, the group's founder and spiritual leader, Mohammed Yusuf, called for the establishment of an Islamic state to properly enforce his fundamentalist version of Sharia law. The young preacher had initially followed the teachings of a seemingly Wahhabi movement, which appeared in the region in 1978 and was sometimes called the *Izala* "eradicator" after its official name: the "Society for the Eradication of Evil Innovations and the Re-establishment of the Sunnah" (*Jama'at Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunna*). Around 2005, Mohammed Yusuf broke with the group, accusing them of collaborating with the corrupt Nigerian government leaders. The Izala in turn rejected Boko Haram's leader for not having the qualifications required by Saudi Arabia to teach Islam.

The sect then went underground and switched to terrorism following the extra-judicial execution of Mohammed Yusuf by Nigerian police in 2009. Under the subsequent leadership of self-proclaimed Imam Abubakar Shekau, the "Group of people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad" (*Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad*) is now known more by the name of Boko Haram ("Western education is sacrilege"), a nickname to which it objects. With the declaration of a state of emergency and setting up of quasi-government militia in 2013, the group set about massacring civilians to dissuade them from cooperating with the security forces. At the same time, it turned to crime and robbery, attacking banks, holding traders to ransom, and kidnapping high-ranking figures and the rare expatriates still to be found in the area. Deprived of its charismatic leader since the demise of Mohammed Yusuf, the group also fragmented, as some elements challenged Abubakar Shekau's brutality, accusing him of killing mainly Muslims. In 2012, a splinter group appeared called *Ansaru* or, to give its full name, the "Community of the Defenders of the Muslims in the Land of the Blacks" (*Jama'at Ansar Al Muslimin Fi Bilad al-Sudan*). As an international anti-terrorist coalition was being set up in early 2015 with the armed forces of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, a faction of Boko Haram fighters pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS, often referred to by its Arabic acronym of Daesh), henceforth calling itself "Province of the Islamic State in West Africa" (*Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyah*).

1.1. From preaching to state of emergency: 2003–2013

Mohammed Yusuf's influence was not restricted to Maiduguri and the hinterland in a region with porous borders. Traces of his influence could be found in the form of sermons, leaflets, and armed forays in Cameroon and Niger well before the extrajudicial execution of the sect's founder in 2009. In 2003, jihadists known as "the Nigerian Taliban" appeared in Kanama on the Niger border before being pursued by the army, taking refuge in the Mandara Mountains in Cameroon, and then melting into the landscape and joining the most vehement preacher of Maiduguri, Mohammed Yusuf, to whom they pledged allegiance. Mohammed Yusuf had the hardest time controlling them and was arrested by the authorities on a number of occasions. The Nigerian Taliban in effect had pan-Islamic ambitions that extended far beyond the confines of Borno State. For example, they went to attack police stations in Kano shortly before the 2007 general election.

At the time, Mohammed Yusuf was not at all an underground figure. A prominent preacher, he acted openly and under the influence of a Salafi/Wahhabi movement that appeared in Nigeria in 1978 and was sometimes referred to as the "eradicator" after its official name: the "Society for the Eradication of Evil Innovations and the Re-establishment of Orthodoxy" (*Jama'at Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunna*). Yet Mohammed Yusuf was more radical and virulent. Whereas the Izala accepted voting and supporting candidates in elections, he completely rejected the model of a parliamentary democracy as being inherited from colonisation, imported from the West, and accused of perverting Muslims' souls because it promoted government by and for the people, rather than a caliphate.[80] The leader of Boko Haram hence gained his popularity from his condemnation of corruption among the Nigerian elites. Hostile to the Sufi brotherhoods dominant in the region, he also underpinned his religious legitimacy by claiming to have international standing and making reference to the doctrine of foreign Salafists, such as the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, who accepted the principle of elections only to topple secular regimes or to consolidate a government which already obeyed Sharia law.

Around 2005, Mohammed Yusuf broke with the Izala, which he accused of collaboration with the Nigerian leaders. The Izala in turn rejected Boko Haram's leader because he did not have the qualifications required by Saudi Arabia to teach Islam. Throughout its preaching period (*Da'wah*) through to 2009, the

80 Nothing could sum up the two movements' opposing views better than comparing the personalities of their founders. Mohammed Yusuf (1970–2009) was a young preacher from the Yobe countryside with no experience of power. Ismaila Idris Ibn Zakariyya (1937–2000) was, on the other hand, a seasoned sheikh when he founded the Izala movement in Jos in 1978. A native of Goskorom, a small village in Plateau State, he began his official career preaching in Kakurdi Prison in Kaduna and as an army chaplain first in Ibadan in 1974 and then in Kontagora and Jos, before being relieved of his position in 1978 due to his inflammatory stance against the traditional Sufi brotherhoods (Ben Amara 2014: 129–130).

sect had its own mosques, preached in the markets, attempted to re-Islamise the entire region, and sought to keep rear bases in Nigeria's neighbouring countries. The Amchide–Banki complex on the edge of Cameroon was typical of these smuggling points that attracted Boko Haram followers to do trade, stock up on supplies, revile "bad" Muslims, and preach Sharia law in a place renowned for its bars and prostitutes.

However, Nigeria's neighbouring countries acquired a new strategic depth following the extrajudicial execution of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, when the group declared jihad, went underground, mounted its first terrorist operations, and extended its attacks to Abuja, Kano, and Zaria in 2011–2012. Under its new leader, Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's shift to brutality went hand in hand with its turning to crime. As the sect could no longer collect funds in its mosques, which had been destroyed, it attacked banks, extorted taxes, and racketeered local traders by kidnapping their children for ransom. In rural areas, it was also joined by armed bandits and cattle rustlers, who took advantage of the chaos to get their share of the spoils. President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the Niger Delta in southern Nigeria, seemed incapable of halting the progress of the movement, which controlled a number of local administrative areas in Borno and Yobe in 2012. Attempts at negotiating amnesty failed, deliberately sabotaged by a government indifferent to the suffering of mainly Muslim populations. Corrupt and dispirited, the army soon lost control of everything but the sub-region's cities.

The conflict escalated further with the declaration of a state of emergency in the BYA states in 2013. The Nigerian army left the cities and set about bombing the countryside, wreaking human damage which was in no way "collateral". Driven out of Maiduguri, Boko Haram took to the bush, setting up camp mainly in Sambisa Forest on the edge of Cameroon, a nature reserve that initially served as a training ground for the police and then the national guard under Ibrahim Babangida's regime in the 1980s. Another factor that exacerbated the conflict was that the Nigerian army decided to make up for its lack of knowledge of the area by supporting local militia, in the form of CJTFs, to flush out the insurgents hidden among the population. Cameroon soon followed with the appearance of village vigilante committees on the border, whose main purpose, for want of stopping Boko Haram incursions, was to alert the authorities to the presence of suspicious individuals.

The insurgents consequently sought to dissuade villagers from joining the militia by launching a terror campaign and scaling up their atrocities, even if it meant cutting themselves off from their social base. For their part, the Nigerian CJTFs and Cameroonian village vigilante committees were guilty of abuses, theft, poaching, and human rights violations. They used the backing they had from the authorities to settle personal scores, racketeer the population, and harass the women. Initially appreciated by Cameroonian displaced persons and Nigerian refugees, the village vigilante committees were soon suspected of being in

league with Boko Haram, and their popularity plummeted. Certain members of the Maiduguri CJTFs went the same way.

In Nigeria, the difference is that the militia also play a highly political role. They are in effect the distant heirs of the security services of the parties that fought for power at independence, notably in Kano with the opposition's *Yan Banga* ("Youth Vanguard" in Hausa) versus the NPC's *Mahaukata* ("Madmen"). For example, the Maiduguri CJTFs took on members from the "Ecomog" gang, instrumental in the Governor of Borno's victory in the regional elections of April 2003 and 2007. They also provided protection to his successor, who, as a member of the opposition, sought a solution to the shortcomings of a police force that had remained under the control of Goodluck Jonathan's government in Abuja. In northern Cameroon, however, the village vigilante committees were not involved in the RDPC (*Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais*) primaries or municipal elections of September 2013.

1.2. Internationalisation of the conflict: 2014–2015

The conflict's internationalisation has played out on two levels. First, there was the media coverage with the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping in April 2014. Driven by the social networks and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) lobby, the story quickly became world famous and became the symbol of a conflict that had remained largely unknown to the general public up to that point. Yet the media spotlight on the Chibok girls kidnapping speaks volumes about the lack of knowledge of the area. The international mobilisation in support of the schoolgirls, who were not actually all Christian, gives the impression of differentiated treatment based on religion in a predominantly Muslim region. For example, the media had not mentioned the 50 Muslim schoolboys burnt alive in a dormitory fire in a secondary school in Buni Yade, attacked by Boko Haram in Yobe State in February 2014. In the same vein, it took five months to spread the news of the kidnapping of three hundred Muslim children in Damasek in Borno State in December 2015.

Paradoxically, the media sensation created by the Chibok affair gave Boko Haram an international profile that the sect did not previously have. Among other things, there was speculation by imaginative journalists about supposed links with Latin American drug cartels and human trafficking networks in Italy. In reality, it is mainly Igbo migrants from the south who command Borno trade in counterfeit drugs and Tramadol, a painkiller used by the Boko Haram fighters.[81] In both

81 Tramadol can cause dependency phenomena similar to morphine addiction. In France, this drug is sold on prescription. Its molecules have the particularity of being found in natural form in a shrub in Borno, the African peach (*Sarcocephalus latifolius*). See also Bärbel Freyer (2004), "The Pains of Temporary Sojourning - Igbo Migrants at Lake Chad", *in* Krings, Matthias & Platte, Editha (ed.), *Living with the Lake. Perspectives on History, Culture and Economy of Lake Chad*, Köln, Rüdiger Köppe, pp. 227–43.

Nigeria and Cameroon, trafficking in hard drugs and amphetamine laboratories are concentrated in the ports on the Atlantic coast and historically originate in trade and military circles.[82] Official statistics,[83] however, indicate that the North East is the least affected by the problem, with 8% of the total drug addicts counted in Nigeria. As regards the Chibok schoolgirls, there is no evidence that any of them were sold or forced into prostitution abroad. In Nigeria, the international prostitution networks extend from the predominantly Christian Edo region in the south and do not pass through Borno, where local prostitution is very different (Box 9).

Box 9

Prostitution in Borno, a local affair

Prostitution in Borno is organised around "women's houses" (*zoworti* in Kanuri or *gidan mata* in Hausa), which also house single, female self-employed workers. The sex industry is run locally by female syndicate "presidents" (*maira* or *shugaba* in Kanuri, *kaltam* in Shuwa Arabic, *magajiya* in Hausa, and *makira* or *mra saba* in Kotoko), generally widows or divorcees (*kamba* or *zowor* in Kanuri) (Platte, 2000: 197–211; 2004: 244–267). It does not involve procurers and makes little use of transsexual or transvestite intermediaries (*yan daudu* in Hausa) to tout for customers. The region's Muslim prostitutes are rarely unmarried, single women and are never young virgins (*budurwa* in Kanuri). The Christian prostitutes are not natives of Borno, Chibok included, but are rather Idoma, Tiv, and Igbo women from the south of Nigeria, the *akwatu;* these women are paid in advance, like the Hausa *halangnoma* (literally "skirt lifters") and unlike the tradition of the local courtesans (*karwa* in Kanuri and *karuwai* in Hausa), who live off gifts, choose their partners, and do not ask set prices.

Whatever the rash speculations about Boko Haram's connections with international prostitution and drug trafficking networks, the mobilisation to free the Chibok schoolgirls reveals most importantly the impotence of the Nigerian authorities, which initially denied the kidnapping. The affair became an electoral campaign argument in the 2015 presidential election. Combined with the kidnapping of a handful of Westerners in Nigeria and Cameroon starting in 2014, it forced Goodluck Jonathan's government to change attitude and call on its immediate and more distant neighbours—essentially the United States, France, and the United Kingdom—to take action against "global terrorism". Up until 2013, the authorities

82 Accounts describe trade in Tramadol organised by members of the Rapid Intervention Unit from Maroua. In Nigeria, trafficking in heroin was started by naval officers in training in India in 1975 (Pérouse de Montclos, 1998: 6).

83 NESTS (2014: 166), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency statistics published in 2008.

had maintained that the insurgency was a simple matter of domestic unrest, in an attempt to guard against outside interference that risked exposing the abuses committed by the army and the poor handling of the crisis. After this point, however, the authorities presented Boko Haram as an extension of Al-Qaida or ISIS to justify the failure of a deeply corrupt and demoralised Nigerian army.

At the same time, Goodluck Jonathan's government tried to win votes by distributing some relief through the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and its local branches, the State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs). Yet projects for the region's economic recovery under the Presidential Initiative for the North East (PINE), launched in Maiduguri in November 2014, existed only on paper. Their main purpose was to put a figure on the cost of reconstruction. They did not deal with governance issues and focused on the purely technical aspects of infrastructure development (PINE, 2014). The Victims Support Fund (VSF), set up in Abuja in July 2014, was tasked with raising funds to assist displaced persons through NEMA and local governments. It was not operational, took over a year to take up its office, targeted communities rather than individuals, and did nothing more than fund maternity clinics, psychological support programmes, and the distribution of school supplies and uniforms for 21,300 schoolchildren in Borno and Adamawa … a mere drop in the ocean compared with reported needs.[84]

1.3. The 2015 election of Muhammadu Buhari

It was against this backdrop that Goodluck Jonathan lost the presidential election in March 2015. For the first time since Nigeria's independence, a change of power came from the ballot box rather than political assassination or a military coup d'État. Paradoxically, this democratic changeover was driven largely by fear of a jihadist group hostile to the principle of a government by and for the people. Boko Haram's attacks, the army's retreats, the corruption scandals, and the Chibok affair had in effect triggered such a feeling of national humiliation that they had pushed voters, Christian and Muslim alike, to vote for a former military man whom they saw as being in a better position to meet the terrorist challenge: Muhammadu Buhari. Likewise, the jihadist threat had prompted the opposition to rise above its divisions for the first time since the end of the military dictatorship in 1999 to form a common platform—the APC—uniting breakaway factions from the PDP, the ANPP, the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), and the CPC, Muhammadu Buhari's ephemeral formation for the 2011 presidential election.

Another paradox was that the APC's democratic victory effectively established a virtually one-party situation in the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria. This outcome was all the more unfortunate in that Borno has a cruel lack of experience of multi-partyism in local politics. At independence, for example, the

84 Interviews with VSF officials in Abuja in May 2016.

emirs manipulated the Native Authorities' police to crush their opponents, forcing the leaders of a short-lived Bornu Youth Movement to flee to Chad following clashes in Maiduguri in 1958 (Cohen, 1971: 567). In 1999, the end of the military regime also failed to put an end to political violence. Mala Kachalla (APP) was first elected in Borno State thanks to the financial support of Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, who had made his fortune doing business with General Sani Abacha's dictatorship. In 2003, the incumbent governor then stood in vain on an Alliance for Democracy (AD) ticket. But he had to hand over to his "sponsor", who kept his grip on power for two terms until 2011. A highly controversial figure, Ali Modu Sheriff (ANPP) was accused of arming a private militia, called Ecomog, manipulating the issue of Sharia law, fuelling religious tensions, financing Boko Haram, and approving the extrajudicial execution of Mohammed Yusuf in order to eliminate a witness who might have exposed his fraudulent activities.

Kashim Shettima, Ali Modu Sheriff's former finance commissioner and successor, left no room for the local opposition either and was suspected of numerous conflicts of interest. A graduate in agricultural economics from the University of Maiduguri and former regional manager of Zenith Bank, he was quick to appoint his bank colleagues to key positions in 2011, with Yunus Marami in Finance and Adamu Lawan in Works and Housing. Zenith Bank also continued to manage Borno State's budget, even though it was a private group established by business tycoon Jim Ovia in 1990 and particularly well connected with the corridors of power since the appointment of its former CEO, Godwin Emefiele, to Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2014. Last but not least, Kashim Shettima was suspected of real estate transactions in Maiduguri for his own profit, as allegedly evidenced by expropriations for unfinished social housing projects. These housing units were then partially occupied by displaced persons in Shettima Ali Monguno Teachers Village (300 houses intended for teachers along Pompomari Bypass), Legacy Garden (90 three-room flats in the district of Bulumkuttu on the road to Damaturu), New Trailer Park (300 family homes near the university campus), Bakassi Housing Estate (1,000 houses in the suburbs along the Biu road), and the Damboa Road and Gubio Road housing estates (some 500 houses each).[85]

In 2015, Muhammadu Buhari's presidential election victory effectively tightened Kashim Shettima's hold over Borno, but it also won the other North East states, which, with the exception of two of them, came under the control of the APC.[86]

85 Kashim Shettima's opponents pointed out that his predecessor had at least managed to finish the work on the Gamboru Road housing estates. See also the *Daily Trust*, 14 September 2013.

86 Held by the APP for a brief period from 1999 to 2003, Gombe re-elected its PDP Governor Ibrahim Dankwambo. Taraba, with its larger Christian population, had consistently voted PDP since the end of the military dictatorship. In Adamawa, however, Governor Murtala Nyako left the PDP and joined the APC in November 2013, before being impeached and removed from office in July 2014. In Bauchi, the ANPP Governor, Isa Yuguda, had joined the PDP in April 2009 and was re-elected in April 2011, before yielding power to Barrister Mohammad Abdullahi Abubakar elected on an APC ticket in May 2015.

In practice, the PDP does not play the role of an opposition party. Confined to its Niger Delta and south-east Nigeria strongholds, it is a mere shadow of its former self. In 2016, leadership of the PDP went to former Governor of Borno, Ali Modu Sheriff, who had left the APC in late 2014 and who, controversial as ever, largely contributed to the multi-faction implosion of Goodluck Jonathan's former presidential formation. In the BYA states, in particular, the PDP networks serve mainly to justify the party's national presence, which is a vital criterion to be legally authorised to run for the 2019 presidential election. Its local representatives, paid by their executive bodies, have a purely honorary function and did not even bother to present candidates for the local elections in Yobe in 2017.

However, President Muhammadu Buhari's victory did score some points against Boko Haram. It immediately boosted the troops' morale. Even more importantly, it gave new hope to the people of Borno, who had felt abandoned by Goodluck Jonathan's government and who were now more willing to cooperate with the security forces, a vital prerequisite to fight an "invisible" enemy. Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from north-east Nigeria and former military Governor of Borno in 1975–1976, gave the impression of being more sensitive to the region's problems. Goodluck Jonathan's relationship with the governors of the BYA states had been disastrous, further complicating the ability to put in place a joint strategy against Boko Haram. Muhammadu Buhari, however, is on the same wavelength as the local authorities. On his election, he immediately had Kashim Shettima accompany him on his official visits to neighbouring countries.

1.4. Boko Haram's fragmentation: 2015–2017

Abroad, the new president was anxious to improve the coordination of the anti-terrorist coalition (the MNJTF) with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. His reputation for integrity reassured the international community and, with crude oil prices plummeting, the drop in government revenues forced him to sign agreements with the World Bank and open the way for the arrival of more consistent humanitarian aid in north-east Nigeria. Paradoxically, the internationalisation of the response to the jihadist threat also drove Boko Haram to seek foreign allies. In early 2015, a faction of the group pledged allegiance to ISIS. Yet its alliance hardly went any further than the actual recorded statement. On the military and financial front, it did not make the insurgents' operations more professional, there were no imports of more sophisticated weapons, and no exchanges of fighters with other jihadist groups in the Sahel or Libya.

Instead, Boko Haram continued to operate like a low-cost insurgency, with very few resources. Despite what President Muhammadu Buhari said in December 2015, the group was not "technically defeated". It did not stop attacking military positions, nor did it target civilians only (Pérouse de Montclos, 2017a). Yet its suicide bombings, a weapon of the poor, proved particularly ineffectual

compared with other known cases in the world.[87] Nearly one-third of the group's bombings missed their targets, claimed no fatalities, or killed only their perpetrator (Warner & Matfess, 2017). These failures were rarely due to technical problems. Most of them were due to the frisking of militiamen or insurgents abandoning the attack in a last-minute refusal to sacrifice their lives or otherwise taking advantage of the opportunity to escape Boko Haram's clutches and turn themselves over to the authorities, a phenomenon that raises questions about the sect's indoctrination capabilities.

In practical terms, the group consequently lost ground and had to retreat to the Sambisa Forest and the marshlands of Lake Chad. At the same time, it continued to fragment into multiple factions. In 2018, Boko Haram was still not "technically defeated", and the insurgents' attacks, sporadic as they may be, continued to destabilise the entire region.

2. Controversies over the causes of the conflict

In a less directly visible repercussion of the conflict, the insurgency has sparked numerous controversies that have revealed the fragility of the region's states, the power of the "conspiracy" theories, and the virulence of the ethnic and religious stereotypes. The debates on the underlying causes of the rebellion have revolved around environmental issues, poverty, Islam, community allegiance, poor governance, and corruption. Although they have failed to reach shared conclusions, they have largely inspired the civilian and military authorities' responses—including at international community level, where anti-terrorist experts have opted for a religious interpretation of the conflict by promoting a "deradicalisation" strategy to get Muslims back into mainstream Islam.

2.1. The disputed role of the environment

Some commentators believe that the Boko Haram conflict is a consequence of environmental degradation, since the drought of the 1970s brought poverty to the countryside and drove unemployed youngsters into the cities, supposedly ready to fall into the clutches of the Salafist and/or terrorist networks. Climate change concerns have effectively fuelled a Malthusian vision, which posits an explosion of violence due to demographic pressure and scarcity of resources. Lake Chad, which has become a world symbol of environmental degradation, is said to be a clear case in point. Researchers take sparse, irregular, heterogeneous, and unmatched data to claim, for example, an increase in water management conflicts in the 1980s and 1990s (Okpara *et al.*, 2015: 308–325). Yet their demonstration is

87 In general, suicide bombings claim ten to fifteen times more lives than classic attacks (Pape, 2006).

inconclusive because they eliminate non-drought years from their study, ruling out any possible comparison with so-called "normal" periods.

Aside from the fact that the Sahel was definitely more devastated by civil wars in the 1970s, it is extremely difficult to prove any direct, and even indirect, causal link between climate change and Boko Haram's use of violence, which has a lot to do with Nigeria's poor governance and the errors of the military crackdown. First of all, the lake was no longer shrinking when the sect emerged (Magrin *et al.*, 2015). Secondly, studies show that natural disasters can also trigger a surge of national solidarity and reduce the risk of civil war.[88] The causes of the conflict are not one-directional. For example, the receding lake waters exposed new lands over which there was competition and triggered an influx of migrants from other Nigerian regions and from as far afield as Mali in the 1970s and 1980s. Yet the lake's rising waters also drove tensions back up when they flooded entire villages (Platte, 2001: 71–81).

Most importantly, land-use conflicts in the Sahel have as much to do with climate variations as with corruption, speculation, predatory behaviour by the authorities, and encroachment by farmers and herders (Benjaminsen *et al.*, 2012: 97–111). They are clearly human-driven, especially considering the part played by the development of irrigation projects and more water-intensive crops in the tensions observed around Lake Chad since the 1970s. Given the many social, economic, and political causes for the violence, it is not really plausible to blame the emergence of Boko Haram on climate change, and it would be even more imprudent to think that raising the level of the lake would put an end to the activities of the sect's fighters, who actually take advantage of the area's marshlands to hide and escape the international coalition forces.

2.2. Poverty in the background

Many observers focus more on the role of poverty to explain the conflict and its development. They are correct in part, depending on the time frame to which their analysis applies. Poverty as such was not behind the Nigerian Taliban in 2003 or the first version of Boko Haram before the extrajudicial execution of its founder in 2009. Yet it did subsequently drive young people into the militant ranks, and the hostilities exacerbated the impoverishment of Borno's populations in a sort of vicious cycle of mutually reinforcing poverty and insurgency. However, it is not worth speculating too much about whether development aid and more resources could help demobilise the fighters, prevent future conflicts, or defuse

88 For example, the countries hit the most by what are called natural disasters are not those that post the highest number of civil wars (Slettebak, 2012: 163–176). See Devitt and Tol (2012: 129–145) for a study in the same academic journal that endeavours to demonstrate a positive relationship between drought and the tendency toward civil war.

other sectarian rebellions (Pérouse de Montclos, 2005: 135–149). It is well known that economic growth periods can also generate social tensions.

A number of elements suggest that the role of poverty is not quite as straightforward as it may seem. First of all, Boko Haram did not develop in the region's poorest areas or among the poorest segments of the population. Its initiators were Maiduguri city dwellers, and Borno was not the poorest state in the Nigerian federation before the 2009 insurgency (Pérouse de Montclos, 2012). If poverty had been the main driver of the insurgency, the sect should have been born in Diffa, Niger, or Maroua, Cameroon's poorest region with the lowest school enrolment rate, where three-quarters of the population were living below the poverty line in 2014 (Map 12). Moreover, the first elements of the Nigerian Taliban and then Boko Haram were not destitute; some of them were children of the elite. In the same vein, the Izala fundamentalists recruited rather from the urban merchant educated middle-class than from the illiterate rural masses, who were more inclined to follow the teachings of the traditional Sufi brotherhoods because they refused to keep their women at home and lose manpower for agricultural work. The Salafist model refers to the Prophet's beginnings in the city of Medina, to the extent that some Islamologists even talk about incompatibility with the rural world, especially the Bedouin and pastoral populations' nomadic life, which rules out gathering in a group to pray at a mosque (Planhol, 1968: 24).

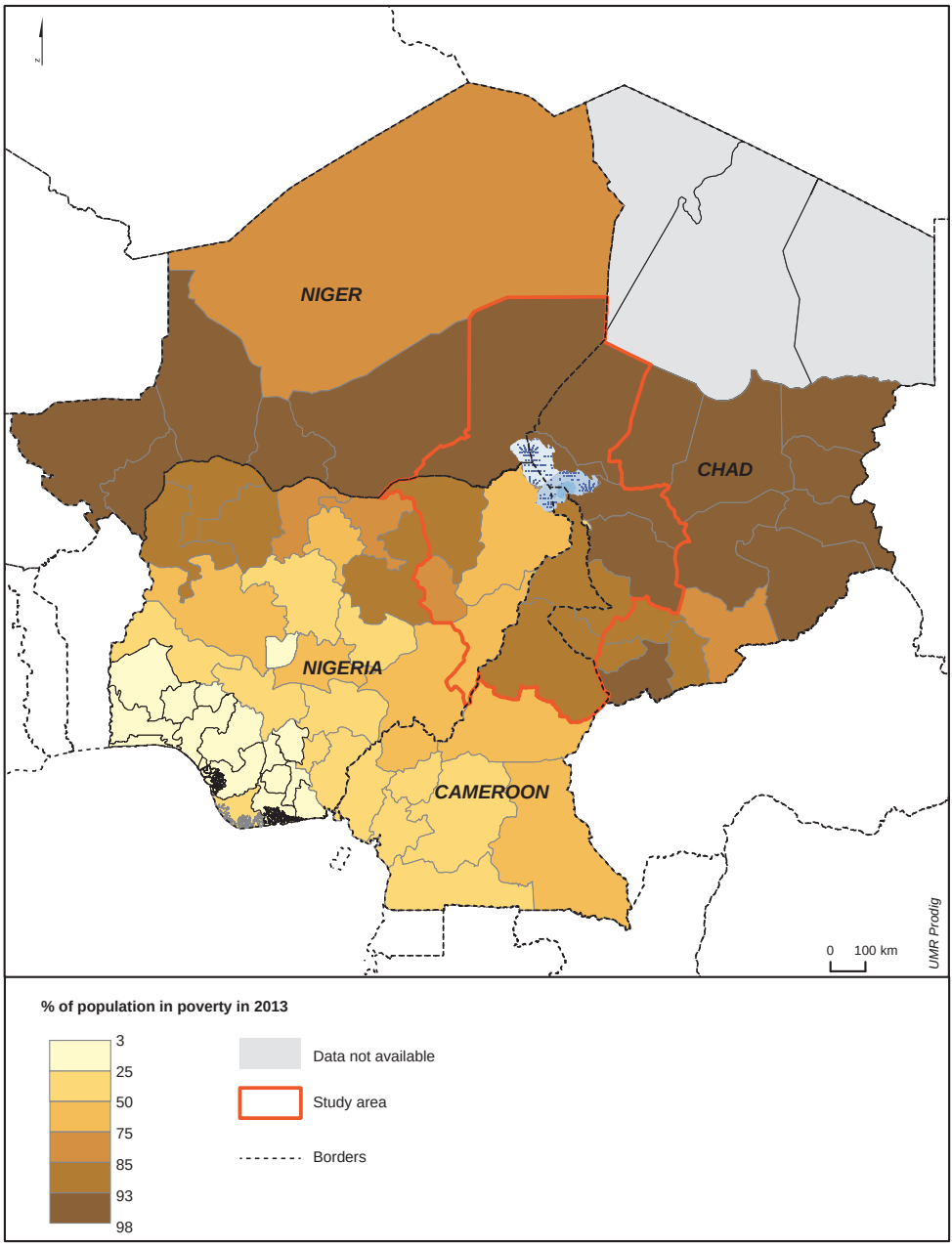
It was only later that Boko Haram's preachers attracted the poor of Maiduguri and the countryside. Mohammed Yusuf, in his sermons against the exploitation and corruption of the Muslim ruling class, answered to the frustration of unemployed youth who had no access to basic public services and who felt abandoned by the government in a region historically lacking in infrastructures. From his sanctuary (*markaz*) in Maiduguri, he made such offers as funding micro-businesses with loans. This enabled him to both recruit followers in debt and show up the shortcomings of government and the private sector in a non-Islamic society.[89]

The authorities also pushed some street vendors and motorcycle taxi operators into the arms of the militants. Thus the government ordered the police to impose mandatory wearing of a helmet and to ban the motorcycles used by the followers of Mohammed Yusuf to demonstrate against Ali Modu Sheriff in the streets of Maiduguri. The upshot of this so-called "Operation Flush" was that many motorcycle taxis (*okada* or *abacha*) were no longer able to operate. Many did not have the means to buy a helmet and took to wearing turbans in protest.[90]

89 Access to credit is notoriously difficult. For example, a survey conducted by the World Bank in 2011 found that just 20–30% of households in north-east Nigeria had a bank account and barely 0.1% had obtained a loan to start up or develop a business (NESTS, 2014: 33, 102; Mustafa, 2016: 11).

90 The chain of events that was to provoke Boko Haram's insurgency in 2009 is reminiscent in this respect of Usman dan Fodio's jihad, which started in 1804 as a tax-related uprising against the oppression of an emir who had just banned turbans, wearing veils … and carrying arms.

Map 12. Poverty in the Lake Chad region



Source: www.orpbi.org.uk, University of Oxford, 2013; based on census data from 2011 (Nigeria), 2010 (Chad), 2004 (Cameroon), and 2006 (Niger).

It is claimed that 40% of them consequently joined the group. Following the extrajudicial execution of Mohammed Yusuf in July 2009, a decree dated 7 July 2011 then confiscated as many as 34,000 *abacha* in Maiduguri and in the Jere suburbs (Anyadike, 2015, p.9). The 5,000 tricycles (*keke na pep*) that the government provided in their place benefited Ali Modu Sheriff's supporters and were hardly any use to the motorcycle taxi operators as a means of finding work again.

Following the declaration of a state of emergency in 2013, the escalation in hostilities, the *de facto* closure of the borders, the hardening of economic sanctions against the insurgents, and the development of the anti-terrorist coalition from 2015 in turn exacerbated the unemployment of young people liable to go over to the rebellion to provide for their needs and get their share of the spoils of war. The region's impoverishment went hand in hand with the group's criminalisation, as Boko Haram was not backed by Al-Qaida or Daesh and had to get funding through bank attacks, kidnappings, and racketeering. During this period, the economic crisis and social downgrading of entire segments of the population effectively became a key driving force behind the rebellion, which recruited growing numbers of young people motivated by the pillaging, especially in rural areas.

2.3. Controversies about Islam

Other observers, rather than stressing the role of the environment or poverty, focus on the question of religious indoctrination. Their line of reasoning, which overshadows political issues, is based on two main types of explanation: a clash of civilisations against the Christians and/or the corruption of an African Islam radicalised through Izala Salafism and Saudi Wahhabism. They therefore posit that the development of the Boko Haram sect was based on an opposition between "black", Sufi, traditional, syncretic, tolerant, and supposedly peaceful Islam, and an exogenous, fundamentalist, "radical", bellicose Arab Islam.

However, Africans from the Sahel did not need to wait for Wahhabi preaching and Saudi funding during the 1970s oil boom to wage holy wars. From Sokoto to Massina, the great jihads of the 19th century were driven by Sufi brotherhoods, which subsequently collaborated with the Europeans and are now criticised by young imams because of their links to secular, corrupt post-colonial regimes (Pérouse de Montclos, 2017b). It is historical nonsense to think that "radical" Islam would not have come into being without foreign Wahhabi influences. Some authors even see in this a form of contempt for the religious practices of black Africans, which are associated with fetishism even if Arab Muslims also believe in jinn spirits and the "evil eye" (Amselle, 2017: 19).

In any case, the little we know about the circumstances and social profile of the Boko Haram combatants recruited after 2009 does nothing to bear out the importance of Islamist indoctrination. There has been a lot of speculation in the

press about the role played by Koranic pupils, who are despised and treated like beggars, called *talibés* in Senegal (from the Arabic root *talib*, meaning a student) and *almajirai* in Nigeria (a Hausa word derived from *almuhajirun,* migrant in Arabic). Yet these itinerant Koranic schools (*tsangaya* in Hausa and *djanguirdé* in Fulfulde) teach traditional education and are usually run by Sufi marabouts (*mallam*) who oppose Salafism. In fact, the Boko Haram insurgency could well be attributed equally to the failure of government schools.

In Nigeria, for example, just one in ten insurgents say they joined the group out of religious convictions after attending a mosque or Koranic school (Botha & Abdile, 2016; Pérouse de Montclos, 2016). Nor does the sect appear in Cameroon to have reached the fundamentalist circles of the so-called *Mahabous* ("dissenters", a Musgum nickname) who live in closed districts such as Madagascar and Hillé Haoussa in Kousséri, Logone-et-Chari (Noray, 2002: 122). In Mayo-Sava, jihadist indoctrination concerned mainly the Mandara of Kerawa, who considered themselves better Muslims than their Mora and Mémé rivals. In the neighbouring department of Mayo Tsanaga, recruitment was conducted on a community basis based on the smuggling trade with Nigeria, especially in the towns of Tourou, Mabas, Zelevet, Mozogo, and Achighachia, where the insurgents handed out a little money to attract unemployed young people.

The local, majority-Muslim populations moreover had no illusions about the motives of the combatants. Although they criticised Boko Haram's doctrinal deviance and its ignorance of the texts supposed to justify a jihad, they do not appear to have attributed the development of the conflict to a problem of religious radicalisation. Going by the polls conducted in Cameroon, for example, they put forward reasons that had more to do with the lure of money and with feelings of frustration and revenge (Dynamique Mondiale des Jeunes, 2015).[91] Local perceptions differ indeed from the analysis proposed at macro level. Internationally, the theory of the clash of civilisations rather places the emphasis on the conflicts between Christians and Muslims along a frontline between the north and south, in Nigeria's Middle Belt but not in Borno.

In the absence of data on confessional allegiances since the 1953 census, it is actually difficult to know how many Christians and Muslims there are in Nigeria. A 2006 Afrobarometer poll, for example, reports that 44% of 2,198 adults interviewed said they were Muslim and 54% said they were Christian. Yet a demographic and health survey of 9,966 people in 2003 gives percentages of 50% and 48%, respectively (Odumosu *et al.*, 2009: 13). Reckoning on a population of 160 million inhabitants in 2010, the World Christian Database found similar proportions for Christians and Muslims, at 46%, with a larger percentage of

91 Socio-economic and political factors, rather than religious radicalisation, are also the main factors mentioned by the populations living in the border areas of eight Sahelian countries, according to polls never published and disputed for their lack of representativeness.

animists at nearly 8%.[92] Last but not least, the Pew Research Center analysts estimated the percentages of Christians and Muslims at 46% and 52% in 2008 (Lugo *et al.*, 2010: 147).

Actually, northern Nigeria has seen an extraordinary increase in Christians since the colonial period.[93] It is therefore possible that the resurgence of jihadism through Boko Haram reflects the rejection of a global modernity based on a Christian democratic and economic development model. In a majority-Muslim region, the fact nevertheless remains that the sect has killed mainly more Muslim than Christian civilians. Likewise, Boko Haram's rhetoric has essentially targeted "bad" Muslims. Conventional wisdom and stereotypes about the Islamisation of Africa, wars of religions, and the "radicalisation" of Islam should not obscure the fact that other factors undeniably contributed to the insurgency.

2.4. A youth revolt or an ethnic problem?

Indeed, Boko Haram can be understood as a youth revolt against the power of the elders: the politicians, the rich, the Muslim establishment, official Islam clerics, and so on. Easier access to women may also have attracted single men unable to afford the expense of a wedding, given that the Salafists condemn the exorbitant cost of African dowries inherited from pre-Islamic traditions (see Box 10). Yet generation divides and gender relations do not explain everything. Generally speaking, the insurgency above all revealed the region's social tensions, as Islam was used to justify the settlement of personal scores or resolve community disputes. Boko Haram is made up essentially of Kanuri, because it was born in Borno and Yobe. Some observers have therefore seen this as the expression of an ethnic agenda. In the region, jihadist movements have often been equated with one group in particular. In the 19th century, the Sokoto Caliphate was regarded as a Fulani Empire. In Kano in 1980, the Maitatsine sect was also interpreted as a Gwari revolt against Hausa domination.[94]

Yet Boko Haram is not an ethnic liberation front. Anthropologists, for that matter, encounter some difficulty when it comes to defining a Kanuri identity, formed historically by combining different types of populations under the rule of the Sultan of Borno. Rather than Kanuri royalism or nationalism, it was primarily the British who supported Borno's irredentist claims, to carry the referendum held under UN supervision in Northern Cameroons in 1961. The Nigerian government then took up the argument as its own to assert its sovereignty over some Lake

92 http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd

93 The region counts an estimated one-third of Christians today. A century ago, two-thirds of its nine million inhabitants were Muslims, going by a British survey of the Northern Nigeria Protectorate in 1911. Yet the remaining third were not Christian (Ostien, 2012; Pérouse de Montclos, 2013: 53–63; Smith, 1965: 117, 149).

94 "Maitatsine" is hence thought to come from the Gwari language, rather than Hausa, to mean "the one who damns" (Hiskett, 1994: 130).

Chad islands at the International Court of Justice in 2002. However, Boko Haram has never called for the restoration of the Borno Empire. Instead, its leaders have identified with Usman dan Fodio's victorious jihad rather than Muhammed al-Kanemi, the Muslim cleric who refused to pledge allegiance to Sokoto and saved the Sayfawa dynasty from the Fulani invasion of Borno in 1808.

Box 10

Boko Haram and women

In its early stages, Boko Haram set out to follow Salafist precepts and confine women to the roles of housewife and mother. Yet circumstances decided otherwise when the group went underground and turned to terrorist violence. The kidnappings and sexual slavery practices started in 2012 when Abubakar Shekau announced reprisals against the ill treatment that the sect's wives had suffered in prison (Apard, 2015: 146). As the conflict evolved, the women hence became victims, messengers, logisticians, spies, and combatants at the same time. They represented a tactical advantage, since soldiers were culturally reluctant to search them and they could therefore pass military checkpoints more easily, to the extent that Boko Haram also used men disguised as women to approach its targets. In addition, women served to replenish a group that had lost mainly male fighters. Last but not least, the international mobilisation to free the Chibok schoolgirls opened the jihadists' eyes to the girls' market and strategic value as bargaining chips and a media platform.

The first case of a suicide bombing by a woman was reported in Gombe in June 2014.[95] The phenomenon went on to attain proportions beyond compare with other terrorist organisations known for their use of women, including the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka. Boko Haram women perpetrated over 56% of the 434 suicide bombings reported from April 2011 to June 2017 (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Their attacks made a huge impression, enabling the insurgents to ramp up their reputation for cruelty, determination, audacity, and resilience to the military coalition of the four lake countries.

Hence the members of Boko Haram rejected the religious authority of the *Shehu* of Borno, seen as a lackey of imperialism and of the corrupt elites of post-independence Nigeria. Following Rabih az-Zubayr's Mahdist revolt, crushed by the French from Fort-Lamy in 1900, the *Shehu* was initially returned to his throne by the colonial power in 1902. Yet the conditions of his restoration marred his legitimacy. In fact, both the Germans in Douala and the English from Bauchi had supported different candidates from the al-Kanemi dynasty: the former with

95 In June 2014, another suicide bombing was committed by a woman in Lagos' Apapa port district. Abubakar Shekau claimed responsibility for the attack, but Boko Haram's involvement was contested by the security services.

Sanda Mandara, a sultan installed by the French just before their departure from Dikwa and Northern Cameroons; the latter with Abubakar Garbai, a man they had extricated from the influence of the French (Dusgate, 1985: 152). In other words, Borno under the colonial yoke found itself with two *Shehus*!

A century later, interference and political manipulation by the Governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff, also contributed to undermining the credibility of the sultan's traditional and religious authority. Thus the death of Mustafa Ibn Umar El-Kanemi in February 2009 had its part to play in the uprising of Boko Haram, because his successor, Umar Garbai Abba Kyari, was perceived as the governor's stooge and had neither the political will nor the standing required to mediate with the insurgents (Pérouse de Montclos, 2012). Ali Modu Sheriff then aggravated the problem when he asked the emirs to spy for and collaborate with an "occupying army". He also continued to interfere in the appointment of traditional leaders—for example, in March 2010 when he split the old Dikwa Emirate into two new entities, Bama and Dikwa, each with its own *Shehu*.

In this context, it could be speculated that Boko Haram expressed the frustration of the Kanuri, who had lost the past glory of the Borno Empire. The Kanuri were never discriminated against at the national level (see Chapter 2, Section 3.3), and their situation cannot be compared to that of the Fulani minority of Gombe and Adamawa, who had to obey the majority electoral rule since the end of the military dictatorship in 1999. But the Kanuri now suffer from the competition of successful Hausa merchants. In Maiduguri, for example, Kanuri became the minority language as the city turned cosmopolitan with the arrival of the victims of the drought in the Sahel, refugees from the civil wars in Chad, and migrants attracted by the oil boom of the 1970s.[96]

For its part, Boko Haram has always maintained a pan-Islamic stance. Its leaders have insisted on the defence of the *Ummah* ("community of believers"), rather than one ethnic group in particular. To "free" the Muslims from the oppression of the traditional and modern authorities of Borno, the movement was therefore careful to appoint non-Kanuri emirs in the areas it controlled in Dikwa and Gwoza.[97] In the district of Goulfey in Cameroon, for example, their emir, Mahamat Abacar Saley, was a Kotoko who started spreading Mohammed Yusuf's word in 2011 after taking Islamic instruction in Sudan, Chad, and Nigeria.

Boko Haram effectively expanded well beyond the Kanuri homeland, planting secret cells in Kano, Kogi, and Bauchi. The sect included Fulani of various

96 It is estimated that barely one-third of the inhabitants of Maiduguri still speak Kanuri, Shuwa Arabic, or the region's Chadic languages. Two-thirds have Hausa as their native language. Even the Kanuri admit that they prefer to teach Hausa to their children so they will succeed in life. Hausa is also attractive to the region's minorities because it is not associated with the domination of Borno's Kanuri nobility (Ross, 2002).

97 Interviews by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos in Borno and Adamawa in 2016 and 2017.

origins, Gwoza butchers from southern Borno, Tiv from Benue, and Shuwa Arabs from northern Nigeria and Cameroon, a population that some historians associate with the Baggara Arabs ("cattle herders") of Sudan and the Barma of Baghirmi. In late 2014, the group then started recruiting Buduma fishermen from the islands of Lake Chad. In 2012, a Boko Haram splinter group called Ansaru[98] also emerged in north-west Nigeria. In this regard, the theory of an ethnic revolt seems far too simplistic to explain what is behind the conflict.

2.5. Poor governance and dysfunctions of the state

Poor crisis management, blind crackdown, and the disputed legitimacy of the elites in power were all drivers behind the insurgency (Box 12). Initially, Boko Haram's call for the strict enforcement of Sharia law became popular because it condemned social injustice, the debauchery of the rich, and the corruption of Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. This rhetoric was not without its ambiguities. Even though Mohammed Yusuf criticised the wrongdoings of a "secular" State, he had followers in the government of Borno, especially the Minister for Religious Affairs, and he had himself been paid by the authorities to participate in an official Sharia committee. Another contradiction was that he blamed parliamentary democracy for the corruption of the ruling class since the return of civilians to power in 1999. Yet the roots of clientelism are very old, before the colonial era. Called *takwara* in Hausa or *juwuna* in Kanuri and Shuwa Arab, vassalage bonds consist, among others, in naming one's children after one's superior. They are used to settle disputes informally rather than going through costly, corrupt courts. Yet they also create reciprocal obligations of protection and mutual support that fuel the clientelistic networks of power (Krings, 2004: 283).

So corruption in Nigeria predates the oil boom of the 1970s with its massive and sudden influx of foreign currency. In Borno in the colonial era, it was quite frequent to pay kickbacks to secure a civil service position (Cohen, 1967: 107; Tignor, 1993: 175–202). The British sometimes deposed chiefs accused of embezzlement and, three years before independence in 1960, they set about dismissing or imprisoning numerous officials accused of corrupt practices (Cohen, 1970: 198).[99] These affairs were so common that they explain the high rate of civil servant turnover in the Borno administration: Ronald Cohen (1964: 503) shows, for example, that in a sample of 38 district heads covering a period of 60 years, 14 were dismissed and 16 transferred to other posts.

The problem also came from the move to put a stop to practices that were not seen as bribes in the old days but as tributes or religious obligations associated with alms-giving (*zakat*). Before the introduction of legal costs, for example,

98 The full name is the "Community of the Defenders of Black Muslims" (*Jama'at Ansar Al Muslimin Fi Bilad al-Sudan*).

99 See also the recollections of British Governor Sharwood Smith, Bryan (1969: 256).

plaintiffs used to offer gifts to judges (*alkali*) in Customary and Islamic courts. To save money, the British subsequently allowed judges and court clerks to continue taking a cut from the fines and sentences they handed down, amounting to around 10% in the case of debt collection or compensation to a victim's family. This practice contributed to inflating sentences and drove the colonial administration to put judicial staff on salaries at the end of the First World War. Nonetheless, the practices of paying gifts have persisted through to the present day.

After independence, elections then contributed to re-forging patron–client networks to secure a maximum of votes. The party in power in Nigeria's Northern Region had no hesitation in tampering with the results of the 1963 census to ask for a larger share of the federation's revenues in Gombe and Taraba—for example, on the Mambilla Plateau where it claimed to have 143,000 male voters when only 88,500 had been counted (Hare, 2013: 38, 143–145, 187). The stakes were especially high given that, in a first count in 1962, it had lost the demographic majority that conditioned the number of seats to which it could aspire nationally (see Box 11). The first coup d'État in 1966 and the Biafran War then militarised clientelism. On the pretext of protecting the interests of the least educated and least developed northern regions, Nigeria's federalisation process and the introduction of recruitment quotas also furthered promotions based on cronyism rather than competence or professional experience.

Box 11

Corruption by statistics: the early example of the censuses in Nigeria

The 1962 and 1963 censuses are the first known example of statistical tampering for fraudulent ends in post-independence Nigeria. The 1962 results, prematurely announced after a record lead-time of eight weeks, were initially revised upwards from a total of 42 to 52 million inhabitants and were then cancelled following protests by the southerners who found themselves in the minority.[100] In 1963, the authorities therefore had to scale up the number of census takers from 45,000 to

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100 The results, as it happens, did not reflect the transfer of territories in southern Nigeria to Cameroon in 1961. Moreover, the demographic growth rate, at 6% per year, was abnormally high probably due to inflated figures rather than an undercount by the last census organised by the British in 1953. There were also numerous irregularities: women secluded in Muslim homes in the north were underestimated; a "village" of 20,000 souls was miraculously "discovered" in Eket in the south-east; census takers had to be suspended for having counted the same people twice; and politicians had put pressure on their electorate by claiming that participation was a condition for improvements to basic services in rural areas (Mansell Prothero, 1956: 166–183; Udo, 1968: 97–105; Yesufu, 1968: 106–116).

…/…

180,000 and employ more literate women from the south to improve the count of illiterate Muslim households in the north.[1016] Enumeration units, however, were announced in advance, which could well have facilitated tampering. In addition, the operations lasted just four days as opposed to two weeks as had been the case previously. The northerners took advantage of the situation to pull back ahead with nearly 54% of a total now hovering around 56 million inhabitants. This percentage would even rise to 64% of a population of 80 million inhabitants in the 1973 census, whose results were just as controversial and were officially cancelled in 1975.

The return of civilian rule with the Second Republic in 1979 did not put an end to the problem. Instead, the elections exacerbated clientelism by encouraging the ruling class to buy votes and overcharge public procurement contracts to pay for its support. Borno and Gongola states, for example, gave their votes to a Kanuri businessman, Waziri Ibrahim, who had been implicated in a kickback scandal with American aircraft constructor Lockheed in 1975 (Panter-Brick, 1978: 166–197). As for the large-scale agricultural development programmes, they were quickly bankrupted and dismantled because of corruption and the liberalisation agenda of the structural adjustment programme of the 1980s. Supported by a 21 million US dollar loan from the World Bank in 1976, the National Livestock Development Project, for instance, was designed to promote stockbreeding by creating transhumance corridors and grazing areas over 115,000 ha of land. Yet the infrastructures provided for in the north-east were either not maintained or were simply never delivered.[102]

In 1983, the leaders of Muhammadu Buhari's coup d'État intended to fight corruption as Nigeria foundered in economic crisis. The Second Republic's most implicated politicians were imprisoned … and then released by General Ibrahim Babangida, who overthrew Muhammadu Buhari in 1985 (Ellis, 2016: 138). Some were even given positions in the government, which returned their confiscated goods to them. The regime became so corrupt that it had to put its own house in order by dismissing a military governor of Borno, Mohammed Lawan Maina, who had chalked up astronomical spending on an official visit by Prince Charles and General Ibrahim Babangida to Maiduguri in 1990 (Siollun, 2013: 182). When the junta led

101 At independence, Muslim rulers in the north did not bother counting women because the number of parliamentary seats allocated to them was set by region rather than by inhabitant. Northern Muslim women were authorised to vote for the first time by a military decree in 1976, a right that was then written into the 1979 Constitution, which established direct universal suffrage for presidential elections.

102 Symbolically, even the oldest forest reserve in the country (known as Gidan Jaja and created in 1919 before being turned into a transhumance area in Zamfara in 1957) folded despite funding from the European Union and USAID up until 1997 (Kuna & Ibrahim, 2016: 207).

by Sani Abacha, a Kanuri, took power in another coup d'État in 1993, it finished off emptying the state coffers, transferring the embezzled funds to offshore accounts.

In this context, the return of civilian rule in 1999 brought a glimmer of hope for a renewal and clean-up of the political establishment. The Fourth Republic, however, quickly dashed these hopes. Electoral competition, combined with greater democratic transparency, exposed corrupt vote buying and cronyism practices. By calling for a stricter enforcement of Sharia law, Mohammed Yusuf's sermons managed to capitalise on the demand for social justice, the poor's resentment of the rich, and the frustration of the Kanuri, who felt excluded from power since the election of a Yoruba Christian and a former general, Olusegun Obasanjo, to the presidency of Nigeria in 1999.

In 2009, the extrajudicial execution of the sect's leader and the brutality of the military repression also legitimated the jihad and pushed young people to join the rebels to escape arbitrary arrest and slow death by torture in prison (see Box 12). The author's interviews with Boko Haram fighters in 2015, confirmed by other sources in early 2016, found that just a small minority had joined the group to earn money, or out of religious conviction when the sect still had the opportunity to preach in mosques. The vast majority had taken up arms rather to protect themselves or avenge family killed by the security forces, reasons that are at odds with the usual narratives of a global jihadist conspiracy (Botha & Mahdi, 2016; Pérouse de Montclos, 2016: 878–895; UNDP, 2017). In practice, the embezzlement of the funds supposed to equip the army also enabled Boko Haram to score points off demoralised, underpaid soldiers whose wages had been appropriated by crooked officers. The corruption in the security forces meant that the insurgents could buy or seize weapons abandoned by retreating troops. Within the Nigerian army, embezzlement fuelled the soldiers' resentment of their hierarchy and encouraged mutiny and desertion.

Box 12

When crackdown and economic sanctions fuel insurgency and humanitarian crisis

Counter-terrorism abuses have proved counterproductive. It was following police brutality against members of the sect who refused to wear motorcycle helmets that Mohammed Yusuf initially called for jihad in 2009. His extrajudicial execution then drove the group underground to seek revenge. In 2013, the declaration of a state of emergency and the extension of the army's operations from the cities to the countryside triggered an upsurge in the number of victims in Nigeria. Then with the MNJTF in early 2015, the establishment of an anti-terrorist international coalition broadened the battlefield and was accompanied by a sharp increase in suicide bombings by Boko Haram in the four countries of the region, particularly against civilians (Warner & Matfess, 2017: 9).

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It is worth pointing out in this regard that the insurgents are not the only perpetrators of atrocities. Following a massacre by the Nigerian army in Baga next to Lake Chad in June 2013, the National Human Rights Commission warned against the "humanitarian crisis" that the excessive use of force and anti-terrorist abuses would trigger (National Human Rights Commission, 2013). Subsequent events proved it correct. In ten years of conflict, from 2006 to 2016, the Nigerian security forces killed at least half of the 33,000 civilian and military casualties, as reported by the University of Ibadan's NigeriaWatch database compiled from local press articles and reports from human rights defence organisations.[103]

Such a finding is hardly surprising since the police and army are known nationwide for being trigger-happy, shooting without warning and with impunity. The NigeriaWatch research group showed that the Nigerian security forces shoot and kill in over half of the fatal incidents (riots, community clashes, assassinations, etc.) in which they are involved—a proportion that can climb to up to 80% in the case of the military (Pérouse de Montclos, 2016: 112–140). In other words, events take an even bloodier turn when the security forces arrive to restore order and, in principle, save lives. While combating Boko Haram, the development of a scorched earth strategy, closure of the borders, and evacuation of buffer zones have also fuelled the food crisis by preventing farmers, cattle breeders, fishermen, and merchants from going about their business. The anti-terrorist coalition's economic sanctions, designed to deprive the insurgents of their supply sources, have considerably hampered the population's capacity for resilience.

2.6. A conflict exacerbated by corruption and suspicion

Counter-terrorism, military secrecy, and impunity have exacerbated corruption in Nigeria's North East. In 2013, the declaration of a state of emergency contributed to obscuring the management of public resources. Under the auspices of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a finance minister previously with the World Bank, Abuja undertook to publish the sums disbursed to the federation's 36 states in the press every month. But the central government's transparency pledges were very limited at the local level. At best, the states' assemblies published budget plans at the beginning of the fiscal year. As the Fiscal Responsibility Act applied only to the federal level, the Debt Management Office barely had the means to hold in check the borrowings by state and local governments, which have often sidestepped all the rules of prudence to secure loans at prohibitive rates and become almost bankrupted.

The government of Borno was the only one in Nigeria that did not publish its budget, whether in terms of revenue, debt stock, recurrent expenditure, or

103 http://www.nigeriawatch.org/index.php?html=7

capital investment.[104] As with other states, it relied much on the "security vote", an official slush fund that is meant to act as a source of discretionary spending to respond quickly to threats to peace. This special line item exists at all local government levels in Nigeria and generally serves, on various security pretexts, to co-opt competitors, pay off allies, or get rid of opponents by hiring henchmen to eliminate them (Albin-Lackey 2007; Egbo, 2012: 597–614). Its disbursements total an estimated 5% of national government expenditure (Andersen & Matthew, 2017: 8).

In the case of Borno, the "security vote" has allegedly been used by Governor Kashim Shettima (ANPP) to fund his political machine and buy land, petrol stations, and housing in Maiduguri. It also financed army operations and CJTF patrols to compensate for the lack of police and the degeneration of the situation in Nigeria's North East, the opposition's stronghold under President Goodluck Jonathan (PDP). Some militia have been put on the payroll of justice minister and prospective successor to Kashim Shettima, the lawyer Kaka Shehu Lawan.[105]

Another adverse effect of military repression is that the crackdown triggered resentment against the authorities accused of massacring the population, abandoning civilians, doing secret deals with the insurgents, and seeking to prolong the conflict to settle scores and line their pockets. Suspicions have taken different forms around Lake Chad. In Maiduguri in July 2009, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff was first suspected of having ordered the extrajudicial execution of Mohammed Yusuf to prevent any hearing that might reveal the deals he had done with the Boko Haram militants to win the regional elections in April 2003 and 2007. In N'Djaména in August 2015, the population then suspected the authorities of hurriedly executing the June suicide bombings' mastermind, Bana Faye (alias Mahamat Moustapha), the very day after he was sentenced to death in order to cover up his collusion with the Chadian military to procure weapons and sell them cars stolen in Nigeria.

In their version of "conspiracy theory", the people from southern Nigeria and Cameroon also suspected the opposition party northerners of supporting Boko Haram to destabilise, if not topple, the governments of presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Paul Biya, both Christians. In Abuja, during the electoral campaign in 2014, the authorities insinuated that Muhammadu Buhari was a Muslim Brother in favour of Sharia law, and Boko Haram was perceived as the vengeful expression of the northerners frustrated at having lost power since the end of the military dictatorship in 1999. In the south, in particular, the CAN lobby stirred up

104 See, for example, the data on the 35 other states online on yourbudgit.com

105 In neighbouring Yobe State, security vote payments to the army and police have apparently been less regular, paid out on an *ad hoc* basis, and reported to have stopped following the 2015 election, when President Muhammadu Buhari came to power and committed to directly supporting the military effort. Interview by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos with the Governor of Yobe, Ibrahim Geidam, in Abuja in May 2016.

old fears of a jihadi push towards the sea, as with Usman dan Fodio's Fulani in the 19th century. Suspicions were also aired about a fifth column within ruling parties. In Yaoundé, Kanuri Deputy Prime Minister Amadou Ali was accused of complicity with Boko Haram even though his house in Kolofata had been attacked by the insurgents in July 2014.[106] In northern Cameroun and Nigeria, local councillors and traditional leaders were also targeted. Caught between a rock and a hard place, they had to compensate for the lack of protection by the security forces, even if it meant supplying the rebels to avoid being attacked. The Mayor of Fotokol in Cameroon and the Chairman of the Mafa LGA in Nigeria were, for example, arrested in September 2014 and January 2017, accused of harbouring members of Boko Haram.

Last but not least, the authorities were suspected of seeking to prolong the conflict for their own profit. In Nigeria, the army benefited handsomely from the increase in arms expenditure, with overcharged contracts. In Niger, the population moreover suspected the government of ordering the evacuation of the Yobe River banks and then the Lake Chad islands in May 2015 to free up agricultural land for a Saudi company, Al Horaish, which had signed an operating agreement with the regional council of Diffa in November 2014.[107] The conspiracy theories hence gave rise to a significant paradox: on the one hand, they revealed an immense distrust of the political authority; on the other, they reflected a demand for protection by the state, while nationalism sometimes transcended ethnic and religious divisions, as in Nigeria during the 2015 presidential election.

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106 Suspicion also fell on Marafa Hamidou Yaya, an opposition member from the north imprisoned since 2012 (Bertolt, 2017: 430).

107 The project signed under a public–private partnership contract was all the more criticised in that it left it up to the municipality to compensate the farmers and conduct an environmental impact study in an area that was beyond its remit. With the region's food production already failing to cover the population's needs, local Al Horaish subsidiary, *Fleuve Niger*, was set up to develop agriculture for export to Nigeria (Diori & Tchangari, 2016: 8, 31).

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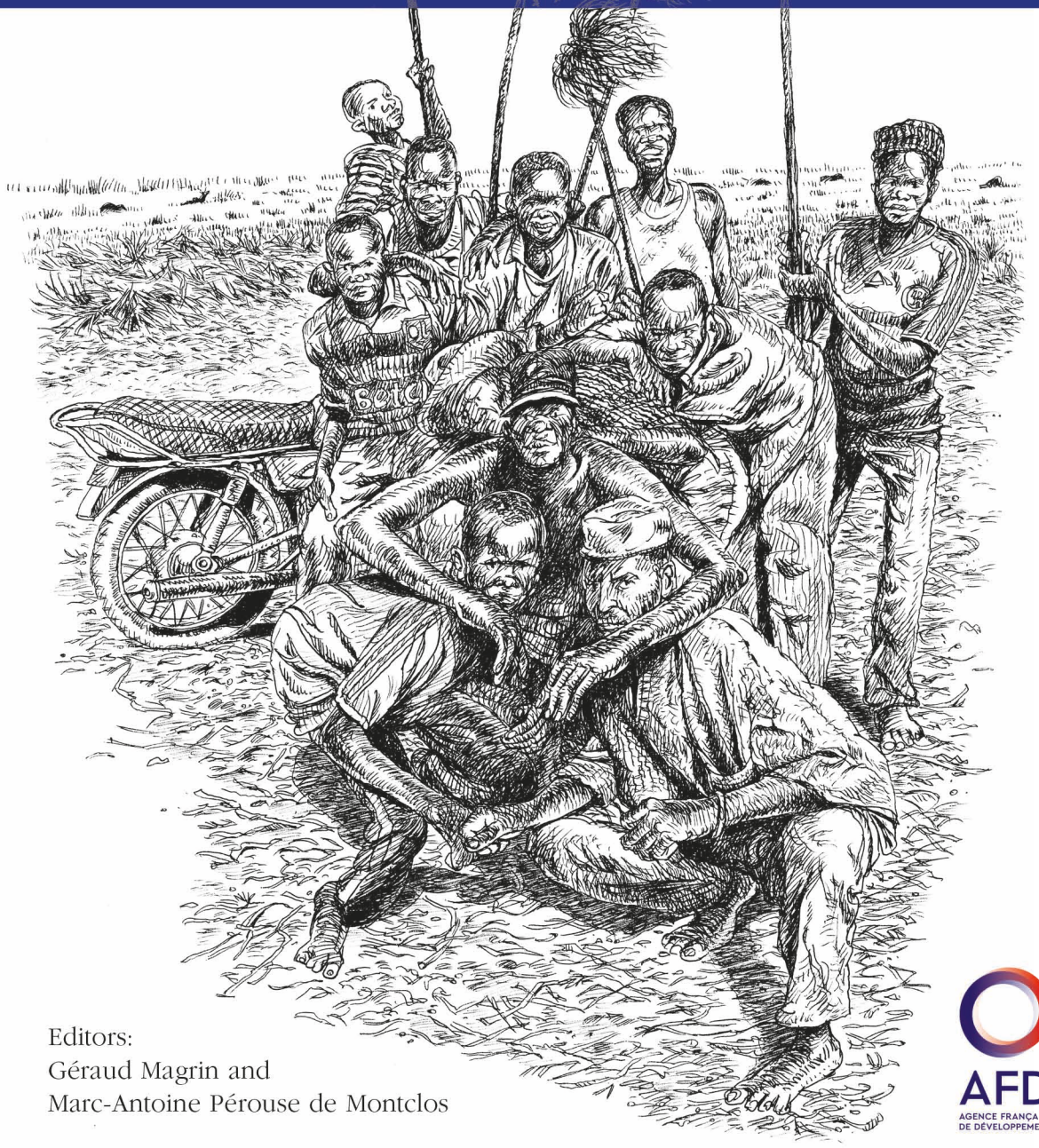

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Foreword

This report covers the benchmarking study on the Lake Chad region drawn up by the Research Institute for Development (IRD) under the terms of reference provided by the French Agency for Development (AFD). The main findings were obtained from workshops and field missions conducted from March to June 2017.

The introduction was written by Géraud Magrin and Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos.

Chapter 1 was written by Emmanuel Chauvin, Charline Rangé, Jacques Lemoalle, Géraud Magrin, Christine Raimond, Sylvain Aoudou Doua, Hadiza Kiari Fougou, Abdourahmani Mahamadou, Ahmadu Abubakar Tafida, and Abdullahi Liman Tukur.

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Appendix 1 was written by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos.

Appendix 2 was written by the entire team.

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