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ISS Research report

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The report, at the request of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, is an initiative to provide research and advocacy aimed at increasing awareness and debate on the evolution of violent extremist organizations in Lake Chad basin. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives funded specific sections of the report.

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Executive Summary

This report, produced by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), is the first in a two-part study examining current dynamics with regards to violent extremist organisations (VEOs) operating in the Lake Chad region (Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger). The report examines factionalism within Boko Haram, while the accompanying report profiles current responses and challenges.

In August 2016, Boko Haram officially split into two groups – Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA), led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, and Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad (JAS), led by long-time militant Abubakar Shekau. The rupture occurred after some militants opposed to the continuation of Shekau’s rule secured the support of Islamic State, replacing him with al-Barnawi. Shekau rejected the demotion, and instead began commanding a faction comprised of fighters loyal to him.

The roots of the rupture have been present for some time, and revolve around a few key concerns: Shekau’s dictatorial leadership style, a need to revive the movement during a period of territorial loss, and most pertinently, a debate over who is an acceptable target of the group’s violence. In particular, ISIS-WA and JAS differ ideologically in terms of whether Muslim civilians can and should be targeted. JAS has argued that anyone who does not actively support the group is essentially a government collaborator, and thus is worthy of attack. ISIS-WA holds a stricter view with regards to Muslim civilian targeting and has advocated shifting the locus of violence back towards government forces and installations instead.

The divergent paths each group has taken in the nearly two years since their split can be traced back to this ideological divide. JAS has been responsible for a wave of suicide attacks, frequently deploying female and child bombers, against civilian soft targets in the region. ISIS-WA has on the other hand preferred to engage in less frequent but more large-scale assaults primarily targeting military structures. Both conduct violence outside this dichotomy, while it is also likely that some militants do not fully subscribe to either faction – but this overall trend explains a significant proportion of attack patterns in the Lake Chad region since 2016.

The factions themselves have largely ignored each other since the split, both in terms of messaging and violence, though sporadic clashes have occurred. Geographically JAS remains confined to south-central Borno around the Sambisa Forest, and along the Cameroonian border. ISIS-WA initially established a stronghold in Lake Chad and along the Niger border, but has subsequently expanded southwards, now with a presence in Yobe State and parts of south-central Borno as well. The enlarged areas of influence place the factions in a few areas of general overlap, but the situation remains fluid, as both adjust to continued military pressure.

Neither ISIS-WA nor JAS have demonstrated substantial external linkages, although ISIS-WA’s messaging continues to be coordinated with Islamic State media outlets, while the faction itself is still allied to Islamic State’s global network of terrorist affiliates. Nonetheless, little evidence of practical ties on the ground has emerged, including with other Islamic State-aligned groups operating in the Sahel and North Africa. Rather both groups rely predominately on local means to sustain themselves. Financing is emblematic of this dynamic, as both generate revenue by extorting those living in areas of their influence, taxing the trade of commodities such as cattle and fish, and conducting high-profile kidnapping operations.

A priority for ISIS-WA has been to resurrect relations with the civilian populace after militant excesses under Shekau’s leadership. This shift can be seen in the reduced rate of civilian casualties during ISIS-WA attacks,

and shifts in patterns of engagement. Nonetheless, a revival of popular support remains a difficult prospect, as many civilians have been scarred by the recent actions of extremist actors in the region. Additionally, those in areas of ISIS-WA influence often have little choice but to interact with the militants, as the faction remains capable of extreme violence, especially against those who violate its rules.

Yet ISIS-WA's attempts to redefine its relations with the civilian population could make it more of a long-term threat to regional stability than that posed by JAS. The concern remains that future discontent against regional governments – driven by conditions that led to the popularity of Boko Haram founder Muhammad Yusuf in the first place and which largely persist today – may be channelled through groups like ISIS-WA, which appear to be sympathetic and offer an alternative path. In this sense, one key strategic element behind the division of Boko Haram into two groups has been the development of a more long-term vision by ISIS-WA, which threatens regional stability in the Lake Chad region, a situation that is likely to endure into the near future.

Introduction

The movement commonly known as Boko Haram, which has ravaged north-east Nigeria for the past nine years, has expanded its violence into the Lake Chad region (Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon) since 2014.¹ In August 2016 Boko Haram announced that it had split into two major groups, thus complicating efforts to reduce the influence of violent extremist organisations (VEOs) operating in the Lake Chad region. Now instead of facing a single Boko Haram movement, national and regional actors are working against two different entities with a shared history but divergent operating methods. It is imperative for policymakers and others interested in countering the insecurity afflicting the region to appreciate these differences fully in order to respond appropriately.

This report, the first in a two-part series aimed at addressing a gap in contemporary understanding of violent extremist organisations operating in the Lake Chad region, will examine the different paths the factions have taken since their split, with a particular focus on the impact on civilians. The second report will examine the Lake Chad environment and regional responses.

For the sake of simplicity, the report distinguishes between the Barnawi/Nur-led and Shekau-led factions of Boko Haram, referring to the former as Islamic State-West Africa (ISIS-WA) and the latter as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS).

Methodology

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) undertook extensive desktop research, relying on secondary sources such as local media coverage, academic articles, and other reporting on conflict dynamics in the Lake Chad region, in addition to primary sources like military updates and messaging from violent extremist actors themselves. The ISS also utilised quantitative datasets for a mixed-methods approach, relying on a database that it maintains of violent incidents likely attributable to Boko Haram to analyse conflict trends, and verifying them with other similar catalogues of attacks.²

The ISS and its partners supplemented the desktop research with field visits to Nigeria (Abuja and Maiduguri), Cameroon (Maroua, Mora and Kolofata) and Chad (N'Djamena) in March-April 2018. The ISS relied on previous fieldwork conducted in the Diffa region of Niger, in addition to follow-up interviews with Diffa and Niamey-based respondents, to ensure a robust regional approach. The field research was combined with the desktop review to triangulate information. Peer and external reviews were also conducted to further validate the analysis.

Across the four countries of the Lake Chad region, more than 75 total interviews were conducted, including with government officials, humanitarian organisation personnel, civil society members, diplomatic representatives, security representatives, vigilante members, traditional leaders, and other researchers. During the course of the field research in Nigeria, an additional 45 respondents from eight local government areas (LGAs) in Borno state affected by the crisis were surveyed.³ This included respondents from Mobbar, Magumeri, Bama, Dikwa, Damboa, Gwoza, Ngala, and Konduga LGAs to grant a geographic balance in terms of coverage and obtain first-hand accounts of current dynamics from the populations most affected.

Interviews were primarily conducted individually, although focus groups were utilised on occasion. The responses were derived from a series of open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires, in order to allow participants to express themselves freely. The identities of those interviewed have been kept confidential to protect them and maintain the anonymity of the information provided.

The Evolution of Boko Haram

Boko Haram's origins lie in the sermons and activism of Muhammad Yusuf in the early 2000s.⁴ Yusuf, a charismatic preacher critical of the Nigerian government, who advocated a religiously inspired societal transformation, was able to build up a strong following in Maiduguri and its environs through his popular sermons and community outreach initiatives. Though it is frequently debated whether Yusuf intended to pursue a path of change through a violent confrontation with the Nigerian state, a clash between his followers and the police in mid-2009 erupted into a large-scale battle, resulting in the death of up to 1 000 Boko Haram members, including Yusuf himself.

Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau, subsequently took over the movement and pursued a path of dedicated violence, engaging in assassinations, bombings and suicide attacks across an expanded operating range. Boko Haram underwent a major transformation in mid-2013 when a state of emergency, combined with the emergence of vigilante actors coalescing under the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), helped push its members from urban strongholds in Maiduguri into the countryside.⁵ Thereafter, Boko Haram became a rural-based insurgency and began to increase attacks on civilian targets in retribution for perceived support for the anti-Boko Haram CJTF. In 2014 Boko Haram initiated regular attacks in northern Cameroon, followed by an extension of violence to Niger and Chad in early 2015.⁶

In March 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to Islamic State (ISIS), allowing his movement to become an official wilayat (province). Boko Haram had begun holding territory and governing populations in the nine months prior to its pledge, but its alliance with ISIS did not result in additional battlefield gains. Rather, the movement suffered a steady series of territorial losses through concerted action by the military forces of affected countries and the coordinated regional response of the five-nation Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).⁷

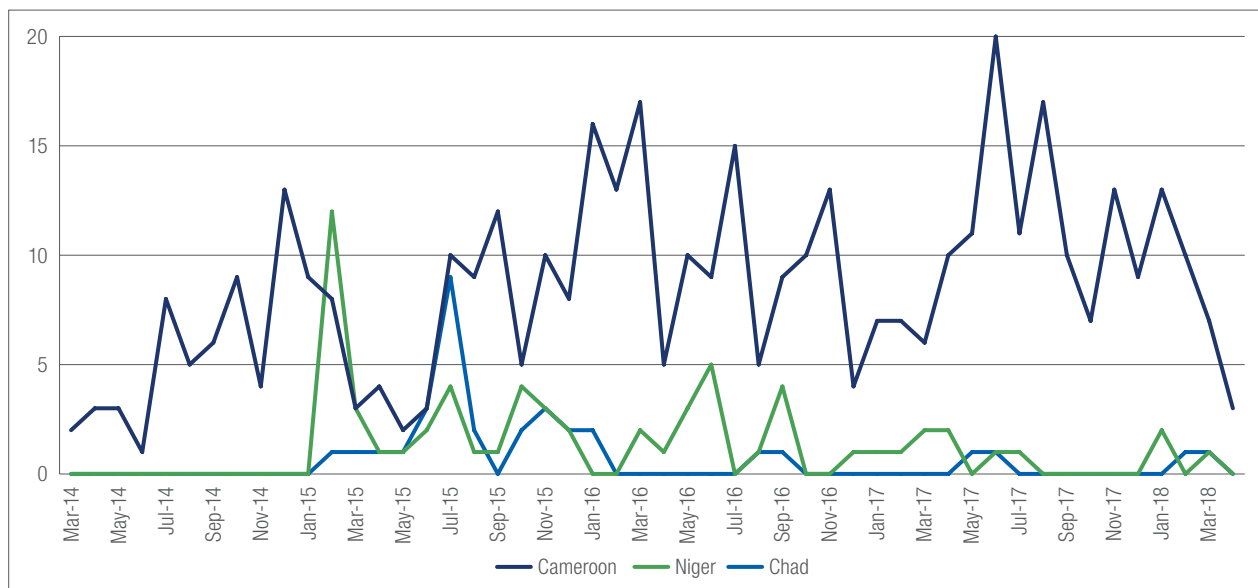
Today Boko Haram remains a substantial threat to the Lake Chad region, even though it no longer controls territory as it did in 2013-14. The Nigerian army has recovered most major population centres but the countryside remains insecure, as attack patterns indicate.⁸ The impact on civilians has been massive – more than two million have been displaced, while an estimated 20 000 have been killed through both militant attacks and security force operations to counter them.⁹ Given the lack of access in remote locations of the Lake Chad region, the true toll of the devastation is probably even higher.¹⁰ The ongoing humanitarian crisis has led to an inflow of international actors into the region, but the scale of the disaster has outpaced the response thus far.¹¹

Actions by the Nigerian military and government have been complicated by Boko Haram's split into two major groups. The split was predicated on a number of factors, some of which had been present within the movement for some time and/or had influenced previous attempts by group members to disassociate themselves from Shekau. The dynamics underpinning the split, and the different trajectories of each group since then, are crucial to understanding the present state of violent extremism in the Lake Chad region and, in turn, the need for nuanced responses to counter it (for a more detailed discussion, see section below: The Split)

Boko Haram in the Region

Following years of non-violent activity in the region, Boko Haram militants initiated regular attacks on all Nigeria's Lake Chad neighbours by 2015, signalling its emergence as a regional threat.¹²

Violent incidents attributed to Boko Haram in Cameroon, Niger and Chad per month between March 2014 and April 2018



Source: ISS database of attacks, derived from local media reporting

Cameroon

Nigeria has been the epicentre of both Boko Haram's evolution and the crisis, but Cameroon has been the second most affected country, with almost daily violence along its border with Nigeria since 2014.

Prior to that, Boko Haram militants had used Cameroonian territory as a sanctuary, a logistical hub and a recruitment ground, taking advantage of porous borders and common links. This was evident early in the movement's formation – for example, after the 2009 clashes Boko Haram members fled into Cameroon, while Muhammad Yusuf's preaching resonated throughout the region, attracting non-Nigerian adherents. Later, a series of arms caches discovered in northern Cameroon and presumed to be destined for Boko Haram symbolised the importance of Cameroonian territory along the trafficking pipeline from Chad and beyond.¹³

From N'Djamena, arms have moved through Cameroon along the Logone and Chari rivers (Kousséri-Goulfey-Bodo) towards Nigeria, passing through Mayo-Sava (Banki, Amchide, Kerawa, Kolofata) or the Mayo-Tsanaga (Mora, Mémé, Mayo Moskota) departments.¹⁴

Nonetheless, in his messaging and actions, Shekau initially ignored Cameroon. This began to change in 2013, around the same time as Boko Haram shifted from an urban-based to a rural movement in Nigeria. The first Boko Haram attacks in Cameroon were financially based. The group conducted four kidnapping-for-ransom abductions in 2013-14, which garnered more than US\$20 million in total.¹⁵ By 2014, reports of recruitment from Cameroon had also increased. For example, Cameroonian Deputy Prime Minister Amadou Ali noted that year that he had a list of 450 'young people' from his hometown of Kolofata who had joined Boko Haram.¹⁶

Recruitment quickly shifted from enlistment by indoctrination or financial and material incentives, to more coercive means. Men, women and children, at times whole villages, were abducted and taken to group hideouts.¹⁷ These forced enlistment campaigns not only strengthened the militants, they also established a climate of fear. Some deserted their villages for fear of being forcibly enlisted, a situation that persists today. According to a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, there are more than 300 empty villages along the Nigerian border, from Darak to Bourha.¹⁸

Cameroon, which had originally viewed the militants as a Nigerian problem, became involved in the fight against Boko Haram out of concern that it might become a target.¹⁹ Although Cameroon perceived the organisation to have originated outside the country, Boko Haram also would not have been as successful

if certain internal factors had not laid the foundations. By 2014, the Cameroon military had become actively involved in the conflict and Boko Haram initiated a regular campaign of violence in Cameroon's Far North province, which has continued to 2018.²⁰

Today the areas of Cameroon under militant influence include those along the foothills of the Mandara Mountains and the southern approaches to Lake Chad – encompassing the Mayo-Tsanaga, Mayo-Sava, and Logone-et-Chari departments of the Far North region. Incursions are often planned from Nigeria and driven by revenge or the need to loot supplies.²¹ Interviewees in northern Cameroon noted that the element of surprise and speed of execution enables the militants, who often rely on motorbikes, to avoid detection. In addition, over the past two years soldiers have, at times, been hindered in aiding victims of the attacks through the militants' mining of certain roads.²² Suicide attacks along the border also remain a common occurrence (see section below: Attack Patterns)

Niger

The south-east portion of Niger retains close ties with Borno State, and developments south of the border typically resonate in this region. The emergence of Muhammad Yusuf in Maiduguri was no different, with his sermons finding their way to a ready audience in Niger. At the time of the pivotal July 2009 clashes, a number of Nigeriens had joined the movement, while others talk about the movement using Nigerien territory as a rear base after that.²³

As in Cameroon, Boko Haram recruitment in Niger had accelerated by 2014.²⁴ Recruitment particularly targeted fellow Kanuri communities, especially along the Koumadougou River that demarcates the border.²⁵ In early 2015, Boko Haram conducted its first attack in Niger, around the same time that Nigerien security forces were becoming more active in operations to counter its growth. Though it has not been able to replicate a similar rate of violence to that of northern Cameroon, Boko Haram attacks in Niger, predominately along the Nigerian border, became a regular occurrence between 2015 and 2016. By 2017 security operations had managed to reduce the overall rates of violence, although sporadic incidents continue. The ISIS-WA faction in particular has claimed a string of attacks just across the border over the past two years. This predominately occurs in the Diffa department of the Diffa region, although attacks also occur in Maïné-Soroa and N'guigmi departments as well.

Local researcher commenting on the duality of some south-eastern Nigerien towns

Some areas in south-eastern Niger have both provided support for, and been targeted by, the militants. The town of Bosso is typical, serving as a recruitment ground but also giving refuge to individuals fleeing Boko Haram, while also suffering from attacks. For example, by mid-2016 Bosso's population of 6 000 had almost quadrupled with the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees fleeing the violent extremist group. Most of their villages had been burnt down and food reserves and valuables looted.²⁶ In addition, Bosso was the target of a major incursion by militants in June 2016, which led to their temporarily taking control and seizing arms from a military base.

Chad

Of Nigeria's Lake Chad neighbours, Chad has been the least affected by the evolution of Boko Haram, but it also suffered one of the most high-profile assaults when twin suicide attacks took place at two police installations in its capital, N'Djamena, in June 2015. This was followed by another suicide attack on a market a few weeks later. A few months prior to that Boko Haram militants had conducted their first attack on Chadian soil in the village of Ngouboua, alongside Lake Chad.²⁷

Audio cassettes of Muhammad Yusuf's preaching have widely circulated in Chad, while in 2014, Boko Haram videos in the Boudouma language also surfaced in Chad, an indication of the desire to penetrate local communities.²⁸ Chad was also alarmed by Boko Haram's seizure of territory in Nigeria in 2014, concerned that continued expansion of militant territory may affect the landlocked nation's access to regional ports. In response, Chad took the lead in kick-starting regional operations to counter Boko Haram,

in concert with Niger and Cameroon. Despite resistance from Nigeria at first, this activity enjoyed initial success – for example, in January 2015 the Chadian army temporarily took control of Malam Fatori in Nigerian territory, along with the border towns of Gamboru, Damasak and Gashigar thereafter.

Following the dismantling of the cell in N'Djamena responsible for the attacks, Boko Haram's presence in the country has largely been restricted to the Lake Chad area. Violence also continues to occur sporadically, but at lower levels than in 2015. Nonetheless, the militants remain immersed in the islands of Lake Chad, posing a threat to both civilians in the area and to border security.

The Split

In August 2016, Islamic State announced a new leader for its West Africa Province, a development that carries significant ramifications today. With Shekau refusing to surrender his leadership, two factions emerged – ISIS-WA and JAS – resulting in two distinct movements. An examination of the history and reasoning behind this split is critical to understanding the contemporary dynamics of Islamist militancy in the Lake Chad region.

Timing

The split was first unveiled in an interview in the ISIS weekly, *Al-Naba*, in August 2016, when Abu Musab al-Barnawi was announced as wali (governor) of the group, but the actual break may have occurred a few months earlier.²⁹ An International Crisis Group report placed the date as early as May 2016, when Barnawi and Mamman Nur, another key member of ISIS-WA, reportedly left a Shura Council meeting.³⁰ In June 2016 United States Africa Command (US AFRICOM) commander General Thomas Waldhauser informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that a group of disgruntled Boko Haram members had broken away because of Shekau's unwillingness to adjust his operational methods in line with ISIS guidelines. Waldhauser cited the continued use of child suicide bombers as one of the key prohibitions laid down by ISIS but ignored by Shekau.³¹

Respondents involved with Boko Haram at the time of the split reported similar, but slightly different, dynamics. One related how Nur, Barnawi and another commander by the name of Aliyu had met secretly with a few 'light-skinned' individuals eight to nine months prior to the split (see text box below). These incidents are difficult to confirm, but those surveyed observed that while many members left with, or followed, the Barnawi/Nur group at the time of the split, more people initially stayed than fled.

Testimony of a female respondent from Damasak

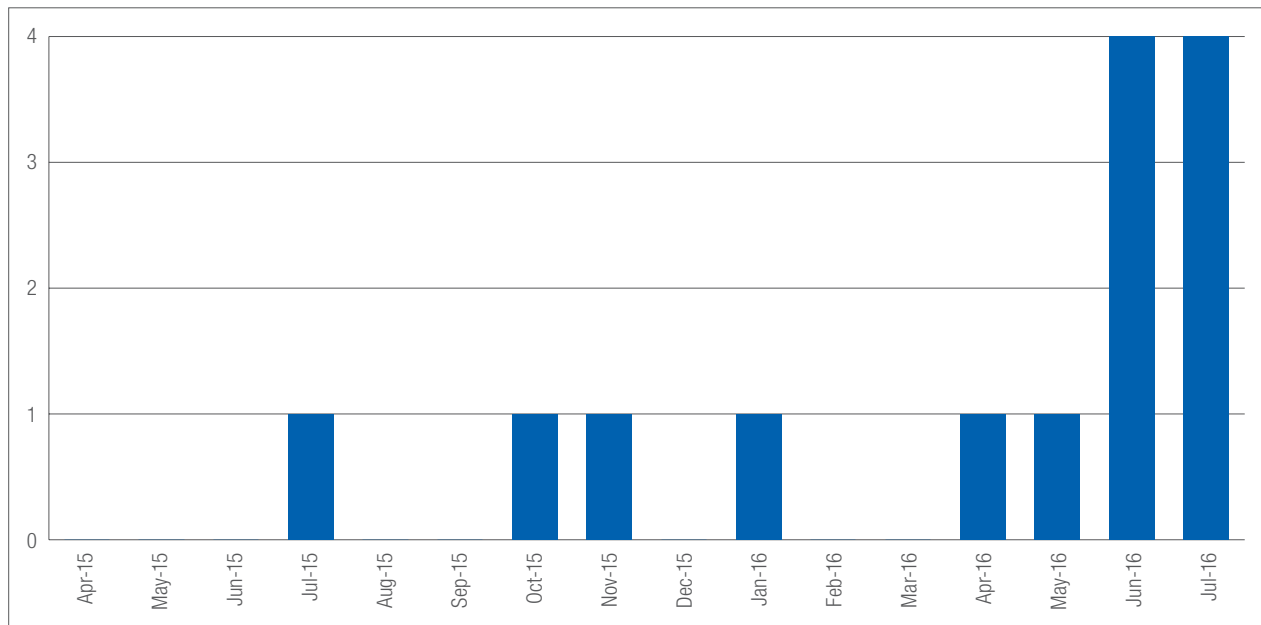
I was captured in Damasak when the Boko Haram fighters attacked the town in 2014. We remained captives in Damasak for about two months. Then they took four of us as brides and we travelled to Gwoza, where we stayed for six months. My 'husband' went back to Damasak and was killed by Chadian forces. I remarried his second-in-command and was taken to Sambisa Forest where I stayed for one year and eight months – before my group went with the Mamman Nur faction to the Lake Chad area.

Before Mamman Nur left, some 'light skinned people' had come to the camp to have a meeting which was attended by Nur, Aliyu, and Habib [Barnawi]. Shekau was not aware of the meeting, but when he heard, he was very angry. Shekau detained Nur and Habib and ordered his fighters to go after Aliyu, who had fled. When Shekau's fighters brought back Aliyu's corpse, Shekau lamented that he had not asked them to kill Aliyu, and said may 'Allah forgive us all'. Nur and Habib subsequently apologised and Shekau later released them, warning that such should not happen again.

After about eight to nine months, Nur left secretly with Habib and other leaders. Some of their followers later went away gradually, but many did not go with either side at first. Others just went back to their families. We stayed for about four months before our group also left to join the Nur faction. There were clashes during the separation but because there were many groups staying in different places, the fighting I saw was not too much.

The groundwork for the split was probably laid in the months preceding August 2016. This corresponds to trends in ISIS messaging about its West Africa Province during this period. After Shekau pledged allegiance to ISIS in March 2015, the ISIS messaging apparatus issued six statements advertising West Africa Province attacks until May 2016. Nonetheless a shift occurred in June 2016 during which the number of statements escalated, with eight over two months – surpassing the total of the past 15 months. The claimed attacks largely conformed to the profile of violence adhered to by the Barnawi/Nur elements and took place within their presumed geographic location. This was thus likely an attempt by ISIS to promote the activities of Barnawi/Nur ahead of making the rupture with Shekau public.

Islamic State attack claims concerning West Africa Province from April 2015 to July 2016



Source: Compilation of ISIS social media statements

In addition, in early June 2016 there was a major assault on the Nigerien town of Bosso, during which militants seized a military base and held it for a few days. While Boko Haram had previously targeted military bases, the large-scale nature of the assault in terms of the manpower involved, the location – far away from the Shekau stronghold of Sambisa Forest, and the direct targeting and defeat of military forces after a period of losses among the militants, made it a significant incident.³² The pattern of the assault closely mirrored future Barnawi-faction violence, however, and the shocking nature of the security forces' initial defeat may have signalled the emergence of the refocused faction, even prior to its official rupture from Shekau.³³

Reasons

There are a number of reasons why ISIS replaced Shekau. An audio recording, reportedly of Mamman Nur, and probably recorded before the split, provides some clarity. The three major themes of the complaints were Shekau's dictatorial leadership, a lack of confidence in his ability to turn the tide of the war and an ideological disagreement over the action required to guarantee a person's Muslim status.

Nur's role in ISIS-WA

Nur may be the true power behind ISIS-WA. As a veteran Nigerian jihadist, he was considered third in line to head Boko Haram at the time of the July 2009 uprising and a possible successor to Yusuf. Nur temporarily led the movement while Shekau recovered from a gunshot wound and Nigerian intelligence named him as the mastermind behind the 2011 attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja.³⁴ Nur also developed links with militants elsewhere in Africa, reportedly training in Somalia and coordinating with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).³⁵

In this sense, he probably carries more gravitas based on his jihadist experience and connections than the younger Barnawi, who served as a commander at the time of the split.³⁶ One respondent who fled with the Nur group remarked that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had initially sent an audio message appointing Nur leader of ISIS-WA, but that he had decided to step aside in favour of Barnawi for unknown reasons.³⁷ The appointment of Barnawi could be a strategic decision given his presumed familial links to the still revered Muhammad Yusuf, which lends additional credence to ISIS-WA's argument that it represents a continuous ideological link to Yusuf, but disassociates from Shekau's wayward application. Nur has typically avoided the spotlight, which fits in with his low profile within ISIS-WA (he has yet to appear in any of the group's messaging). Nonetheless, his presence can be felt, as the Nigerian army and respondents who have interacted with ISIS-WA frequently refer to it as the 'Nur' faction, rather than invoking Barnawi's name.³⁸

Shekau's leadership style

Nur complained about being sidelined when Shekau ignored his Shura Council and made decisions on a whim. In addition, Shekau's judgement was questioned because of his suspect use of Quranic reasoning, while he was also accused of killing his own group members, often in secret and without justification. Other complaints revolved around Shekau's lack of concern for the welfare of group members, allowing them to go hungry while he ate well. Essentially, Nur did not agree with the dictatorial manner in which Shekau operated and felt he did not adequately seek to take care of the group's members.³⁹

Reviving the movement

Tied to this loss of confidence in Shekau's leadership ability was the need for a change to revive the movement during a time of decline. Nur complained that under Shekau, the militants had territories taken from them and were losing the war. Shekau's inability to provide weapons and fuel for his soldiers was cited as evidence of his failings, and Nur appeared to have little confidence in Shekau's capacity to turn the tide of the war. In short, Nur and his associates sought a fresh approach in order to reverse recent battlefield misfortunes.⁴⁰

Debate over who is a Muslim

The most important theme, however, was an ideological debate about who is and is not considered a Muslim and, thus, who can be targeted. The process of declaring other Muslims infidels, known as takfir, is a controversial action and Nur believed more stringent conditions should be applied. One respondent maintained that it is this debate that initially caused some members to refuse to fight for Shekau, leading Mamman Nur to approach the Boko Haram leader about it.⁴¹

Shekau views anyone who has not actively demonstrated allegiance to his group as violating Islam, thus losing their Muslim status. In Shekau's perspective for example, those who live under government rule and do not rise up are no longer considered Muslims. The same applies to those who flee areas of his control for government territories. In essence, the onus on securing one's Muslims status lies in the proactive actions of each individual. This means a large segment of the Lake Chad region's population are not viewed as legitimate Muslims in the eyes of Shekau, and thus are deemed acceptable recipients of his violence.⁴²

While Shekau has always maintained such strident ideological beliefs and conducted violence in accordance with them, this principle was more widely applied over time, leading to increased civilian casualties and causing others in the movement discomfort. The roots of this lay in the advent of civilian vigilante groups in mid-2013, collectively referred to as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Given the grassroots development of the movement, its collaboration with the military and the local support they enjoyed, Shekau began to view large segments of the civilian population as working with security forces in opposition to him, leading to extreme violence.

For example, respondents from Damboa, Dikwa, and Konduga LGAs confirmed how their towns and

villages had been spared large-scale attacks until the formation of vigilante units.⁴³ Respondents from other areas noted that the militants frequently referred to them as ‘pagans’, and complained about how they had fled from areas of Boko Haram rule.⁴⁴ Such aspects reaffirm how Shekau’s ideological stance over one’s Muslim status translated into violence against poorly defended rural populations, and the expansion of his views to the point where he judged just about the entire local populace, aside from those overtly supporting his group, as against him.⁴⁵

Respondents commenting on CJTF dynamics

Dikwa

When Boko Haram was chased out of Maiduguri by the CJTF, people in each locality were urged to form similar units to fight. In Dikwa we said we cannot do that because it might cause a lot of problems. Security forces then told us we were sympathising with Boko Haram. Our traditional leader complained to the government and asked them to come search our town – they did and found nothing. That is how we were able to stay safe for a period of time.

But later, after we had refused to join the CJTF, others went ahead and decided to start a unit. The very next day Boko Haram came in the evening and killed them.

Damboa

Around the time the CJTF was formed in Maiduguri, Boko Haram had started to kill some businessmen in Damboa. We debated that if we don’t form a CJTF unit like Maiduguri, these people [will] kill us all. But the person who called us to form the CJTF was slaughtered that very night.

Later I was in another village near Damboa when Boko Haram came. They came and slaughtered the head of the town, but then informed us that because this village had not formed a CJTF it would not be burnt. But then they said they were going to a nearby town to kill all the people and burn it because they already had the CJTF there. Some people managed to escape and warn that town, so when Boko Haram arrived, they saw no one.

This pattern continued with the return of more asymmetric attacks following the movement’s loss of territorial control in early 2015 – indiscriminate suicide attacks became a weapon of choice, often aimed at civilian soft targets and leading to many Muslim deaths.⁴⁶

Nur vehemently disagreed with this approach, arguing in his recording that the focus of the insurgency should be true infidels, and that attacks on mosques should cease in favour of churches and military barracks.⁴⁷ Barnawi also noted in the *Al-Naba* interview that Islam prohibits targeting ordinary people as long as they do not demonstrate active opposition to jihad.⁴⁸ In this way, Barnawi departed from Shekau’s emphasis on collective responsibility for the rise of the civilian vigilantes to a focus on individual actions, calling only on those specifically working with security forces to repent or pay the price. Thus the Barnawi group removed geographic proximity to a vigilante force as a measure of guilt, and promised that attacks targeting regular civilians going about their daily lives in mosques and markets would cease.

Ansaru

The theme of civilian targeting had surfaced within Boko Haram earlier, causing the Ansaru movement, the previous biggest challenge to Shekau, to break away in 2012.⁴⁹ Ansaru announced its emergence after the 20 January 2012 assault on the largely Muslim city of Kano, in which about 185 people were killed.⁵⁰ In its criticism of the indiscriminate nature of such violence, Muslim casualties, Shekau’s leadership and even the killing of group members, Ansaru’s rhetoric closely mirrored messaging from Nur/Barnawi. In this sense, the legacy of Ansaru’s pursuit of a distinct jihadist path in Nigeria outside the confines of Shekau’s authority continues via ISIS-WA, although it remains unclear if there has been any overlapping relationship between the two groups.⁵¹

Shekau's group and that of Nur and Barnawi differed over who qualified as a civilian and who did not, a debate common to internal jihadist rifts elsewhere. But it was ultimately the killing of Muslim civilians that precipitated the split, with ISIS siding with Barnawi, appointing him the head of ISIS-WA. Shekau rejected his demotion but did not renounce his allegiance to ISIS, and continues to operate under his old banner, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS).

Factional Relations

After the split, ISIS-WA and JAS could compete, cooperate or cohabitate, and it seems the last option has been the preferred path thus far, with geography serving as a convenient buffer. Nonetheless, there have been sporadic clashes. A surrendered militant claimed in May 2017 that the factions had fought six times, while the *Wall Street Journal* reported that 400 members were killed in internal clashes at the time of the split.⁵² Other clashes were reported in Dikwa LGA in December 2017, after militants from ISIS-WA reportedly crossed into JAS territory.⁵³ This level of activity has been minor overall, however, with no significant indication of one group trying to eliminate the other.

This dynamic is probably explained by the geographic divide between the main areas of the two factions, an aspect that could be difficult to maintain as operational areas continue to shift – evidenced by the above-mentioned clashes in Dikwa. The southward movement of ISIS-WA within Nigeria, combined with the shifting nature of some JAS sanctuaries due to military pressure (see section below: Geographic Areas of Operation), may eventually place the group in overlapping areas of operation, potentially leading to more overt competition.⁵⁴

The same pattern of avoidance has continued in messaging, however, as the two have largely avoided commenting on each other since immediately after the split. The lack of interaction probably results from an adherence to ISIS guidelines, which set the tone during Barnawi's *Al-Naba* interview, in which he did not mention the man he was replacing. Official ISIS messaging has continued this pattern of completely ignoring JAS, even as Shekau maintained his pledge to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and began rebranding his messages with ISIS logos in early 2017.⁵⁵

Outside of official ISIS messaging, however, Barnawi and Nur have commented on Shekau. The Nur audio tape released just after the split, in August 2016, was not disseminated through official ISIS media channels, while a video in early August 2017 followed a similar pattern. In that clip Barnawi reportedly criticised Shekau for not taking advice and branding anyone who disagreed with him as an infidel, messaging similar to the reasons behind the split.⁵⁶ The commentary outside of ISIS media channels and after a long period of silence was curious, but coming as it did about a year after the split, it may have been aimed at reinforcing this rupture.

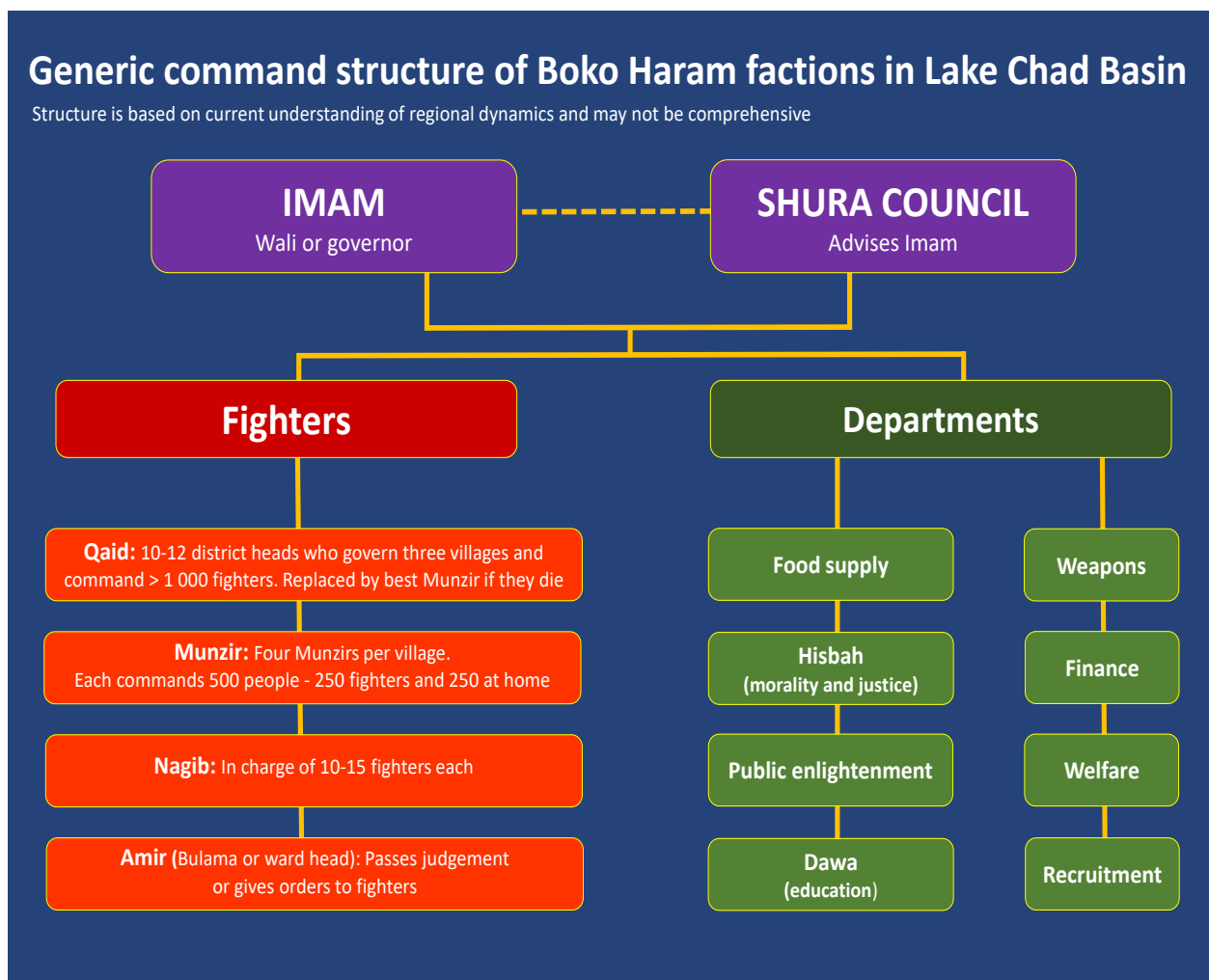
One interviewee did mention that there had been attempts at reconciliation between the factions, but these produced little results.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, one instance of possible cooperation between ISIS-WA and JAS took place on 10 February 2018, when two sets of high-profile hostages were released. The first consisted of three members of a team of geologists exploring oil prospects in Borno State, whose military-protected convoy came under attack in Magumeri LGA in July 2017. Along with the location, a subsequent video release confirmed they were being held by the ISIS-WA group. The second involved a convoy of women travelling on the Maiduguri-Damboa road for a funeral, which also came under attack in July 2017; Shekau confirmed in subsequent videos that JAS was holding the 10 women. Despite being held by different factions, the hostages were released together on 10 February 2018 in Banki, on the Cameroonian border. An interviewee who had been involved in the negotiations remarked that it was 'dumb luck' and that two distinct sets of negotiations with two distinct actors just happened to coincide.⁵⁸ But the incident still raises questions about the logistics of the release, given the ostensible need for the ISIS-WA-held hostages to travel through JAS areas to reach Banki.⁵⁹

Overall, however, despite some localised instances of cooperation and others of competition, the factions have largely avoided each other in the year and a half since the rupture. The divergent tactics pursued (see section below: Attack Patterns), combined with episodic messaging, reveals that ISIS-WA upholds certain guidelines in terms of how it operates, which JAS does not accommodate.

This would indicate that the ideological gulf between the two factions remains vast and unaltered. Nonetheless, similar dynamics preceded the rupture of the Ansaru group from Shekau, a dispute which may eventually have been settled internally.⁶⁰ The fact that Shekau has not renounced his pledge of allegiance to ISIS, continued branding his messaging with ISIS logos, and avoided directly commenting on Barnawi or Nur (curious, given his otherwise loquacious personality), indicates that the possibility of future reconciliation, while appearing unlikely given the continued ideological divide, cannot be ruled out entirely.

Command Structures

Respondents who had spent time with either faction were asked about the structures and hierarchies they witnessed. Respondents offered differing opinions on some structural aspects, but largely converged on others, such as the hierarchy of fighters. Those who had spent time with both ISIS-WA and JAS noted little overt difference in their structural make up, although some differences in terms of location did emerge, such as the roles and responsibilities of the Amir. In addition, respondents mentioned various functional departments, with some overlap but not full consistency. It is also unclear the role and/or interaction of geographic-based assignments, compared to more functional responsibilities. Some respondents were probably more familiar with certain departments or structural aspects than others, so what follows is a best guess approximation based on main areas of convergence across respondent commentary, combined with open-source reporting.⁶¹



Regardless, it is difficult to confirm the functionality of these structures in practice, for either group. For example, one grievance of Mamman Nur during his audio at the time of the split revolved around Shekau's disregard of his Shura Council, while other reporting suggested that he had disbanded it completely.⁶² The leadership and ideology of Shekau does appear to play a predominant role in guiding the actions of his factional members, signifying his dominant role within JAS's command structure.

In terms of ISIS-WA, one interviewee closely monitoring the situation mentioned that the faction comprises more of those who were united in opposition to Shekau, but not necessarily on everything else, thus engendering a more diverse grouping.⁶³ This latter point, combined with actions undertaken by militants aligned with ISIS-WA that do not necessarily follow the guidelines set forth during the time of the split (see below: Guidelines vs Reality), could suggest a less concentrated hold down to the command level for ISIS-WA. The Dapchi kidnapping incident, discussed below, also raises questions regarding the coherence of ISIS-WA's command structure.

Nonetheless, while interviewees differed over how much day-to-day control each factional leader wields over his commanders and the strength of the hierarchical command, many noted the relative discipline of ISIS-WA, suggesting a greater deal of control and coordination.⁶⁴ In this sense, while Shekau's personality probably dominates his faction in a way that Barnawi does not, the greater effectiveness noted in ISIS-WA attack patterns alludes to a more robust command structure, even if individual members or commanders stray from this at times.

Splinter Movements

There are also groups or cells that are not explicitly aligned with either faction, which may help explain atypical incidents and patterns at times, further revealing the complexity of militant dynamics in the Lake Chad region. Respondents familiar with Boko Haram at the time of the August 2016 split noted that some did not choose to join either side. These unaligned members have not consolidated around a specific leadership or core programme, with some waiting to see how the situation played out and others returning home.⁶⁵ Some key commanders may also have left Shekau but did not initially join Nur.⁶⁶ There has also been a wave of surrenders, especially around the Monguno area in early 2018, another indication of members unwilling to continue with either side.⁶⁷

Respondent from Gwoza explaining dynamics around the split

Boko Haram came to our village in 2015. They checked your profession to see if they can use you or not. They also killed people that resisted them, so they forced me to join them. They took me to a bush near Sambisa Forest where they preached and taught us daily. They read [the] Quran, but with different interpretations. Because I am a driver of big trucks, they made me drive for them. I drove food items. Sometimes they raid a village and then I go and pick up the items to bring back to the Sambisa Forest. I do the driving for about three to four days and then they allow me to rest while other drivers take their turns.

In 2016 there were talks about a potential split within Boko Haram, but the talks were underground because if you talk openly they kill you. There were two main groups. One was the Shekau group and the other is the Mamman Nur group, which accused Shekau of killings. Some commanders had also stopped fighting – Shekau would either kill or replace them. Nur said we should advise Shekau on why some commanders aren't fighting, but Shekau did not change his mind.

Mamman Nur left with some top commanders and the people under them. But plenty of people did not align with either. There was a third group of those who had been forced to join and wanted to quit. Some of us decided to take opportunity of the chaos to leave. One day I got in the truck and drove like I was going on duty, until I escaped.

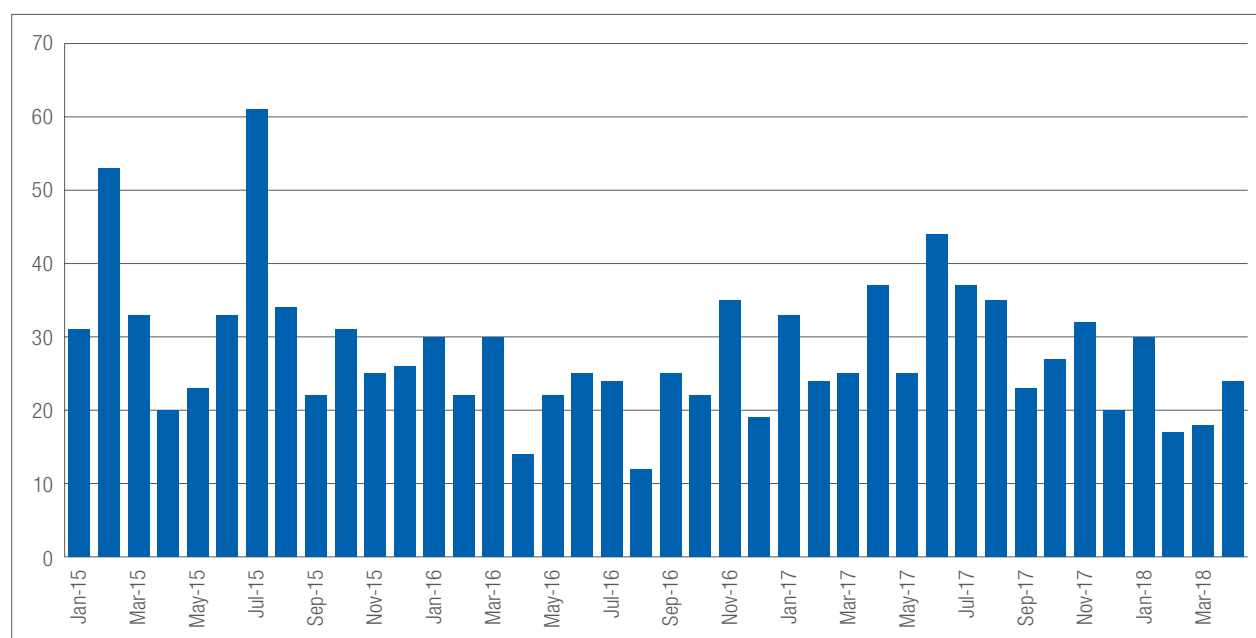
More recently, discussions about a potential third faction have gained currency in some interviews.⁶⁸ One interviewee who follows local dynamics closely noted that a commander in Marte area was thought to

be operating independently but also serving as a go-between for both factions.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, thus far no specific group has emerged in terms of messaging, leadership, or even distinctive style or operating patterns. The abduction of schoolgirls from Dapchi in February 2018 (see Outlier Incidents below) could have been a demonstration of a commander operating independently, but the operation ultimately still occurred within the prism of ISIS-WA, revealing limited overall independence. In this sense, while some commanders may demonstrate a degree of independence at a local level, overall dynamics remain heavily influenced by the ISIS-WA and JAS dichotomy.

Attack Patterns

High rates of violence continue to afflict the Lake Chad Basin, even in the aftermath of the split. For example, while recorded attacks in August 2016, the month the split was announced, dropped to 12 from an average of 23 per month that year, attacks in 2017 rebounded to levels similar to those in 2015.⁷⁰ This demonstrates the ability of both sides to regroup and illustrates that the split has not had a major impact on reducing (or increasing) violence in the Lake Chad region. Nonetheless, the patterns of violence since the split have demonstrably differed.

Attacks attributable to Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region by month from January 2015 to April 2018



Source: ISS database of attacks, derived from local media reporting

The prevailing view among those interviewed has been that JAS is responsible for the wide-scale use of suicide bombers, including female and child bombers, often directed at the civilian populace – an aspect Shekau has more or less confirmed in his messaging.⁷¹ ISIS-WA, on the other hand, has concentrated on targeting security forces through large-scale but less frequent assaults.

While the vast majority of violence in the Lake Chad region is unclaimed and some even unreported, the notion of distinct attack profiles adheres to overall patterns in the messaging and actions of both groups. Nonetheless, ISIS-WA has deployed (male) suicide bombers, primarily through the use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) during operations, and has been accused of harming civilians, while JAS has also confronted security forces and conducted non-suicide violence – a pertinent reminder that the characteristics of each faction are not absolute.⁷²

JAS: Suicide Attacks and Civilian Targeting

JAS under Shekau has largely continued its pre-ISIS operating methods, which are characterised by the notion of punitive and retributive violence against the civilian populace. For example, in a June 2017

message championing the group's first major infiltration of Maiduguri in more than a year, Shekau justified the incident by remarking that the people in Maiduguri were not true Muslims as they continued to live under man-made laws, upholding a wide definition of enemy combatants.⁷³

Another video from January 2017 claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a mosque on the University of Maiduguri campus, an area which became a repeated target in 2017. Shekau justified this violence by stating that un-Islamic activities were taking place in the mosque.⁷⁴ In the video Shekau also commented on the use of female suicide bombers, the first time he had specifically referred to this tactic since one of the group's first deployments of a female bomber in June 2014.⁷⁵ These messages demonstrated Shekau's continued preference for both suicide attacks and civilian targeting.

Both aspects have been dominant themes in patterns of violence throughout the Lake Chad region, especially since August 2016. According to a database of attacks maintained by the ISS and likely attributable to Boko Haram, civilians were the target of 44% of total violence between August 2016 and April 2018, while a further 29% of incidents did not have a clear target, but many may have ultimately been directed at civilians as well.⁷⁶ In addition, suicide bombings comprise nearly 36% of all violent incidents since August 2016, marking it as a major attack type.⁷⁷

Of course the Shekau faction has also engaged in non-suicide violence in addition to targeting non-civilian entities. For example a recent trend has been to attack military convoys travelling on highways in Borno State, while there has been a pattern of roadside improvised explosive device (IED) incidents in areas of presumed Shekau dominance.⁷⁸ At other times likely Shekau militants have engaged security forces, but not with the same frequency or level of success as ISIS-WA.⁷⁹ Raids on local villages also revolve around the need to loot supplies.⁸⁰

Given Shekau's demonstrated propensity to engage in both civilian targeting and the use of suicide bombers, combined with the dominance of these two aspects in local attack patterns, his faction has probably been responsible for a high proportion of the more than 540 recorded violent incidents through the Lake Chad region since August 2016, and thus a greater proportion of overall deaths as well.⁸¹

Nonetheless, the fatalities per attack tend to differ. For example, ISIS-WA large-scale violence tends to result in a greater number of deaths, albeit fewer civilian deaths. Casualty counts are difficult to verify and often rely on actors who have an incentive to either over- or understate totals. Nonetheless, out of 34 incidents since 2017 that were either claimed in social media statements or adhere to geographic and targeting patterns utilised by ISIS-WA, an average of 10.5 deaths per incidents were recorded, including militant casualties. Conversely, the average suicide bomber incident resulted in 4.6 casualties, including the bombers themselves.⁸² Regardless, JAS remains capable of inflicting high casualty totals as well, evidenced through its likely culpability in the May 2018 suicide attacks on at a mosque and market in Mubi, Adamawa state – which killed anywhere between 29 and 86 individuals.⁸³

ISIS's selective promotion of violence

In the period during which Shekau subordinated his movement to ISIS (March 2015 through August 2016) there was probably a tension in his approach to violence, compared to what ISIS wanted to see its West Africa Province pursue.

ISIS and associated media outlets claimed 10 West Africa Province attacks through May 2016, a small portion of the more than 400 attacks during this period.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, ISIS's claims showed some distinct patterns – all but one was perpetrated by male suicide bombers and none claimed to target civilians. The selective promotion of this type of violence contrasts with the vast majority of attacks that were ignored by ISIS, such as the wave of female suicide bombings on markets, mosques, transport depots and other civilian centres.⁸⁵

An infographic from the ISIS-associated Amaq News Agency in December 2016 provided further evidence of guidelines, noting seven target categories – the armies of each Lake Chad country (Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Nigeria), pro-government gunmen (likely referring to the vigilante forces), pro-government parties and Shi'ite militias, again ignoring the vast majority of other targets. In this sense, ISIS had probably taken issue with the West Africa Province's indiscriminate attack profile under Shekau, by promoting only certain types of violence and ignoring others, tying into reported concerns about Shekau's unwillingness to follow IS guidelines prior to the split.⁸⁶

ISIS-WA: Assaults on Security Forces

ISIS-WA, on the other hand, has strived to operate in line with the guidelines laid down during the split, which revolve around new patterns of engagement with the civilian populace and a focus on government targets.⁸⁷ This has been marked by an emphasis on less frequent but larger-scale assaults on military targets. For example, ISIS-WA, via the ISIS media apparatus, has claimed 28 specific attacks since August 2016 (see map).⁸⁸ Each of these has claimed to target security forces, a key indication of the type of violence in which ISIS and its West Africa Province seek to engage.⁸⁹ As is the case with Shekau, there is probably a level of ISIS-WA violence that does not adhere to these standards and is thus not promoted. In addition, three of the attacks were suicide attacks, though only by male bombers.

In his messages Barnawi also stated that there would be a return to Christian targets, but this has not transpired.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, the shift in targeting away from Muslim civilians has occurred.

The examples above indicate that the attack profiles of both groups largely conform to the dynamics surrounding the ideological issues behind the split, with JAS primarily responsible for continued violence targeting the civilian populace. While these are overarching trends, at a micro level both have conducted activities that do not always fit neatly into these patterns. Yet the broader trend helps explain much of the difference in attack patterns between the two groups in the past two years.

Geographic Areas of Operation

The patterns of violence are largely synonymous with the geographic areas of operation for each group, which can be determined by attack trends, safety conditions along major routes, the testimonies of respondents and key informant interviews. Generally, JAS is present in south and central Borno State, particularly around the Sambisa Forest and the border with Cameroon. ISIS-WA initially had its stronghold in northern Borno near Lake Chad but has since expanded further south to areas north and west of Damboa and in Yobe State around Buni Yadi. Both are present in northern Cameroon, while areas of Chad and Niger are dominated more by ISIS-WA.⁹¹

Cells from both factions have probably been active in other areas as well, complicating the picture on the ground.⁹² But their locus is in the main areas mentioned, as shown by recorded attack patterns. The forest around Sambisa and the vegetation along the shores of Lake Chad provide a degree of natural coverage for both factions, resulting in strongholds in those locations.⁹³

The major areas of operation are consistent with the conditions along main roads in Borno State. Many interviewees noted that ISIS-WA tends not to conduct ambushes along transport routes unless to target military personnel. Roads in JAS areas, in contrast, remain insecure to the point where military escorts are required. Thus, from Maiduguri, the roads north and west to Baga, Damasak and Damaturu – all passing through areas of presumed ISIS-WA influence – are considered by humanitarian personnel to be relatively safe, while those going east past Mafa and Konduga, and south to Damboa, all of which pass through JAS areas of influence, are not. A higher rate of violence and greater use of IEDs, tactics which more closely relate to JAS operating methods, have been recorded on these routes.⁹⁴

JAS Locations

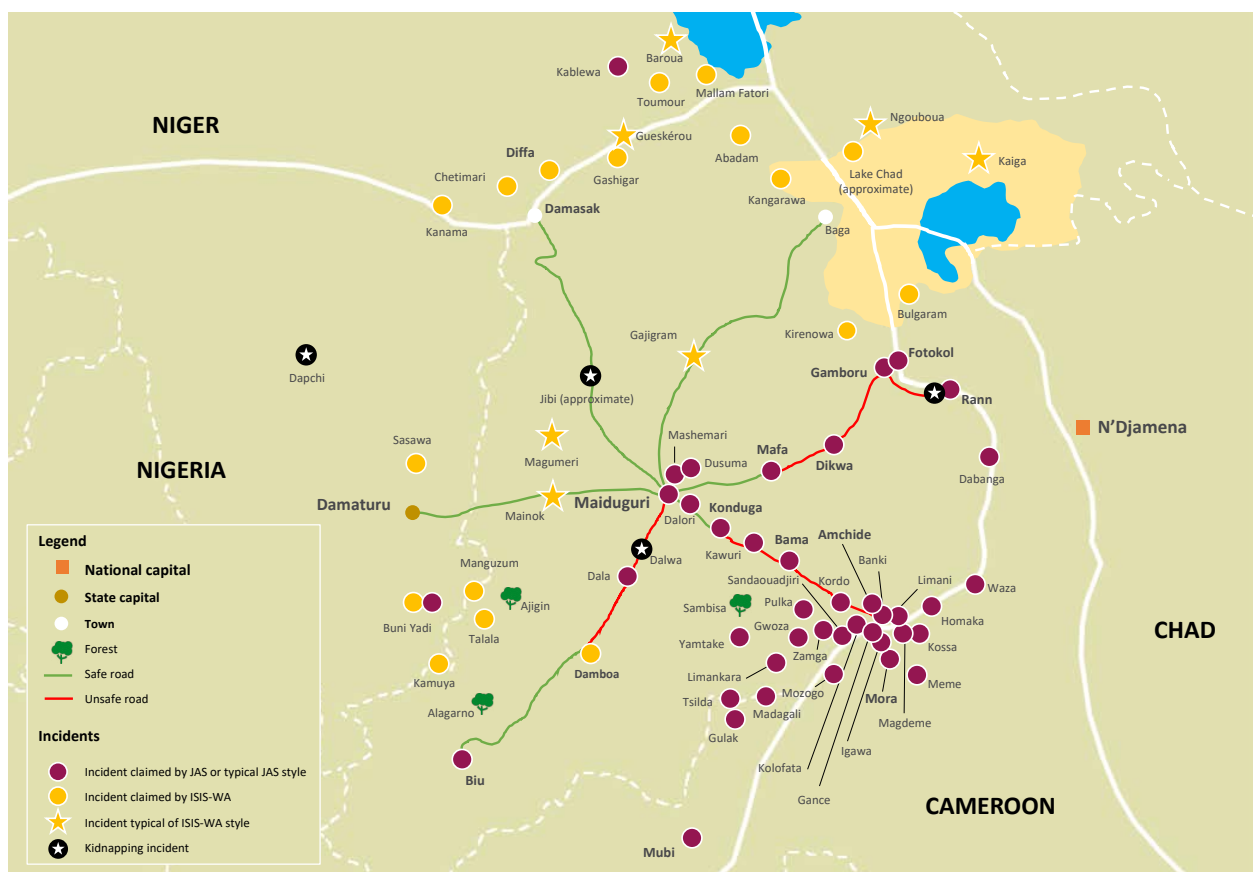
JAS has maintained a stronghold in Sambisa Forest despite military incursions to clear the area. This has allowed the faction to focus its attacks on areas of south-central Borno, including a high concentration of activity in Maiduguri and along the border with Cameroon near Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga departments.

JAS has demonstrated an obsession with Boko Haram's birthplace, Maiduguri, targeting the city more actively after the split.⁹⁵ Of 74 recorded violent incidents in Maiduguri and its environs between August 2016 and April 2018, 69 were perpetrated by suicide bombers.⁹⁶ The majority of these occurred on the city's southern and eastern outskirts, as bombers were detected by CJTF and security forces while approaching the Borno State capital.⁹⁷

Given Shekau's preference for suicide attacks and his strongholds in areas to the south and east of the city, it is likely that these bombers came from hideouts under his control.⁹⁸ In contrast, few bombers have approached the city from the north or west – areas closer to ISIS-WA hideouts.⁹⁹ The Maiduguri obsession is apparent in Shekau's messaging as well: in a March 2017 clip he claimed responsibility for all suicide attacks in the city.¹⁰⁰

Despite the increase in targeting, the majority of suicide bombings have resulted in few casualties, indicating the limited impact of this type of violence and the relative safety of the city.¹⁰¹ Maiduguri and its environs have been targeted in four major assaults since the split, coinciding with Ramadan and Christmas in 2017, Easter in 2018, and another incident in late April. While militants were able to penetrate initial

Location of attacks by violent extremist groups in Lake Chad Basin: August 2016 – April 2018



Disclaimer: Locations and features approximate, map not representative of quantity and only denotes identifiable locations.

Source: Map is based on media reporting of violence in the Lake Chad region, attack claims in the messaging of both ISIS-WA and JAS factions, and field interviews regarding local conditions; information is current as of April 2018

fortifications during those incidents, the incursions were ultimately repelled, demonstrating the limitations of JAS's assaults on the city, despite persistent attempts.

In the same March 2017 speech Shekau claimed his fighters had repelled a major assault by security forces along the Cameroon border.¹⁰² The highest rate of suicide attacks has been in Maiduguri and areas of Cameroon near the Nigerian border, indicating the probable operating range of Shekau's fighters. For example in 2017 approximately 36% of all suicide attacks occurred in northern Cameroon (primarily in the department of Mayo-Sava), while a similar percentage took place in Maiduguri and its outskirts.¹⁰³

Local research commentary on suicide attacks in Cameroon

The presence of JAS in Cameroon has been more visible than that of ISIS-WA, in particular as Cameroon has been the target of a large number of suicide attacks, including by women and children. According to local interviewees, the scenarios are almost always identical: young women suddenly appear in a particular location. Not knowing the town and very often having forgotten their instructions, they ask local residents for information and the residents sometimes alert soldiers or vigilance committees.

In some cases, the women are neutralised before they can activate the devices hidden beneath their flowing garments; in others, they manage to blow themselves up at the planned location, or when they realise they have been exposed.

The latest trends suggest that the militants, faced with increasingly early detection of the young women they send in, seem to have opted for less suspicious and more naive carriers: children. According to Captain Gilles Onana Mbarga, head of the Rapid Intervention Brigade's (BIR) Anti-Terrorist Unit in Kolofata:

‘These children are used to seeing radios and amplifiers ... They know just which button they have to press. When they hand one to a young child, they tell them, “Once you get to the market or perhaps a particular site, you just have to press the button.” And they go and do it without a second thought.’¹⁰⁴

JAS has also demonstrated an ability to extend beyond its main area of operations on occasion. Recent suicide attacks in Biu and Mubi, outlier events after long periods of calm in those areas, indicate its capacity to deploy suicide violence further afield. The success of those attacks, with high rates of casualties in two Mubi incidents, indicate the need for continued vigilance even in areas in which there has been little recent activity.¹⁰⁵

ISIS-WA Locations

Initially after the split, ISIS-WA was confined to northern Borno State along the Niger border and the fringes of Lake Chad. Large-scale engagements typical of ISIS-WA attack patterns occurred in this area, while LGAs like Abadam and parts of Guzamala continue to be off limits, constituting the faction’s stronghold.¹⁰⁶ Specific areas in northern Borno such as Kangral, Tumbum Gini, Tumbum Rego, Abba Ganaram, Tumbuwa and Kusuma were frequently mentioned by both respondents and interviewees as key hideouts of the faction. In Cameroon, the faction has been reported to be active in Logone-et-Chari department, although some elements reportedly still loyal to Shekau operate in the area as well.¹⁰⁷ In Niger ISIS-WA’s presence has largely been restricted to the Diffa department, while in Chad it is found in the Lac region.

By the end of 2016/beginning of 2017, however, ISIS-WA had expanded into central areas of Borno and neighbouring Yobe state. Claimed incidents in Talala and Buni Yadi are indicative of this, along with repeated assaults on Magumeri. The group has reportedly been active west of the Damboa-Maiduguri road and, with JAS operating east of that, the road has served as an informal dividing line.¹⁰⁸

The southward expansion has reportedly involved a strong ISIS-WA presence in the Alagarno and Ajigin forests.¹⁰⁹ Kareto, Geidam and Mainok were mentioned as key crossing points for ISIS-WA militants, indicative of its range of influence.¹¹⁰ Attacks have also been claimed in Cameroon’s Logone-et-Chari department, the Chadian side of the lake and just across the border in Niger, demonstrating the faction’s regional areas of operation. As an indication of ISIS-WA’s presence and strength in south-east Niger, US military units reportedly came under fire in the area in December 2017, although only the militants suffered casualties in the attack.¹¹¹

Ultimately, ISIS-WA has shown itself to be more mobile and effective than JAS, allowing it to expand territorially after the initial split. At a time when military pressure has checked JAS’s expansion, and even forced the loss of certain stronghold areas, ISIS-WA has not suffered a similar fate.¹¹² Rather, the expansion in southern-central Borno and Yobe around Buni Yadi indicates the opposite, in addition to its presence in all Lake Chad region countries.

This has led to some areas of potential overlap. For example, as the February 2018 attack on a military base in Rann denotes (see section below: Outlier Incidents), ISIS-WA has established a presence in the Dikwa-Ngala-Marté area, encroaching on areas where JAS had been operating.¹¹³ The group also claimed to repel a Nigerian military attack on its positions in Marté LGA in May 2018, further demonstrating its presence in the area.¹¹⁴ Respondents from Dikwa and Ngala also confirmed the presence of both in their LGAs.¹¹⁵ This may explain the above-mentioned clashes between the two in Dikwa LGA in December 2017.

Outlier Incidents

Some incidents do not fit neatly into the geographically defined attack patterns, however – a few recent examples of which are worth highlighting.

Two female suicide attacks – one on 30 June 2017 by two bombers at an IDP camp in Kabelawa, Niger, and another attack by a teenage suicide bomber on a mosque in Buni Yadi on 2 March 2018 – conform to JAS-style attack patterns but occurred in areas where ISIS-WA has been more active.¹¹⁶ It is unclear

whether the incidents represent JAS penetration of an ISIS-WA area, atypical ISIS-WA operations or the work of other actors, but neither has been followed by significant activity, making them relevant but outlier incidents.

In addition, two attacks in 2018 by ISIS-WA raise questions about its operating methods and location. On 1 March 2018 militants probably aligned to the Barnawi faction attacked a military base situated next to an IDP camp in Rann, near the Cameroon border.¹¹⁷ The incident made headlines as four humanitarian personnel were killed, forcing the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and others to temporarily suspend operations there.¹¹⁸ In addition, three aid workers were kidnapped. This was the first major incident affecting humanitarian personnel.

It later emerged that all the victims were inside the military base at the time of the attack and that the humanitarian organisations located next to the base were untouched.¹¹⁹ In this sense, given the targeting limitations adhered to during the attack, the incident conforms more closely to ISIS-WA attack patterns, despite this being an area in which JAS has been active.

On 19 February 2018, ISIS-WA kidnapped more than 100 schoolgirls from the northern Yobe town of Dapchi. The attack followed patterns similar to the most notorious Boko Haram attack to date, the abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State – an incident that took place prior to the split but on which Shekau frequently capitalised in his messaging. The Dapchi attack was, however, different in that all but one of the girls were Muslim and, apart from the one Christian student, were returned by the militants to the town less than a month later, on 21 March 2018. However, the abduction ran afoul of the guidelines laid out by ISIS-WA, as five Muslim girls died during the assault. The attack also confirmed the faction's abhorrence of Western education – the militants warned the girls they would come back to abduct them again if they returned to school, continuing an ideological link to a central tenet of Muhammad Yusuf's preaching.¹²⁰

The return of the girls was a positive development but led to additional scrutiny. The Nigerian government explained that the release had resulted from previously undisclosed negotiations, an effort it claimed had been going on for a year and facilitated a compensation-free outcome. If accurate, this would mark the most significant and serious engagement of the militants during the Buhari administration. President Buhari also noted in April 2018, around the same time, that negotiations over the Chibok girls were halted due to internal differences among the abductors.¹²¹ Given that JAS is probably holding the remaining Chibok girls, this further demonstrates differences between the factions, and the Federal Government's divergent approach to each. In this sense, the Federal Government is essentially indicating that it views the ISIS-WA faction as a potential negotiating partner, views which do not translate to JAS and Shekau.¹²²

Regardless of the dynamics surrounding the release, the incident still raises major questions, such as, if genuine discussions are ongoing, why did the abductions happen in the first place?¹²³ Some interviewees suggested the reasons lay in frictions within ISIS-WA, or the need to generate funds.¹²⁴ In addition, the ability of the militants to conduct such an operation in an area they had not previously targeted, and at a distance from core operating areas, raises questions about the efficacy of the Nigerian military's response, and further damages its reputation in relation to civilian protection.¹²⁵ In fact, the surprising incident and even more surprising outcome resulted in a propaganda victory for ISIS-WA, with social media images showing the triumphant militants returning the girls to cheering crowds in Dapchi, while the Nigerian military was forced to stand down as part of a week-long ceasefire.

Recruitment & Popularity

The divergence between ISIS-WA and JAS with regard to civilians underlines the fact that local support is paramount to the movement's success. In many ways it is also a recognition that JAS's operating methods had become short-sighted, given that the targeting of the same population from which supplies (including manpower) are derived means that these can only be extracted by force, which does not bode well for long-term sustainability.¹²⁶ In this sense, ISIS-WA has likely sought to redefine its relations with the local population throughout the Lake Chad region in a less violent or predatory manner as part of a longer-term strategy to revive its fortunes.¹²⁷

Respondent interviews across the eight Nigerian LGAs highlighted the tactical differences between the two groups, providing further evidence of the practical effects of this divide at a local level. While respondents were not always aware of the specific leadership of each faction, most knew that a split had taken place within Boko Haram. This was often connected to differences witnessed in terms of civilian interaction, especially in LGAs where both were reported to operate, such as Ngala, Dikwa and Damboa. In this sense, those who broke away were considered to be more 'sympathetic' to civilians than those still operating under Shekau.

The resulting impact on civilians is literally the difference between life and death. Respondents from Magumeri and Damboa LGAs explained this in simple terms. They noted that upon spotting unprotected civilians in rural locations, one group of militants would stop to converse while the other would immediately attack. While not all respondents explicitly tied this to the differences in approach of the Barnawi/Nur and Shekau factions, many did make that connection, remarking that 'the Shekau faction just kills'.¹²⁸ In turn, respondents advised that if the Shekau faction was spotted they should immediately run.¹²⁹

Respondent from Damboa explaining the difference between the groups

Some people go to the bush to look for firewood. If the Nur people meet them, they say you should run if you see black turbans, because those are Shekau's people. Along the roads Nur's people will stop you and ask where you are from and to check if there is any security in the car. If not, they will let you pass. Shekau will just fire on the car – there are no negotiations with them, just killing. Nur's people will kill the CJTF, however, and collect foodstuff – though they may apologise about it.

Other testimonies reinforced this view, including interviews from Cameroon and Niger. Respondents from Damboa LGA noted that militants from the Nur faction had allowed civilians to leave for Damboa town, which was in the hands of the Nigerian government. This is in marked contrast to Shekau's characterisation of those who flee to government-controlled areas as 'infidels', and JAS's targeting of such populations.¹³⁰ Prior to the split in 2014, respondents from Konduga LGA also described how militants in the area had largely ignored them until some of them decided to relocate their families closer to government territory. Immediately after they had done so, militants referring to them as 'pagans' and attacked them for leaving lands ruled by Islamic law. While the episodes described occurred prior to the split, they are a telling reflection of Shekau's ideology and stand in marked contrast to the policy adopted by ISIS-WA-aligned militants in a nearby area just a few years later.¹³¹

In another telling incident, a respondent from Mobbar LGA described how a group of ISIS-WA militants came across a polio vaccination team in northern Borno State. The polio vaccine has a controversial history

in northern Nigeria, marked by conspiracy theories that it has been used as a tool to render Muslim women infertile. Rather than attack the team, the militants reportedly demanded half its fuel, paid a small sum for it, and left. The incident demonstrates a few key points – the first is that the ISIS-WA faction’s default response is not simply to attack those it encounters, but rather to uphold certain guidelines. This case is all the more relevant given the particular history of the polio vaccine in Nigeria and previous attacks on similar teams.¹³² It also demonstrates one of the faction’s means of sustenance – the need to secure supplies locally. At the same time, the latent threat of force from armed militants clearly still hovers in the background, and probably serves as the dominant underpinning of ISIS-WA’s continued relations with the civilian populace.

Local researcher commenting on vulnerabilities exploited by ISIS-WA in Chad

In Chad, interviewees remarked that ISIS-WA presents themselves as protectors against the abuses of local chiefs, the gendarmerie and custom agents. They often cite the extortion, fines and arbitrary arrests by gendarmerie brigade commanders. Their message tends to resonate with those who have experienced social injustice, inequalities and selective impunity. Some interviewees say the group also offers money at times to young people who join them. Such patterns attempt to exploit local grievances, while driving a wedge between the government and populace, which ISIS-WA can then take advantage of. Similar dynamics were present in Boko Haram prior to the split, and it appears ISIS-WA is attempting to maintain a degree of continuity with previous recruitment practices.

Guidelines vs Reality

Nevertheless, ISIS-WA has not always adhered to the ideals it professed at the time of its separation from JAS, underlining the fact that while it may generally pursue a different relationship with the civilian populace, it is still capable of inflicting extreme violence and placing strains on local livelihoods.

The reality of operating in rural areas has meant that the faction probably still needs to extract goods from the civilian population in order to survive. Respondents commented on these dynamics, noting that ISIS-WA seizes supplies such as food, livestock and fuel. Respondents in Magumeri lamented that they received almost daily visits from militants asking for food. While these visits are not accompanied by overt violence, underlying threats give people little choice but to acquiesce. In some cases, the militants offer compensation (not always at market value, as in the polio example above) and/or even apologise for their actions, something that is rare in areas near a JAS presence.¹³³ Yet they are still essentially seizures under the threat of violence.

Similarly, in Cameroon, interviewees indicated that those residing in areas where ISIS-WA operated were subject to taxes on business activities, and that the group demanded the tacit collaboration of the villagers, upon the penalty of death.¹³⁴

Respondent from Magumeri explaining current dynamics with regards to militant interaction

Three years ago, Boko Haram started attacking our village. There are times when they come and demand the man of the house. I often hide, while my wife comes out and says that I am not around. They say that they will deal with me when I come back. They have burnt my house three times. The third one was the deadliest – they attacked our village and two of my children were caught in the fire and could not be rescued. They died in the incident.

Now the attacks are less violent, but we live in fear. The burnings and killings stopped about six months ago. But they come and ask for food items almost every day – even yesterday they were in our village. They take food items like cows, goats, sheep and maize, among others. When they come, they warn us against working with the government or security people.

Although they don’t kill people often in the village anymore, if you meet them in the bush they kill you because they think you are informants disguised to get information for the government. We last farmed about two and half years ago and Boko Haram fighters came and took some and set others on fire.

Most of us prefer to stay in our village rather than go to IDP camps as even if they give me a nice house I will not take it. All we need now is security for us to farm again.

Respondent from Magumeri relating a story of how the militants seize food items under threat of force

The militants came to our village when we had been hiding a goat, because we had not had meat in so long. The militants knew it was there and came to ask for it, but couldn't find it. We said we don't have anything. They said fine, but when we go check, if we find something it will be a big problem for you. One of the villagers got afraid, so he ended up leading them to where we hid the goat, to save his life.

ISIS-WA still violently punishes civilians who do not adhere to its rules.¹³⁵ Its actions are often related to a lack of obedience or suspicion of government collaboration. Interviewees in Diffa also said militants there had used their position to settle old scores with those who had wronged them in the past.¹³⁶ In March 2017 ISIS-WA militants were accused of killing a man who refused to pay protection money, while interviewees recounted an episode in March 2018 in which five fishermen in northern Borno were killed for passing on information about the Dapchi incident.¹³⁷ These occurrences clearly demonstrate the unforgiving stance of ISIS-WA towards those it perceives who have crossed it, and the propensity for extreme violence.¹³⁸ Multiple respondents emphasised this point, describing how ISIS-WA militants frequently warned them against working with security forces and the CJTF, punishing those who ignored their dictates. Other provisions include injunctions against gambling, smoking, drinking alcohol and idolatry.¹³⁹

Limited Prospects of Popular Support

Despite these dynamics, information supplied by respondents suggests that while JAS largely operates by force (driven by Shekau's continued animosity towards the local population), ISIS-WA is attempting to maintain a balance between prioritising the demands of survival and the need to engender support from the civilian population. The effectiveness of this strategy ultimately remains to be seen, especially if the needs and/or demands of ISIS-WA on the local population increase. But the more forgiving approach to civilians underlines a newfound tactic to win 'hearts and minds' after JAS's devastating reign of destruction.

Some respondents indicated the limitations of this strategy with few believing that ISIS-WA was capable of overcoming the trust deficit unleashed by JAS's relentless civilian targeting. This is particularly true among those whose lives have been devastated by the militants. As one respondent observed, 'How can we stay with the lion, even if it repents?'¹⁴⁰ Others pointed out that initially Shekau also did not target them, but then changed his mind – a warning that the same could occur with the Barnawi/Nur militants, even if they appeared less violent now. Others in Niger echoed these sentiments.¹⁴¹

The feelings of distrust were reflected in comments from some respondents about how Boko Haram's initial programme, especially the preaching and anti-government rhetoric of founder Muhammad Yusuf, were well received. The path taken by Shekau, however, had erased any such goodwill or continued support for Boko Haram's vision to remake the region, to the point where one respondent remarked bitterly that the militants had been 'deceitful'. Some interviewees also commented that while improving civilian relations might be an overall ISIS-WA strategy, many civilians still flee from areas in which it operates – an indication of continued hardship and/or discontent.¹⁴²

There is little clarity on the subject of popular support for ISIS-WA. Some interviewees talked about recruitment from IDP camps in northern Borno State, but their accounts were largely based on anecdotal reports and there was little hard evidence.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, given the high degree of anger with the government over their situation (see section below: Lack of Choice), other respondents expressed concern that if this persists, it could lead to future support for violent extremist organisations in the region.

However, when it came to making a personal choice, there was resoundingly little willingness to go down this path, given the pain and destruction already experienced. The concern, however, is if the government

continues to fail them, a new generation less versed in the personal history regarding the excesses of the militants will emerge, and may thus seek alternatives elsewhere.

Local researcher commentary on the Boudouma and Boko Haram

In Chad, the Boudouma (people of the grass) are one of the ethnic groups living on the isolated islands of Lake Chad, and have frequently been stigmatised for associating with militants. When asked about foreign fighters in the movement, some respondents noted the presence of ethnic Boudouma as the second largest group, after Kanuris.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, considering an entire ethnic group to be an 'enemy of the state' would be a dangerous assumption that could lead to stigmatisation, since, as local researchers note, their ethnicity is immediately recognisable by their strong physique, dark complexion, scars and distinct dialect. Although Islam is one of the religions practised by the Boudouma (Kuri), it is only a recent development. The Boudouma, with their liberal customs, are considered neither 'good Muslims' nor extremists. Their Koubri brothers in the same region, on the other hand, are notably more assiduous when it comes to applying sharia law. In this sense, while the Boudouma have frequently been associated with Boko Haram, religion is less important than the individual choices of vulnerable, uneducated and unemployed youth – a profile that covers many in the region, Boudouma and non-Boudouma alike.

The prospect of ongoing recruitment in Niger

The border town of Maïne-Soraa, approximately 70 km west of Diffa, is often identified as the first area in Niger where Muhammad Yusuf gained a mass following. A researcher from Niger argued that Maïne-Soraa provided a reliable recruitment base over the years, asserting that this has continued in the shadow of different forms of preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE) interventions, and the presence of sector 4 of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the town of Diffa.¹⁴⁵

Lack of Choice

Certain communities maintain a mutual understanding with ISIS-WA, albeit one predicated by a lack of choice. As respondents in Damboa noted, militants sometimes come to purchase items from local markets. The markets are open to everyone, they argue, and thus when armed men come asking for supplies, there is no real choice but to oblige, particularly in light of the precarious nature of local livelihoods and the need to make money to survive.¹⁴⁶ Respondents from Damasak described a similar situation of mutual understanding between the militants and villagers along the Niger border.¹⁴⁷

The testimonies of two respondents who had escaped from ISIS-WA in the Lake Chad region highlighted the duality at play – both were aided by rural pastoralists sympathetic to their plight, but also noted that such communities were able to operate in nearby areas without fear of attack because of their relationships with the militants in the first place.¹⁴⁸

Despite the fact that some civilians have no choice but to engage with the militants, security actors often accuse such civilian populations of working with them. Many respondents said they were caught between supporting the government and allegiance to the militants, although the situation is far from being that clear-cut. In this sense, just because ISIS-WA does not actively attack civilians in their area of influence, and some continue to live outside government-fortified towns and IDP camps, this should not serve as an automatic presumption of guilt. Such perceptions are analogous to Shekau's anger about those who flee from areas of his control, in effect with the government arguing the same point – if you do not come to us, you are supporting our enemy.

The testimonies of those who live in areas contested by both militants and soldiers, but not completely under the sway of either, are telling. Respondents living in Magumeri LGA complained about the Nigerian military, accusing them of failing to act when informed about militant movements and instead becoming suspicious of the informants. In this situation, respondents noted, it would be better not to have the military present. Being caught between two opposing sides is difficult and some would prefer to go it alone and

take their chances, given that the military cannot provide full protection against the militants. In this sense, cooperation is therefore often pragmatic and a survival tactic, which benefits the militants and weakens state authority in the area.

Respondent from Magumeri explaining the dilemma of being caught in the middle

For five years now, Boko Haram has come and terrorised our villages. They say we are informants to the government. Yet, when the military comes, they also say we are protecting Boko Haram members. We end up being in the middle as we are not safe on either side. Nowadays Boko Haram no longer kills us, but rather they come and buy food items from the town, and maybe take solar panels and go. But then the military comes and says that we are Boko Haram members too.

The truth is that we are not willing to provide information to either side. If we provide information to the military, Boko Haram will come and kill us. But there was also a time when soldiers came and shot one guy in our village who they suspected was from Boko Haram. Both sides are the same thing, so we prefer to live in silence – no one is willing to say anything to the soldiers because they can twist your story and say you are a Boko Haram member and kill you. It is sometimes better for the military not to come, because then we will be safe from attacks from either side.

Financing

As noted above, to a large degree both ISIS-WA and JAS have demonstrated an uncanny ability to sustain their activities by relying on available resources. Despite reports of shortages, both groups have obtained what they require by extorting it from private citizens, but have also generated revenue through involvement in illicit trade and criminal activities, like kidnappings for ransom. While approaches to revenue generation have differed over the years, the focus of the following section is on current dynamics.

Extortion of Local Population

Extortion and looting of resources appear to be a major means of supply for both groups, given the frequency with which they occur. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, the use of violence in pursuit of such activities remains a key difference between the factions. Respondent commentary and local media reporting have confirmed these dynamics, contrasting the ISIS-WA approach of taking but generally not killing with JAS's more routine practice of destroying what it cannot carry away during village raids.¹⁴⁹ Nonetheless, ISIS-WA has also meted out harsh punishment to civilians who do not cooperate, as evidenced by the murder of a herdsman in Dumba near Lake Chad, who tried to avoid paying protection money to the group.¹⁵⁰ Such examples denote the precarious situation civilians living in areas of militant influence continue to face.

The continued extortion places a strain on local civilians, who are already suffering from the impact of the humanitarian crisis and restrictions on their livelihoods. For example, a respondent in Ngala described how in 2017, militants stole 100 hectares of guinea corn during harvest time, after villagers had done months of hard labour. The inability of the military to protect their crops demoralised the farmers to the point where they decided they will not attempt to farm during the coming planting season.¹⁵¹

Nonetheless, ISIS-WA militants have reportedly also created the space for economic activities in order to provide a tax base. For example, *Reuters* reported the group charges local herders per animal, but provides a safe ground for grazing.¹⁵² This demonstrates a key difference between the factions in terms of revenue generation, with ISIS-WA encouraging local economic activity given that it can benefit from it, versus JAS's killing of those collecting firewood or farming, given its punitive measures towards the local populace.

Overall, it is hard to estimate the quantity of supplies received by both through their reliance on the local population, but desktop research and respondent commentary indicate that fuel and foodstuffs like grains and livestock are sourced frequently. It is unclear whether any of these goods are, in turn, sold for profit, or, as is more likely, consumed, providing daily sustenance for the factions.

In Cameroon, interviewees report that militants offer protection to various economic actors, for which they are taxed. This has occurred largely in areas where ISIS-WA has been active, and especially with fishermen along Lake Chad.¹⁵³ This is preferably paid in kind, for example, cans of fuel or five koros of cereals.¹⁵⁴ The militants responded to the measures taken by national governments to keep the movement of fuel and food to a minimum, by making people pay in fuel and cereals so that it can continue to move around and supply its troops.¹⁵⁵

Engagement in Local Trade

In recent years, Boko Haram militants have inserted themselves into local trades in the Lake Chad Basin, controlling certain aspects in return for profit. Chief among these has been cattle rustling and fishing.

Cattle rustling, which is estimated to bring in millions of dollars, remains one of the biggest sources of financing.¹⁵⁶ Interviewees indicated that since the split both factions are still involved in the practice. Often it takes the form of stealing cattle from local herders, disguising the source by taking circuitous routes or crossing international borders, and then selling the cattle in local markets (sometimes at a discounted price).¹⁵⁷ The militants also reportedly rely on middlemen, who sell the cattle on their behalf.¹⁵⁸ While this activity has been going on at least since 2013, one interviewee noted an uptick in recent months.¹⁵⁹

The prevalence of this activity led the Borno State government to close cattle markets temporarily in March 2016.¹⁶⁰ The Nigerian military has also recovered large quantities of stolen cattle, such as 1 000 cows in Konduga in March 2017.¹⁶¹ In January 2017 the Al-Hayah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria estimated that 169 000 cows and 63 000 rams, goats and sheep had been lost due to Boko Haram violence – an indication of the scale of the problem.¹⁶²

Cameroon has been another large source of stock. According to a study published by the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (Ministère de l'Élevage, des Pêches et des Industries animales – MINEPIA), 'The theft of livestock encouraged by Boko Haram's acts of violence in the Far North of Cameroon and highway robbers in the northern part of the country have cost it more than XAF 80 billion [\$145 million] over the last three years.'¹⁶³

Along with cattle rustling, Boko Haram has reportedly been involved in the fish trade along the shores of the Lake Chad Basin, especially around Baga. According to interviewees, the perpetrators in this area were predominantly members of ISIS-WA.¹⁶⁴ The militants operate in two ways, either stealing fish and selling them, or allowing local fisherman in areas of Lake Chad to conduct their activities in return for a share of the profit.¹⁶⁵

This taxing and involvement in the fish trade led the Nigerian military to impose restrictions on commercial fishing, especially on transportation from Baga to Maiduguri.¹⁶⁶ These restrictions were lifted in July 2017 following appeals from the local fishermen's union, but fishermen are required to follow the directives of the army and allow their activities to be monitored.¹⁶⁷ Interviewees, however, suggest that ISIS-WA continues to be involved in the trade. The Niger government also placed a ban on the transportation of smoked fish in the Lake Chad area, to the point where Niger's air force bombed a convoy carrying smoked fish into Nigeria in 2015.¹⁶⁸

In Niger, taxing the pepper trade has been another source of funds. In October 2017 Nigerien authorities lifted a two-year ban on the trade, a symbol of confidence in the reduction of the militants' ability to profit from it.¹⁶⁹ However, it was still banned near the border with Nigeria, where there is a greater militant presence, and an interviewee from Diffa said militants continued to be involved.¹⁷⁰ The interviewee went on to claim that some security officials were complicit. There have been similar complaints with regard to the fish trade in Nigeria, with local fishermen asserting that since the ban on fishing in Baga was lifted security forces have seized local catches, allegedly because they suspect that they will be taken to militant groups, and have rather sold them for themselves.¹⁷¹

Security officials have also been implicated in aiding the trade by accepting bribes from cattle rustlers for the passage of the cows from one village to another. In January 2017 the Nigerian military arrested about 30 officials for their involvement in cattle rustling, including soldiers, police officers and members of the CJTF, who received about 5 000 naira (about \$16.5) to allow the stolen cattle to pass.¹⁷² When asked about the theft of livestock, one interviewee who has investigated the practice in both Adamawa and the Lake Chad region claimed that Cameroonian and Chadian officers had been involved in the handling of stolen cattle, which they sold through their own secure channels to livestock trucks headed for markets in southern Cameroon.¹⁷³ While militants benefit from regional trade, there is a growing volume of accusations directed at security force profiting through the very same means.

Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnapping for ransom is another major source of funding for the extremist group. Prior to the split, Boko Haram earned more than \$20 million from a series of foreign national kidnapping incidents in 2013-14,

primarily in northern Cameroon.¹⁷⁴ A plethora of less high-profile kidnapping incidents probably also generated profits for the group, albeit at lower levels.¹⁷⁵ Interviewees noted that in Cameroon the relatives of livestock farmers had been targeted for kidnapping.¹⁷⁶ Others in Niger complained about the targeting of specific individuals.¹⁷⁷

Recently, a series of hostage releases and fresh abductions have raised concerns that the group is re-engaging in this activity. Two rounds of Chibok schoolgirls were freed in October 2016 and May 2017, in addition to the combined release of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) geologists and policewomen in February 2018. While the terms of the negotiations have not been disclosed and the Nigerian government insists that no monetary reward was provided, speculation surrounding compensation is rife.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the Dapchi schoolgirls incident in February 2018, the opportunistic abduction of aid workers during the attack on Rann in March 2018 and a recent kidnapping threat to expatriates around Mainok on the Maiduguri-Damaturu road – all in areas of ISIS-WA influence – raise concerns that the negotiations have inspired a new round of kidnappings, causing the tactic to re-emerge as a key means of militant revenue generation in the region.¹⁷⁹ The release from Cameroon of previous kidnapping victims flushed millions of dollars to the movement and likely dwarfed all other revenue streams at the time, and there is concern that a similar dynamic may be repeated.

Abductions, however, are not always aimed just at high ransoms for the sect. Militants have also secured the release of their own from detention through prisoner swaps.¹⁸⁰

Illicit Trafficking

Various claims have emerged regarding militant involvement in drug, human and weapons trafficking in the region. While it does appear that JAS or ISIS-WA militants have been involved in all these activities at some level, little has emerged in terms of revenue generation. Rather, the involvement has probably been based on internal usage more than anything else.

For example, militants in the region have been frequently associated with the abuse of Tramadol, an opioid pain medication. The rise of Tramadol trafficking across Africa was noted in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) 2017 World Drug Report, which stated that since 2017 seizures of the drug had risen from 300 kg annually to three tons.¹⁸¹ The abuse of such pharmaceutical drugs in West Africa has reached such proportions that the Nigerian government banned the import and production of codeine, a similar opioid-based medicine, in early May 2018, an indication of the seriousness of the problem.¹⁸²

Boko Haram militants in the region have been arrested with Tramadol tablets on them, while in June and August 2017, Cameroonian authorities seized large shipments of Tramadol near areas where militants had been active along the Nigerian border.¹⁸³ Nonetheless, respondent interviews and other reporting confirm the frequent usage of the drug internally, particularly ahead of suicide bombings.¹⁸⁴ This and similar drugs have also been reported as part of 'initiation' rites, and/or spiked into dates and water that the militants have distributed to new recruits.¹⁸⁵ In this sense, internal usage appears to be a key dynamic driving importation of the drug, given little evidence concerning onward trafficking.¹⁸⁶

Similar dynamics characterise human trafficking (via those who have been kidnapped) and weapons smuggling. Militants have been involved in sourcing arms regionally, but probably use those weapons themselves, rather than profiting from their movement.¹⁸⁷ Militants continue to seize weapons from military sources during attacks, often displaying the 'spoils' in their videos later. Nonetheless, little evidence has emerged of these weapon stockpiles turning up in more distant contexts, probably indicating that they are predominately kept in the region.¹⁸⁸ In this sense, the lack of evidence during the course of desktop and field work suggests that militant involvement in trafficking activities is largely related to an internal dynamic, rather than one conducted on the basis of generating income.

External Links

Despite speculation, little hard evidence has emerged of significant relationships between external jihadist organisations and either faction. Given that ISIS-WA retains its position as a wilayat of ISIS, and the presence of similarly aligned militants operating in northern Mali/Niger and Libya, ISIS-WA is a more natural partner for regional ISIS-aligned movements. Shekau, in turn, spurned previous links with al-Qaeda groups operating in the Sahel upon his pledge of allegiance to ISIS in March 2015 and was subsequently rebuffed by ISIS when it named Barnawi as wali in his place in August 2016, probably diminishing his appeal to either external jihadist organisation.¹⁸⁹

Little evidence has emerged of concrete connections outside of the messaging realm, nor have there been signs of external influence on operational capacity or group strategy, as may have been the case during Boko Haram's period of territorial control from mid-2014 to early 2015.¹⁹⁰ Nonetheless, an article in the *Wall Street Journal* in March 2018 discussed intercepted communications between ISIS-WA members and ISIS commanders based in Iraq and Syria, while an International Crisis Group report in 2017 claimed limited monetary transfers to ISIS-WA from the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁹¹ The fact that there have been few other indications of cooperation suggests that while there may be limited connections, the movement remains localised, with both groups operating independently of significant external backing.

Connections to Libya may have been stronger prior to the fall of ISIS's third capital in Sirte in December 2016. Before that Nigerians had surfaced in a few ISIS messages produced in Libya, yet it is unclear whether or not these individuals were also linked to Boko Haram.¹⁹² The commander of AFRICOM admitted that some Boko Haram fighters had fought in Libya in December 2015, but also noted that they had never come back.¹⁹³ Between late 2016 and mid-2017, Nigerian officials also arrested a number of suspected militants in Kano and Kogi states who had purported ties to ISIS and, specifically, to Libya.¹⁹⁴ Little other information on these cells has emerged, and their distance from the north-east limits the likelihood of an overt ISIS-WA or JAS involvement, suggesting that the reported connections occurred on an individual rather than organisational basis.¹⁹⁵ An interviewee from Diffa, following these dynamics, noted that since the split there had been little recorded movement of fighters coming south from Libya to join the group, indicating that there was little connection between militant actors in the two regions.¹⁹⁶

With regard to migration patterns and the possibility of infiltration by extremist networks, a researcher in Maiduguri noted that only 30 to 40 migrants from the region had moved northwards to Libya or beyond in the past few months. Most of those were aided by family and friend networks and were unlikely to have become involved in extremist organisations.¹⁹⁷ This is supported by data from the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix for Libya. Two reports from 2017 suggest that the majority of Nigeria's migrants to Libya and beyond hail predominately from southern areas of the country, far from locations of militant activity in the north-east, precluding likely connections.¹⁹⁸

The fact that the most dominant area of influence and connection to ISIS has been via messages, probably because of the ease with which documents can be transmitted electronically, is further indication of the limited physical ties to external movements. This influence is apparent in the media operations of both factions, but only ISIS-WA has demonstrated direct links, befitting its status as a wilayat.¹⁹⁹

Respondents who were familiar with both groups were asked about possible external connections. Given that many were not in positions of authority, it is difficult to confirm any true links. The most commonly reported incidents, according to four different respondents in separate interviews, involved the occasional presence of light-skinned individuals in the Sambisa area prior to the August 2016 rupture. A local researcher who has examined insurgent dynamics in the region since 2009 noted hearing similar accounts on numerous occasions.²⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the exact nature of such links and the foreign presence remains uncertain and no similar stories emerged in the aftermath of the split.

For these reasons it is difficult to conclude that active links outside the realm of messaging are ongoing with either group. Despite a more natural tendency for this to occur through ISIS-WA, the lack of any overt indicators, especially with regard to foreign-fighter involvement in the region since the fall of Sirte, seems to suggest there are limited further links, or at least ones that would make a meaningful difference on the ground.²⁰¹

Conclusion: ISIS-WA as a Long-Term Concern

The split between ISIS-WA and JAS was predicated on elements that had been present in Boko Haram for some time, but manifested themselves into the most direct challenge to Shekau's rule since he took over the movement in 2010. The factions have demonstrated distinct operating patterns since then, indicating the relevance of the ideological divide to ground operations. This has not always been consistent or without exception, but the larger trend has held true over the past two years, indicating that the Lake Chad region now essentially suffers from the actions of two, rather than one, militant groups.

Given these dynamics, despite JAS's continued ability to survive and inflict violence, ISIS-WA probably poses the more dangerous long-term threat to the Lake Chad region. As leader of JAS, Shekau has maintained a strong presence in the region for years despite the odds, and thus should not be dismissed. But there are many reasons to view ISIS-WA as a greater concern.²⁰²

Firstly, ISIS-WA's dominant attack profile is designed to simultaneously weaken security forces and increase its own strength. The success of each passing confrontation of security forces at their bases, in addition to the looting of weapons and materials, ensures this. This has been a common pattern throughout Boko Haram's history and, while JAS certainly engages in similar behaviour at times, its predominant focus is on punishing the civilian population, which in turn does little to strengthen the movement.

ISIS-WA's recent record of direct assaults on military bases stands in stark contrast to that of JAS, showing that it is a superior military foe. The direct targeting of military bases, including those of both the Nigerian and Nigerien armies, some of which have resulted in the bases being overrun, indicates this. One conflict researcher noted that there were fewer fighters present in an average ISIS-WA attack, but greater coordination.²⁰³ Another commented that the group's superior capability extended to the planning phase, pointing out that the attack on a military barracks in Rann on 1 March only succeeded because the militants took their vehicles through a point where a trench around the camp had not been completed, showing that their advance reconnaissance had been effective. The same interviewee remarked that similar attempts by JAS to attack the military in Bama, Gwoza and Dikwa had failed.²⁰⁴

Secondly, ISIS-WA appears to prioritise resurrecting relationships with the civilian populace, probably viewing these relationships as important to its survival, and predicated on a less coercive model than that of JAS. ISIS-WA's attempts to maintain an ideological link to the preaching of Muhammad Yusuf, but distance itself from Shekau's wayward application, is central to its appeal to those who may disagree with Shekau but remain vulnerable to such rhetoric and/or still harbour anti-government sentiments. It remains unclear how effective this strategy will ultimately be, and respondents living in areas near an ISIS-WA presence remarked that the militants had thus far provided little in return in terms of services or governance.²⁰⁵ At the same time, however, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 926 000 people remain in areas of Borno State that are difficult to access by humanitarian organisations, which implies areas where militants are active. It is difficult to say exactly what is happening there, especially with regards to service delivery by militant actors.²⁰⁶

Regardless, even limited success on this front would allow for greater inflows of supplies and potentially even recruits, to further strengthen the ISIS-WA movement as it continues to build. This in turn makes it a

source of greater concern in the future and it is all the more pertinent for regional governments to undertake a concerted and effective response to the current crisis in order to avoid engendering resentment that could eventually play into the hands of the extremists.

JAS, on the other hand, largely relies on force to achieve its aims and continues to punish the local population, with little indication that such patterns will change in the future. This short-sighted strategy engenders little popular support and indicates the movement's limited long-term appeal.

Thirdly, both JAS and ISIS-WA have distributed messaging related to governance, often via the provision of public justice for sharia infractions, indicating the desire of both to establish a state capable of dispensing justice and governance in the region.²⁰⁷ Yet given JAS's previous failures on this front and its continued targeting of the civilian populace, ISIS-WA probably has an easier route to gaining support and ultimately implementing their societal vision.

ISIS-WA holds sway in Abadam and parts of Guzamala LGA, but it is unclear to what degree it controls and governs territory as opposed to using it as a hideout.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless, its presence and enhanced mobility, marked by increasing activity in Yobe State, demonstrate its potential for growth and territorial control. It is already more active throughout the region, with a presence in south-east Niger, the Logone-et-Chari department in northern Cameroon, and on the islands of Lake Chad, which straddle international boundaries.

In contrast, JAS's primary external theatre of operations is just across the Cameroonian border, with many of its attacks occurring on a hit-and-run basis, indicating that strongholds are still more apparent on the Nigerian side. Even in Nigeria, JAS does not occupy large stretches of territory outside Sambisa, and the movement has already had a chance to put its vision for the region into place after capturing territory in 2014-15. The result was little governance or service provision, but rather a predatory rule, which laid the seeds for the humanitarian crises afflicting the region today. In this sense, JAS's previous failure to create a state ties into the idea that the movement has already passed its high watermark and is now aiming to survive rather than thrive.

Fourthly, ISIS-WA is more likely to receive external support, although evidence of this has thus far been limited. While external dynamics have taken a back seat to internal machinations in determining the trajectory of militancy in the Lake Chad region, external support can provide a fillip at certain times – for example, the external training of Boko Haram members probably allowed the movement to re-emerge in 2010 in a deadlier fashion. While such adjustments are yet to be seen, if any decisive external support does flow to the Lake Chad region, ISIS-WA is a more likely recipient, thereby also making it a greater threat. Nonetheless, it is important to caution that the evidence on this point has been extremely limited to date.

Considering these aspects, ISIS-WA may be a longer-term concern for the region. JAS remains capable of horrific violence and should thus not be ignored, but the movement and its actions appear less likely to position itself in a manner that can sustain and even revive its fortunes down the road.

Recommendations

For National Actors

- Ensure understanding within Lake Chad military and government circles of the key differences that caused the split of Boko Haram into two groups and the way this has influenced the behaviour of each. Such an understanding can help with the development of a more nuanced picture of Islamic militancy in the Lake Chad region and aid in crafting appropriate (international and national) responses.
- Encourage a narrative that directly links the ideology espoused by ISIS-WA with the destruction wrought in the Lake Chad region. In this sense, it is imperative to ensure that ISIS-WA's attempts to distance itself from Shekau's wayward application of that ideology do not gain currency.
- Avoid the blanket stigmatisation of local communities living in areas of militant influence. In a situation where the military is unable to provide total protection, civilian survival is predicated on a multitude of factors, some of which may involve militant interaction. Yet that does not mean that all civilians in such areas support militancy, and blanket assumptions will do more to ensure that turns out to be the case than not.
- Ensure that the current response to the humanitarian crisis adequately prioritises meeting basic needs of all vulnerable populations. The response from regional governments can go a long way in terms of determining future civilian-state relations in the region, and ultimately weaken the future appeal of militant actors, who are also attempting to win local hearts and minds.

For the US and International Partners

- Provide support to regional governments in terms of cutting Boko Haram's sources of funding at a local level. Better tracking and detection of regional commodity movements could help distinguish between legitimate and illicit trades, in addition to helping identify any security officials profiting from the situation.
- Encourage regional governments to explore all possible means of ending the conflict, including the reported ongoing negotiations. Previous rounds of negotiations have failed at times because of a lack of coordination and political will – securing both these aspects can help ensure that government missteps will not lead to potentially missed opportunities.
- Continue to support coordinated responses among the Lake Chad countries, given the cross-border activities of both factions, and the previously fraught nature of regional relations.

Endnotes

- 1 It is important to note that Boko Haram is a colloquial term for the movement. It was more accurately referred to as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) prior to its March 2015 pledge of allegiance to ISIS and Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyya or Islamic State-West Africa Province (ISIS-WA) afterwards. Following the split of the movement into two groups in August 2016, the faction led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi has continued to go by the ISIS-WA moniker, while the Shekau-led faction has reverted to its original name, abbreviated to JAS. Throughout this report the term Boko Haram will be used for logistical ease, with reference to the specific ISIS-WA or JAS factions after the split.
- 2 The ISS maintains a database of violent incidents in the Lake Chad region, likely attributable to Boko Haram. This database helps shed light on key trends and patterns in conflict dynamics but does have limitations as it relies on media reporting on the conflict. Given the difficulties in accessing remote areas of the region, the database likely represents a fraction of overall violence. In this sense, it should not be taken as a comprehensive view of each and every attack in the region, but rather as a guide to overall patterns and trends.
- 3 The affected populations are henceforth referred to as 'respondents', while others are called 'interviewees', in order to allow for a distinction based on personal or professional experience. The experiences of the respondents shed light on the localised dynamics of violent extremist organisations operating in north-east Nigeria as well as the impact on the civilian populace. While the conflict dynamics differ significantly from one local government area to another, or even from town to town, key cross-cutting patterns emerged and the differences also illustrate pertinent trends.
- 4 This section provides a quick overview of major aspects of the Boko Haram insurgency. For more detailed accounts, see V Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, Hurst, 2015; A Walker, *Eat the Heart of the Infidel*, Hurst, 2016; A Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*, Princeton University Press, 2017.
- 5 Non-CJTF vigilante groups also operate in the region, many of which were present prior to the emergence of the CJTF; interview with researcher, Addis Ababa/Maiduguri, 26 April 2018.
- 6 It is important to note, however, that this expansion of violence was a reaction to the involvement of those nations in operations to counter the group.
- 7 The MNJTF, which is largely a coordinating body around border areas, is comprised of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. Each country also conducts other military operations within its territory. For more on the MNJTF, see W Assanvo, JE Abatan and WA Sawadogo, Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, *ISS West Africa Report*, 15 September 2016.
- 8 For example, according to a database of Boko Haram violence maintained by the ISS, the group (both factions combined) conducted 362 attacks in 2017, similar to the numbers recorded in 2015 (392 attacks) and 2014 (366 attacks). Given that the database relies on media reporting, and in view of the restrictions on travel outside major urban centres, the incidents are likely to be underreported.
- 9 Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview, 7 March 2017, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lac%20Chad%20Snapshot_07%20march%202017.pdf.
- 10 Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Overview, 7 March 2017, OCHA, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Lac%20Chad%20Snapshot_07%20march%202017.pdf; Z Somorin, 20,000 Killed, \$5.9bn Property Destroyed by Boko Haram in Borno, *Thisday*, 22 March 2016.
- 11 For example, in February 2018 OCHA estimated that 926 000 people remained in areas that international organisations find hard to reach, while only 2.4% of funding needs had been met; North-East Nigeria: Humanitarian Situation Update, February 2018, OCHA, <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/north-east-nigeria-humanitarian-situation-update-february-2018>.
- 12 Reports have emerged of activity related to Boko Haram in other countries in the region, particularly with a connection to Senegal, but no violence has occurred and the linkages have been largely limited to individual connections at this point. For example, Senegal in 2015 arrested and is currently trying a few of its citizens for Boko Haram linkages, *Boko Haram s'invite dans le procès de l'imam Ndao et Cie: Momodou Ndiaye , un accusé raconte...*, Sene News, 11 April 2018, https://www.senenews.com/actualites/boko-haram-sinvite-dans-le-proces-de-limam-ndao-et-cie-momodou-raconte_228119.html.
- 13 For an example of this, see Moki Edwin Kindzeka, Cameroon's military seizes war weapons, *Voice of America*, 18 June 2014, www.voanews.com/a/cameroons-military-seizes-war-weapons/1939612.html.
- 14 Sudan closes its borders with Libya 'to prevent arms trafficking'; interview with local researcher examining arms trafficking in and around Lake Chad, March 2018, www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170906-sudan-closes-its-borders-with-libya-to-prevent-arms-trafficking/.
- 15 An estimate based on media reporting of ransom payments, which the government of Cameroon has denied took place.
- 16 In July 2014 Ali's wife was abducted by the militants from Kolofata and held for more than two months. Boko Haram plans more attacks, recruits many young people, *AFP*, 8 August 2014, www.vanguardngr.com/2014/08/boko-haram-plans-attacks-recruits-many-young-people/.
- 17 Interview with Colonel Ngouyamsa Abdoulaye, Commander of the Gendarmerie Legion in the Far North, Maroua, 22 March 2018.
- 18 Most fled to more secure parts in northern Cameroon away from the border; interview with a member of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in Maroua, on 20 March 2018.
- 19 Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram, International Crisis Group, 16 November 2016.

- 20 While this has ebbed and flowed, near-daily attacks or incursions into Cameroon's Far North province have been a regular feature since 2014. The area has also become a primary theatre for Boko Haram's suicide violence.
- 21 One theory is that Boko Haram's incursions are inspired by the attacks involving fleets of motorbikes carried out by bandits known as 'road cutters' (*coupeurs des routes*) in 2009, before the sect turned into an armed group: 'It is a modus operandi based on cross-border banditry that Boko Haram has adopted.' Christian Seignobos, Boko Haram: innovations guerrières depuis les monts Mandara. Cosaquerie motorisée et islamisation forcée, www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-contemporaine-2014-4-page-149.htm.
- 22 Interview with Colonel Ngouyamsa Abdoulaye, Commander of the Gendarmerie Legion in the Far North, Maroua, 22 March 2018.
- 23 Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?, International Crisis Group, 19 September 2013, p.41.
- 24 David Lewis, Niger fears contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists, *Reuters*, 19 March 2014, www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-bokoharam-insight/niger-fears-contagion-from-nigerias-boko-haram-islamists-idUSBREA2H6720140319.
- 25 Jochen Stahnke, Guest Post: An Account from Diffa, Niger about the War with Boko Haram, *Sahel Blog*, 16 July 2015, <https://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/16/guest-post-an-account-from-diffa-niger-about-the-war-with-boko-haram/>.
- 26 Interview with Diffa-based researcher, March 2018.
- 27 Madjiasra Nako, Boko Haram attacks village in Chad as revolt spreads, *Reuters*, 13 February 2015, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0LH1E120150213?sp=true>.
- 28 In recent years, the Boudouma have frequently been associated with Boko Haram; Emma Farge, Chad's Deby plays for high stakes in Boko Haram talks, *Reuters*, November 3, 2014, www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-violence-chad-insight/chads-deby-plays-for-high-stakes-in-boko-haram-talks-idUSKBN0IN1MG20141103.
- 29 Interestingly, *Al-Naba* made no reference to Shekau. This pattern of avoiding mention of the former leader in ISIS messaging has continued since, although a non-IS-sanctioned audio recording in early August 2017, reportedly featuring Barnawi, contained some poignant criticism.
- 30 Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency, International Crisis Group, 27 February 2017, 18; according to a local researcher interviewed in Maiduguri on 27 May 2017, the group reportedly left Sambisa for Abadam at about this time.
- 31 Phil Stewart, Boko Haram fracturing over ISIS ties, U.S. general warns, *Reuters*, 22 June 2016, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN0Z80K6>.
- 32 Some previous incidents conformed to this pattern, including an attack on a military base in Kareto, Mobbar LGA, in April 2016, which reportedly involved about 100 militants, and a November 2015 assault in Gudunbali, Guzamala LGA, which resulted in significant military casualties. These incidents also occurred in northern Borno State and demonstrate a pattern of direct security force targeting far from the Sambisa area. The attacks differed from most of the violence at the time, however. Kingsley Omonobi, Boko Haram attack: 30 Terrorists Killed, 24 Soldiers Wounded in Borno, *Vanguard*, 19 April 2016, www.vanguardngr.com/2016/04/boko-haram-attack-30-terrorists-killed-24-soldiers-wounded-in-borno/; Nigerian Military covers up killing of soldiers by Boko Haram, *Premium Times*, 13 February 2016, www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/198161-nigerian-military-covers-killing-soldiers-boko-haram.html.
- 33 ISIS media also covered the Bosso assault, another indication that its relationship was with the emergent Barnawi, rather than Shekau, faction; the success of that attack may also have provided the Barnawi faction with much initial strength, especially in terms of weaponry; interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017.
- 34 Nigeria Sets \$175,000 Bounty For Mamman Nur, The Alleged UN Office Bomber, Sahara Reporters, 18 September 2011, <http://saharareporters.com/2011/09/18/nigeria-sets-175000-bounty-mamman-nur-alleged-un-office-bomber>.
- 35 Treasury sanctions Boko Haram leaders, US Department of Treasury, 1 December 2015, www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0290.aspx; interestingly those groups remain aligned with al-Qaeda, meaning that Nur switched to throw his allegiance in with the ISIS.
- 36 Interview with respondent from Gwoza, Maiduguri, 25 March 2018.
- 37 Interview with respondent from Damasak, Maiduguri, 27 March 2018.
- 38 Interviews with multiple respondents in Maiduguri, March 2018. For example, see Boko Haram top member surrenders – army, *Premium Times*, 1 April 2017, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/227660-boko-haram-top-member-surrenders-army.html; interview with humanitarian actor, Abuja, 30 May 2017.
- 39 New Boko Haram Leader, al-Barnawi, Accuses Abubakar Shekau Of Killing Fellow Muslims, Living In Luxury, Sahara Reporters, 5 August 2016, <http://saharareporters.com/2016/08/05/new-boko-haram-leader-al-barnawi-accuses-abubakar-shekau-killing-fellow-muslims-living>.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Interview with respondent from Gwoza in Maiduguri, 25 March 2018.
- 42 Based on series of messages from Shekau; Dionne Searcey, Boko Haram Leader Speaks on YouTube, Deepening Signs of Split, *New York Times*, 4 August 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/08/05/world/africa/boko-haram-leader-speaks-on-youtube-deepening-signs-of-split.html.
- 43 Interviews with respondents from Dikwa, Damboa and Konduga in Maiduguri, 24, 25 and 31 March 2018; 'Our job is to shoot, slaughter and kill', Amnesty International, 14 April 2015, 30; for example, this application began to apply to Borno state residents at large. During a horrific attack in Benesheikh in September 2013 in which over 100 were killed, militants specifically separated those from Borno State for death versus those from elsewhere travelling along the road; Xan Rice, More than 80 killed in Boko Haram attack in northeast Nigeria, *Financial Times*, 20 September 2013, www.ft.com/content/ef66bdc8-21ea-11e3-9b55-00144feab7de.
- 44 Interview with Konduga respondents, Maiduguri, 31 March 2018.
- 45 This was evidenced by the rise in rural attacks from 2013 to 2014, in which entire villages were razed, and casualty rates spiked. While difficult to track given the challenges in reporting and reliance on actors who at various times have an incentive to inflate or minimise casualty counts, and the fact that much violence probably passed by unreported, by any account Boko Haram's lethality towards civilians increased during this period. For example, the Global Terrorism Database maintained by START noted that casualties from Boko Haram violence jumped from approximately 1 500 in 2013 to over 6 000 in 2014, while the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) demonstrated a similar pattern, jumping from around 1 200 Boko Haram casualties in 2013 to more than 5 000 in 2014; Global Terrorism Index, Institute for Economics &

- Peace, 2015, 22; ACLED Version 7 (1997-2016), accessed 30 November 2017, www.acleddata.com/data/acled-version-7-1997-2016/.
- 46 For example, a detained female bomber in early 2017 recounted how she was instructed to detonate anywhere there was a crowd in Maiduguri, an illustration of the indiscriminate nature of the violence; Boko Haram gave me N200 to detonate explosive – Teenage suicide bomber, *Premium Times*, 7 February 2017, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/222868-boko-haram-gave-n200-detonate-explosive-teenage-suicide-bomber.html.
 - 47 New Boko Haram Leader, al-Barnawi, Accuses Abubakar Shekau Of Killing Fellow Muslims, Sahara Reporters, 5 August 2016, <http://saharareporters.com/2016/08/05/new-boko-haram-leader-al-barnawi-accuses-abubakar-shekau-killing-fellow-muslims-living>.
 - 48 During this interview Barnawi also actively denied that his group were Kharijites (those who have adopted a radical approach to killing people deemed insufficiently Islamic). Prompted by the interviewer to address the question twice, this was probably a deliberate move to distance himself from Shekau; IS al-Naba newspaper interviews West Africa ‘Governor’ Abu Musab al-Barnawi, SITE, 3 August 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/is-al-naba-newspaper-interviews-west-africa-governor-abu-musab-al-barnawi.html>.
 - 49 Pertinently, however, Ansaru chose to break away from Shekau rather than challenge his position within the movement, contrary to what the Barnawi group has done (thanks in part to the external backing of ISIS).
 - 50 Fliers announcing the group’s emergence were posted around Kano less than a week after the attack.
 - 51 The issue of civilian targeting has been a frequent one for Boko Haram, to the point where it surfaced in 12% of all Boko Haram messaging between 2010 and 2016, Omar S Mahmood, More than propaganda: a review of Boko Haram’s public messages, *ISS West Africa Report*, 28 March 2017, 20; Ansaru’s geographic focus was predominately in central Nigeria, very different to the geographic location of Barnawi’s faction today; Khalid al-Barnawi (not to be confused with Abu Musab al-Barnawi), Ansaru’s presumptive leader, was arrested in April 2016 in Kogi state despite no major operations on behalf of Ansaru in three years.
 - 52 Clashes have been reported in Marte LGA (January 2017), and across Damboa, Marte, Monguno and Abadam LGAs just after the split (September 2016); interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; Leadership tussle: Boko Haram groups clash in northeast, *Punch*, 7 September 2016, <http://punchng.com/leadership-tussle-boko-haram-groups-clash-northeast/>; Nicolas Pinault, Behind Barbed Wire, Niger Tries to Deradicalize Boko Haram Fighters, *Voice of America*, 8 May 2017, www.voanews.com/a/niger-deradicalize-boko-haram-fighters-barbed-wire-camps/3842966.html; Joe Parkinson, Drew Hinshaw, and Gbenga Akinbule, Islamic State faction in Nigeria follows Boko Haram’s Playbook: Kidnapping Schoolgirls, *Wall Street Journal*, 18 March 2018; another ex-militant who claimed to be an intelligence officer before his capture in June 2017 in Buni Yadi, Yobe State, claimed that the two factions clashed nine times at the time of the split; <http://saharareporters.com/2017/12/24/ex-boko-haram-intelligence-chief-speaks-detention-reason-albanerwi-nur-and-other>.
 - 53 Hamza Idris and Uthman Abubakar, Boko Haram supremacy battle: Shekau loses ground to Albarnawi faction, *Daily Trust*, 14 December 2017, www.dailytrust.com.ng/boko-haram-supremacy-battle-shekau-loses-grounds-to-albarnawi-faction.html.
 - 54 For example, friction between the factions reportedly emerged over the local fish trade in the Logone-et-Chari department of northern Cameroon in February 2017; Hans De Marie Heungoup, Boko Haram’s shifting tactics in Cameroon: what does the data tell us?, 14 February 2017, www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/blog/boko-harams-shifting-tactics-cameroon-data-tell-us/.
 - 55 JAS’s initial videos after the split removed ISIS logos from its messaging, but these reappeared in two mid-March 2017 videos, and have continued to appear since; Abdulkareem Haruna, In New Video, Boko Haram Leader, Abubakar Shekau, Threatens To Attack Buhari In Presidential Villa, *Premium Times*, 8 August 2016, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/208260-new-video-boko-haram-leader-abubakar-shekau-threatens-attack-buhari-presidential-villa.html; curiously Islamic State has continued its policy of ignoring Shekau completely, and hasn’t responded to the fact that he is using their logos in his messaging.
 - 56 Author obtained a copy and translation of the message.
 - 57 Interview with diplomatic official, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
 - 58 Interview, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
 - 59 Banki is in Bama LGA, an area close to Sambisa Forest, where JAS has been more present. Some ISIS-WA activity has been reported in the LGA, however; Troops kill Boko Haram mercenaries, *PR Nigeria*, July 4, 2017, <https://prnigeria.com/2017/07/04/troops-kill-boko-haram-mercenaries/>.
 - 60 Some analysts closely following the dynamics of Islamic militancy in Nigeria claim that many members of Ansaru settled their differences with Shekau and reunited by 2014, explaining the reduction in Ansaru activity. While difficult to envision given the ideological gulf between the two movements presented in their messaging, this would help explain Ansaru’s operational drop-off after 2013, despite some limited messaging and reported arrests related to the Ansaru faction continuing since then; see Jacob Zenn, Wilayat West Africa Reboots for the Caliphate, *CTC Sentinel*, August 2015; Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency, International Crisis Group, 3 April 2014.
 - 61 Two other sources of information on militant operating structures, albeit prior to the split include, Ahmed Salkida, Regional military cooperation must improve to defeat Boko Haram, *African Arguments*, March 11, 2015, <http://africanarguments.org/2015/03/11/regional-military-cooperation-must-improve-to-defeat-boko-haram-by-ahmad-salkida/> and Our job is to shoot, slaughter and kill, Amnesty International, April 14, 2015, p.15.
 - 62 Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, Freedom for the World’s Most Famous Hostages Came at a Heavy Price, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 December 2017, www.wsj.com/articles/two-bags-of-cash-for-boko-haram-the-untold-story-of-how-nigeria-freed-its-kidnapped-girls-1513957354; In addition, while Shekau may have dissolved his Shura Council, it was active at one point – a suspect in the killing of prominent cleric Sheikh Adam Albani in Kaduna state in 2014 stated upon his arrest that the decision to target Albani came from the Shura Council itself; Ronald Mutum, SSS parades alleged killers of Albani, *Daily Trust*, March 4, 2014, www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/ss-parades-alleged-killers-of-albani/40413.html.
 - 63 Interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
 - 64 For example, ahead of major ISIS-WA attacks, its commanders meet to organise, with previous attacks in Geidam and Chettimari preceded by sightings of large numbers of ISIS-WA militants in Mobbar and Yunusari LGAs respectively; interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri,

- 24 March 2018, interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
- 65 Interview with respondents from Gwoza, Maiduguri, 25 March 2018.
 - 66 For example, a key ISIS-WA commander in Geidam may have followed this path; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 67 While there have been surrenders throughout the region, the high number from Monguno suggests members leaving ISIS-WA. Some surmise that the reason is that the faction is allowing its members to leave or at least is not killing dissenters, unlike JAS; <https://prnigeria.com/2018/02/14/boko-haram-troops-eliminate-186/>; interview with Civilian Joint Task Force member, Maiduguri, 29 March 2018.
 - 68 Interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
 - 69 Interview with logistics coordinator, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 70 According to a database of recorded violence likely attributable to Boko Haram, maintained by the ISS.
 - 71 In a message on 17 March 2017 Shekau claimed responsibility for all suicide attacks in Maiduguri; Boko Haram Leader Shekau threatens more bombings in new video, *The Nation*, 18 March 2017, <http://thenationonline.net/boko-haram-leader-shekau-threatens-bombings-new-video/>; in another clip from 2 January 2018, he states that 'we are the people that killed and destroyed property in Maiduguri, Gamboru-Ngala, Damboa, and every part of northern Nigeria', author obtained translation of video.
 - 72 Although some respondents recounted violent responses by ISIS-WA, the majority said the faction was less harsh towards civilians, interviews with respondents, Maiduguri, March 2018.
 - 73 The attack occurred during Ramadan, and Shekau noted that the fasting of those in Maiduguri was in vain, as God does not accept them as true Muslims because they continue to live under government rule; Abdulkareem Haruna, In new video, Boko Haram leader Shekau claims victory in Maiduguri attack, gives condition for ceasefire, *Premium Times*, 11 June 2017, www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/233671-in-new-video-boko-haram-leader-shekau-claims-victory-in-maiduguri-attack-gives-condition-for-ceasefire.html.
 - 74 Boko Haram claims University of Maiduguri attack, Channels TV, 17 January 2017, www.channelstv.com/2017/01/17/boko-haram-claims-university-maiduguri-attack/.
 - 75 Boko Haram's only attack ever in Lagos in July 2014, claimed by Shekau, was probably conducted by a female suicide bomber; Tim Cocks, In Nigeria, Boko Haram-style violence radiates southwards, *Reuters*, 14 July 2014, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN0FJ0GF20140714>.
 - 76 Given that many suicide bombers have either prematurely detonated their explosives or been intercepted at checkpoints before they could do so, it is difficult to classify them, but the intended target in many cases may have been civilian in nature given the attempted penetration of urban centres.
 - 77 Of these, slightly more than half have involved female bombers. Only 6% of the suicide bombers actively targeted non-civilian entities (although a large proportion of targeting remains unknown), indicating that the majority of the suicide violence conforms more closely to Shekau attack patterns; according to a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
 - 78 Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 79 Ibid; interview with humanitarian actors, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 80 Reflections based on a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
 - 81 Though very difficult to verify given the difficulties in tracking casualty counts in the region, at least 2 000 deaths were recorded in the ISS database since 2017. Sixty-three percent of these occurred in attacks that mirror JAS patterns more closely, 17% in those that mirrored ISIS-WA patterns, and 19% in incidents with an unclear pattern; militants have also reportedly instructed suicide bombers sent on missions to wait until they find a big crowd to detonate – indicating the lack of target pre-selection and the indiscriminate nature of the attacks; Boko Haram gave me N200 to detonate explosive – Teenage suicide bomber, *Premium Times*, 7 January 2017, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/222868-boko-haram-gave-n200-detonate-explosive-teenage-suicide-bomber.html>.
 - 82 Data based on database of Boko Haram violence maintained by the ISS.
 - 83 The casualty counts range depending on the source, an indication of how difficult it can be to accurately track this type of data. A local researcher who interviewed those at the local mortuary counted 64 total bodies; interview with local researcher, Addis Ababa/Maiduguri, 6 May 2018; 86 killed in Mubi suicide blasts, *Vanguard*, 3 May 2018, www.vanguardngr.com/2018/05/86-killed-ne-nigeria-suicide-blasts-gravediggers/.
 - 84 According to a database of Boko Haram violence maintained by the ISS.
 - 85 There was a discrepancy at times between what ISIS claimed had been attacked and the likely target of the incident. However, in such cases ISIS ignored any notion of civilian targeting and stuck to its prescribed list of targets.
 - 86 Phil Stewart, Boko Haram fracturing over Islamic State ties, U.S. general warns, *Reuters*, 22 June 2016, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN0Z80K6>.
 - 87 Shekau does not appear to have shifted his leadership or operating style in any discernible way in reaction to the split. For example, he admitted killing group spokesman Abu Zinnira in December 2016, continuing a trend of murdering group members, even high-ranking ones; Abubakar Shekau kills Boko Haram's spokesman over 'leadership plot', *Vanguard*, 24 February 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/02/abubakar-shekau-kills-boko-harams-spokesman-leadership-plot/.
 - 88 Author collection of sources – the ISIS media apparatus includes statements directly from ISIS itself, and other statements issued by the ISIS-associated Amaq News Agency and its monthly *Rumiyah* magazine.
 - 89 Some of the incidents may have been designed in such a way as to avoid civilian casualties. For example, Barnawi militants did not follow fleeing soldiers into the city during the February 2017 attack in Gajiram, ostensibly to avoid such collateral damage; interview with humanitarian worker, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; eyewitnesses to an attack in Mainok in December 2017 also stated that the militants specifically told civilians passing along the road that they were not there for them; Boko Haram tries to take over military base in NE Nigeria, *AFP*, 14 December 2017, www.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Boko-Haram-tries-to-take-over-military-base-Borno-state-Nigeria/1066-4227756-4hrdm2/index.html.
 - 90 Between 2012 and 2014 Boko Haram had undertaken a wave of attacks on churches in areas of northern and central Nigeria.
 - 91 Interviews with Diffa-based researchers and government officials, March 2018.
 - 92 For example, both factions have been reported present

around Marte, Dikwa and Ngala LGAs, although the Barnawi faction may be more dominant there now; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; Skype interview with a humanitarian actor, Addis Ababa/Maiduguri, 8 December 2017; interviews with respondents from Dikwa and Ngala, Maiduguri, 24 and 26 March 2018. The Nigerian military also reported that Barnawi members attacked military bases in Bama and Dikwa in July 2017, closer to Shekau's Sambisa hideout; Boko Haram attacks military bases cast doubt on FG's claim, *Vanguard*, 6 July 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/07/boko-haram-attacks-military-bases-cast-doubt-fgs-claim.

- 93 Interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 23 March 2018.
- 94 Based on series of conversations with humanitarian personnel and local researchers; note that the Maiduguri-Banki road officially reopened in March 2018.
- 95 For example, there were 10 violent incidents in the first half of 2016, compared to 31 in the first half of 2017, according to a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
- 96 Database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
- 97 Many of these occurred primarily in Muna Garage area on Maiduguri's eastern outskirts, and in Molai area and by the road to Konduga in the south; interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017.
- 98 The Nigerian military destroyed a bomb-making factory in Konduga in November 2017, which had reportedly been used to facilitate a suicide attack on Maiduguri on 18 November 2017; Olatokunbo Adesanya, NAF Destroys Boko Haram Bomb-Making Facility in Konduga, PR Nigeria, 22 November 2017, <https://prnigeria.com/security/naf-destroys-boko-haram-bomb/>.
- 99 Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017.
- 100 One interviewee believed that Shekau's focus on Maiduguri, even in the wake of mostly ineffective attacks, was due to a personal grudge; interview with humanitarian actor, Abuja, 30 May 2017. Shekau has maintained a particularly punitive view towards Maiduguri since his group was pushed out of the city after the emergence of the CJTF in mid-2013, and the fact that it serves as a refuge for those who have fled areas of his control.
- 101 Casualty accounts are based on media reporting and are difficult to verify; based on a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
- 102 Cameroon claimed in mid-March that joint operations with Nigeria in the Mandara Mountains along the border had resulted in the death of 60 militants, the release of 5 000 captives and the destruction of both a petroleum depot and an explosives factory; Moki Edwin Kindzeka, Cameroon Claims to Have Freed 5,000 Boko Haram Captives, *Voice of America*, 14 March 2017, www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-boko-haram-captives/3766420.html.
- 103 According to a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS.
- 104 Cameroun: Lutte contre Boko Haram: une tranchée contre les kamikazes, interview with Gilles Onana Mbarga conducted by Patrick Fandio in Kolofata in August 2017, broadcast on *France 24*, www.facebook.com/mhoumfa/videos/10214226041554235/.
- 105 Northern Adamawa was an area of significant Boko Haram activity previously, but this declined from 2014 onwards. Eight incidents were recorded in November 2017, however; more than the previous four months combined. Madagali

LGA has been a particular source of violence, with 21 recorded incidents in 2017, compared to 15 total in 2015-16, according to a database of recorded violent incidents, maintained by the ISS; Skype interview with a humanitarian actor closely involved in northern Nigeria, Addis Ababa/Paris, 27 November 2017; Suicide bomber kills 50 in Nigeria in deadliest attack this year, *Reuters*, 21 November 2017, <http://news.trust.org/item/20171121092350-bke8f>.

- 106 These areas are essentially under ISIS-WA's control, although leaders of the CJTF were able to travel there in March 2018. Multiple interviewees commented that the military is essentially not in charge or present in Abadam LGA; Skype interview with humanitarian actor, Addis Ababa/Paris, 27 November 2017; Skype interview with humanitarian actor, Addis Ababa/Maiduguri, 8 December 2017; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 28 March 2018; interview with CJTF leadership, Maiduguri, 29 March 2018; interview with logistics coordinator, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 107 Interview with local researcher, March 2018. It was also mentioned that this geographic split between the factions has played out in terms of attack patterns as well, with less violence in Logone-et-Chari since 2017.
- 108 Mainok reportedly served as a crossing area linking Barnawi's southern and northern strongholds until it was blocked in early 2017; interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; interview with humanitarian actor, Abuja, 30 May 2017.
- 109 Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017; Al-Barnawi Boko Haram faction responsible for recent attack, *AFP*, 28 January 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/01/al-barnawi-boko-haram-faction-responsible-recent-attack/.
- 110 Interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 111 Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, *New York Times*, March 14, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/03/14/world/africa/niger-green-berets-isis-firefight-december.html; ISIS-WA messaging also claimed an attack in the Diffa area in May 2018, demonstrating a continued presence.
- 112 It should be noted, however, that the Shekau faction has demonstrated an ability to counter military gains, causing the Nigerian Army to announce the capture of its main Camp Zero sanctuary in the Sambisa Forest in December 2016 and again in late 2017/early 2018; interview with civil-military coordinator, Maiduguri, 23 March 2018.
- 113 Interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018; interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 114 Islamic State messaging claim regarding ISIS-WA attack, May 9, 2018.
- 115 Interviews with respondents from Dikwa and Ngala in Maiduguri, 25 to 26 March 2018.
- 116 Hamisu Kabir Mal, Female suicide bomber hits Buni-Yadi mosque, *Daily Trust*, 2 March 2018; Suicide bombers kill two, wound 11 in attack in Niger, UN, *Reuters*, 30 June 2017, www.dailytrust.com.ng/female-suicide-bomber-hits-buni-yadi-mosque.html; 2 killed as women bombers blow themselves up at Niger refugee camp, *Vanguard*, 30 June 2017, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN19L1UX-OZATP>; www.vanguardngr.com/2017/06/2-killed-women-bombers-blow-niger-refugee-camp/.
- 117 Interviews in Maiduguri, March 2018.
- 118 Four UN aid workers killed, one abducted in Rann attack, *Premium Times*, 2 March 2018, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/260374-four-un-aid-workers-killed-one-abducted-rann-attack.html; MSF suspends medical

activities in Rann, MSF, 2 March 2018, www.msf.org/en/article/nigeria-msf-suspends-medical-activities-rann.

- 119 One respondent following the incident closely claimed the militants had strict orders to only attack the military base and leave the more than 50 humanitarian personnel based there alone; interview with logistics coordinator, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 120 Bukola Adebayo and Stephanie Busari, Freed Dapchi girl: Boko Haram told us 'don't go back to school', *CNN*, 26 March 2018; interview with local researcher who visited Dapchi after the incident, Maiduguri, 29 March 2018.
- 121 Isakia Wakil, Chibok girls: Negotiations with Boko Haram halted – Buhari, *Daily Trust*, April 13, 2018, www.dailytrust.com.ng/chibok-girls-negotiations-with-boko-haram-halted-buhari.html.
- 122 While negotiations to end the high levels of violence in the Lake Chad region should be pursued, it is at the same time difficult to envision the outcome of any agreement between the government and ISIS-WA. Despite the fact that the government claimed the negotiations had been ongoing for a year, neither military operations nor militant attacks have ceased during that period. Furthermore, ISIS-WA ostensibly remains committed to the imposition of an Islamic state on Nigerian territory, a development Abuja would not be able to countenance. ISIS-WA also remains part of the Islamic State's global network of affiliates, and despite the fact that there is little day-to-day evidence of concrete relationships, the organisation would also be hard-pressed to support the discussions its West Africa Province are rumoured to be a part of. Furthermore, the discussions thus far appear to have been limited to the Nigerian government, which would eventually require the involvement of Niger, Chad and Cameroon as well, all of which also suffer from ISIS-WA violence. In this sense, there are many complications and seemingly irreconcilable positions at hand, which in turn has thus far limited Nigerian government parlays (with both JAS and ISIS-WA) to transactional prisoner releases. Nonetheless, these entrenched dynamics should not preclude creative explorations that could move beyond current positions, given the exigent demands for peace in the region, and the limitations of a military solution.
- 123 Nigeria talking to Boko Haram about possible ceasefire, *Reuters*, 20 March 2018, www.voanews.com/a/nigeria-boko-haram-cease-fire/4315470.html.
- 124 Some interviewees suggested that ISIS-WA leaders did not sign off on the attack but were forced to deal with it when the girls were brought to the Lake Chad area. Given the immense logistical preparations required for the attack, including the travel time to and from the militants' sanctuary, it is unlikely that ISIS-WA leaders could have been so oblivious to the plans. A week-long stand down order to the Nigerian military in order to facilitate safe passage for the girls' return indicates the area this operation spanned and thus the coordination required to travel through such diverse territories; interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018; interview with logistics coordinator, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 125 Some of the freed girls said their journey home had taken four to five days, an indication of how far from Dapchi the militants had travelled, Dapchi girls: Freed Nigerian girls tell of kidnap ordeal, *BBC News*, 22 March 2018; interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
- 126 The decline in popularity of Shekau's group can be seen in the context of increased forced recruitment, which began to take place at an unprecedented level in 2013-14; see Drew Hinshaw and Joe Parkinson, The 10,000 Kidnapped Boys of Boko Haram, *Wall Street Journal*, 12 August 2016, www.wsj.com/articles/the-kidnapped-boys-of-boko-haram-1471013062. Kidnappings, probably perpetrated by both factions, continue in the region, albeit it at lower levels, but indicating that forced recruitment probably remains a means of replenishing group ranks.
- 127 JAS popularity and thereby recruitment efforts suffered under Shekau, especially with the turn towards large-scale civilian targeting by 2013. This coincided with reports of increased forced recruitment, an indication that the group was struggling to replenish its ranks through other means.
- 128 Interviews with respondents, Maiduguri, 22 to 31 March 2018.
- 129 In certain LGAs where both factions operate, respondents noted some visual aspects to distinguish between them. For example, respondents from Damboa indicated that Shekau's faction wears 'black turbans' while Barnawi/Nur's faction wears 'red turbans'. A respondent from Gwoza further clarified that when Shekau's fighters are in their strongholds, they wear 'white turbans' but when they go to war, they wear 'black turbans'. Interviews with respondents, Maiduguri, 22 to 31 March 2018.
- 130 For more on the targeting of IDPs, see Aimée-Noël Mbiyozo, How Boko Haram specifically targets displaced people, *ISS Africa*, 6 December 2017.
- 131 Eyewitnesses to the factional clash in Dikwa LGA in December 2017 also noted that ISIS-WA militants allowed villagers to leave the scene, rather than forcing them to remain; Hamza Idris and Uthman Abubakar, Boko Haram supremacy battle: Shekau loses ground to Albarnawi faction, *Daily Trust*, December 14, 2017, www.dailytrust.com.ng/boko-haram-supremacy-battle-shekau-loses-grounds-to-albarnawi-faction.html.
- 132 A polio vaccination team in northern Borno State was attacked in Gubio LGA in November 2017, although it was accompanied by a military convoy, which may have been the true target of the attack. This would be similar to an attack in July 2017 on a team of geologists from NNPC and UNIMAID. That team was also accompanied by a military escort which suffered heavy casualties. In the hostage video after three of the team members were captured after the raid, one of the hostages noted that the militants 'promised us that if their demands are met, they will release us immediately to go back to the work we were caught doing', an indication that the survey team itself was likely not the initial target, Abducted UNIMAID Workers Beg FG To Meet Boko Haram's Demands, *Channels Television*, 28 July 2017, www.channelstv.com/2017/07/28/abducted-unimaidd-workers-beg-fg-meet-boko-harams-demands/; a series of attacks by suspected Islamist militants also targeted polio vaccination teams in 2013 in Kano.
- 133 Interviews with respondents, Maiduguri, 22 to 31 March 2018.
- 134 Interview with local researchers, March 2018.
- 135 A series of reports from the REACH network surveyed IDPs in Guzamala, Monguno, Magumeri, Marte and Nganzai LGAs, areas mostly where ISIS-WA is thought to predominate. IDPs in those areas reported harassment from armed groups, including abductions, executions, village burnings and movement restrictions, all activities more commonly associated with JAS. Another REACH survey in Pulka, an area closer to JAS hideouts, noted severe movement restrictions, including the mining of areas so civilians couldn't leave, and the harassment of women if seen outside their homes. A major difference that emerged is while the villages in the northern part of the state surveyed had fled their homes often due to armed group activity, they were able to leave in large numbers, while those from Pulka had to sneak out in smaller groups to avoid militant detection. In any case, the reports shed

- light on the dynamics that while ISIS-WA is still capable of predatory behavior towards civilians, JAS maintains a stricter view towards those fleeing from areas of its control, tying into dictates from leader Shekau; Gajiram, Gajiganna and Tungushe Displacement Overview, REACH, January 2018; Marte and Monguno LGA - Displacement Overview, REACH, January 2018; Pulka Displacement Overview, REACH, 9 February 2018; Guzamala LGA - Situation Overview, REACH March 2018.
- 136 Interviews with Diffa-based respondents, March 2018.
 - 137 Boko Haram kidnap 22 girls, women in Borno, *AFP*, 1 April 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/boko-haram-kidnap-22-girls-women-borno/; Lake Chad Basin: Crisis Update No. 19, OCHA, 18 September 2017, 3. Other civilians have also reportedly been killed while carrying out normal activities such as collecting firewood in areas of a Barnawi presence, while Barnawi militants have taxed local civilians on market day; interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 27 May 2017. A Fulani herder was reportedly killed by the Barnawi faction in Damboa area for refusing to part with his cattle; interview with humanitarian worker, Abuja, 30 May 2017; Interview with diplomat, Abuja, 19 March 2018.
 - 138 Boko Haram fighters storm Borno village, kill three for 'collaboration' with the military, *AFP*, 27 March 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/boko-haram-fighters-storm-borno-village-kill-three-collaboration-military/.
 - 139 Interviews with respondents from Magumeri in Maiduguri, 22 March 2018; one recounted how militants who came to his shop destroyed all Coca-Cola bottles, but took away Fanta and Sprite. Another stated that being caught with a government ID card, prayer beads or charms can also lead to trouble.
 - 140 Interview with respondent from Magumeri, Maiduguri, 22 March 2018.
 - 141 A youth representative from Diffa said in an interview in March 2018, 'To us they are all BH. They are violent.'
 - 142 Skype Interview with humanitarian actor, Addis Ababa/ Maiduguri, 7 December 2017; Skype interview with logistics coordinator, Addis Ababa/Maiduguri, 8 December 2017.
 - 143 It has also been reported that the ISIS-WA faction has been specifically asking people in IDP camps to return home to areas under its influence; Paul Carsten and Ahmed Kingimi, Islamic State ally stakes out territory around Lake Chad, *Reuters*, April 29, 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN11008A-OZATP>.
 - 144 Interviews with respondents, Maiduguri, 22 to 31 March 2018.
 - 145 Interview with Diffa-based researcher, March 2018.
 - 146 Interviews with respondents from Damboa, Maiduguri, 25 March 2018.
 - 147 Interview with respondent from Damasak, Maiduguri, 27 March 2018.
 - 148 Ibid.
 - 149 As an example of this dynamic, during an attack in Chibok LGA in late 2016, militants set fire to maize fields that were almost ready to be harvested; 14 killed in Boko Haram attacks in NE Nigeria, *AFP*, 20 September 2016, www.news24.com/Africa/News/14-killed-in-boko-haram-attacks-in-ne-nigeria-20160920; in similar incident in early 2018, an entire village along with food was burnt by the militants, Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon despite 'defeated' claims, *AFP*, 5 February 2018, www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/boko-haram-attacks-nigeria-cameroon-despite-defeated-claims/.
 - 150 Boko Haram kidnaps 22 girls, women in Borno, *AFP*, April 1, 2017, www.vanguardngr.com/2017/04/boko-haram-kidnap-22-girls-women-borno/.
 - 151 Interview with respondent from Ngala in Maiduguri, 26 March 2018.
 - 152 This runs reportedly to N2 500 (\$8) per cow or N1 500 (\$5) for smaller animals; Paul Carsten and Ahmed Kingimi, *Reuters*, Islamic State ally stakes out territory around Lake Chad, 29 April 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN11008A-OZATP>.
 - 153 Interview with local researchers, March 2018.
 - 154 The koro, a measuring bowl used in the markets in places around Lake Chad, holds about 2.5kg.
 - 155 Interview with anthropologist in Maroua, 21 March 2018.
 - 156 A 2016 report from the International Crisis Group claimed Boko Haram had earned \$3.4 million from the cattle trade, while another investigation in 2016 by the Financial Action Task Force noted that the seizure of cattle in three incidents in northern Cameroon was worth €12 million; Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram, International Crisis Group, 16 November 2016, 17; Terrorist Financing in West and Central Africa, Financial Action Task Force, October 2016, 12-13.
 - 157 Interview with local researchers, Abuja, 20 March 2018; Terrorist Financing in West Africa, 2016, Financial Action Task Force.
 - 158 How Boko Haram makes its cash from stolen cattle, *Ventures Africa*, 5 January 2017. <http://venturesafrica.com/boko-haram-makes-cash-from-stolen-cattle/>; typically cattle herdsman in the area hail from the Shuwa Arab, Koyam, or Fulani groups, meaning that anyone apart from those selling cattle in local markets will come under suspicion; interview with government official, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 159 Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 160 Borno Govt. Criminalizes Cattle Import to Check Terror Funding, *Channels TV*, 4 March 2016. www.channelstv.com/2016/03/04/borno-govt-criminalizes-cattle-import-to-check-terror-funding/.
 - 161 Lafiya Dole: Troops Intensify Clearance Operations, *Channels TV*, 13 March 2017, www.channelstv.com/2017/03/13/lafiya-dole-troops-record-success-in-clearance-operations/.
 - 162 It is unclear whether these figures represent total losses due to the overall violence or the numbers of cattle stolen for profit; Boko Haram Kills 1,900 Herdsmen, 169,000 Cows, Association, *News Agency of Nigeria*, 11 August 2016, <http://punchng.com/boko-haram-killed-1900-herdsmen-association/>.
 - 163 Business in Cameroon, Cameroon: estimated at FCfa 8 billion, cattle thefts represent 15% of losses linked to the war against Boko Haram, 23 March 2017, www.businessincameroon.com/breeding/2203-6997-cameroon-estimated-at-fcfa-8-billion-cattle-thefts-represent-15-of-losses-linked-to-the-war-against-boko-haram.
 - 164 Interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
 - 165 One researcher mentioned that each boat would pay a fee ranging from NGN1 000 to 5 000 in order to be able to fish in the area; Interview with local researchers, Abuja, 20 March 2018.
 - 166 Military Bans Fish-Smuggling in North-East, Patrols Waterways in Niger Delta, *PR Nigeria*, 5 May 2017, <https://prnigeria.com/2017/05/05/military-fish-smuggling-waterways/>.
 - 167 With Boko Haram Threat Receding, Nigeria Allows Fishing to Resume in Lake Chad, *VOA*, 11 July 2017, www.voanews.com/a/with-boko-haram-threat-receding-nigeria-allows-fishing-to-resume-in-lake-chad/3937890.html.

- 168 Niger: Smoked fish, a source of significant income for Boko Haram, *RFI*, 25 February 2015. www.rfi.fr/afrique/20150225-niger-poisson-fume-source-importants-revenus-boko-haram-interdit-lac-tchad/; Niger troops bomb fish farmers financing Boko Haram, *PM News*, 25 February 2015, www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2015/02/25/niger-troops-bomb-fish-farmers-financing-boko-haram/.
- 169 Spice of Life: Niger region lifts ban on red pepper, *AFP*, 18 October 2017, www.news24.com/Africa/News/spice-of-life-niger-region-lifts-ban-on-red-pepper-20171018.
- 170 Interview with Diffa-based source, March 2018.
- 171 Interview with local researcher who had recently visited Monguno and Baga, April 2018.
- 172 How Boko Haram makes its cash from stolen cattle, *Ventures Africa*; EXCLUSIVE: Full list of soldiers, police officers others arrested for collaborating with Boko Haram, *Premium Times*, 28 October 2016.
- 173 Interview with local researcher, 24 March 2018, in Maroua.
- 174 Nigeria's Boko Haram 'got \$3m ransom' to free hostages, *BBC*, 27 April 2013, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22320077; Boko Haram 'was paid' \$12.5 million to release French priest, *Africa Review*, 7 January 2014, www.africareview.com/News/Boko-Haram-paid-millions-to-release-French-priest/-/979180/2137672/-/j1qvxf/-/index.html?relative=true.
- 175 This practice continues – for example, a village chief in northern Cameroon was released in May 2018 reportedly for N2 million (\$5 500). Thousands of people have also been abducted in the region to serve within the movement and not for overt financial gain; https://twitter.com/loeil_du_sahel/status/993371488278466560.
- 176 Interviews in northern Cameroon, March 2018.
- 177 An official from Diffa complained, 'They come in the dead of the night and knock on your door and ask for the specific amount that you earned during the day, or they hold family members for ransom', interview, March 2018.
- 178 The *Wall Street Journal* has reported that \$3m was paid in exchange for the Chibok girls; Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, Freedom for the world's most famous hostages came at a heavy price, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 December 2017, www.wsj.com/articles/two-bags-of-cash-for-boko-haram-the-untold-story-of-how-nigeria-freed-its-kidnapped-girls-1513957354.
- 179 The concerns in Mainok may have revolved around a specific individual, rather than a more indiscriminate threat; interview with logistics coordinator, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 180 For example, Shekau has often complained about the detention of members of his group and, in videos discussing the fate of the Chibok girls, asked for them to be released.
- 181 Sahel and beyond: UNODC sounds the alarm on the increase in trafficking and consumption of Tramadol and its security and health implications, UNODC, December 11, 2017, <http://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/2017-12-11-unodc-warns-tramadol-use.html>.
- 182 Nigerian authorities shut three cough syrup manufacturers, *BBC News*, 8 May 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44039496.
- 183 The August interdiction effort involved 600 000 tablets of Tramadol in the Mayo-Tsanaga area, while the June incident recovered 3 000 packs of Tramadol in the town of Fotokol, on the Nigerian border; Northern Nigeria internal security sitrep – Week Ending 12 August 2017, Vox Peccavi blog, 15 August 2017, <https://peccaviconsulting.wordpress.com/2017/08/15/northern-nigeria-internal-security-sitrep-week-ending-12-august-2017/>; 200 Kg de drogue destinés à Boko Haram saisis par la douane camerounaise, Africa News, 18 June 2017, <http://fr.africanews.com/2017/06/18/200-kg-de-droque-destines-a-boko-haram-saisis-par-la-douane-camerounaise/>; Clearance Op: Army Recovers Corpses of soldiers, Arrests Terrorists, *PR Nigeria*, 11 January 2017, <https://prnigeria.com/2017/01/11/clearance-op-army-recovers-corpses-soldiers-arrests-terrorists/>.
- 184 Interview with respondent from Bama, Maiduguri, 23 March 2018; Another respondent noted, however, how her husband was beaten by the group for taking Tramadol; interview with respondent from Konduga, Maiduguri, 31 March 2018; Cameroon vigilantes risk lives to thwart Boko Haram, *AFP*, 2 December 2015, <http://guardian.ng/news/cameroon-vigilantes-risk-lives-to-thwart-boko-haram/>.
- 185 Sarah A Topol, Trained to Kill: How Four Boy Soldiers Survived Boko Haram, *New York Times*, 21 June 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/06/21/magazine/boko-haram-the-boys-from-baga.html; Chika Oduah, The women who love Boko Haram, *Al Jazeera*, 22 September 2016, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/08/women-love-loved-boko-haram-160823120617834.html.
- 186 The 2017 UNODC report also discusses the 2015 trial of 10 alleged Boko Haram members in N'Djamena, Chad, reporting that large amounts of psychotropic substances were found in the home of a defendant. While the Chadian court concluded that a trafficking element was involved, little has emerged since then of similar activity; The drug problem and organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism, UNODC, p.36.
- 187 A 2018 study on arms trafficking in Niger concludes that trafficking from Libya has declined since 2014, and the majority of material in south-east Niger originates from Chad and Nigeria. Nonetheless, stockpiles investigated by the author also contained material from Algeria, Mali, and Sudan, although the chain of transfer is not always straightforward; Savannah de Tessières, At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts, Small Arms Survey, 2018.
- 188 For example, the force commander of the MNJTF admitted in March 2017 that the majority of weapons used by Boko Haram militants originated from regional military posts; Margaret Besheer, Regional task force battles Boko Haram, *Voice of America*, 14 March 2017, www.voanews.com/a/regional-task-force-battles-boko-haram/3765775.html.
- 189 Shekau's steadfast commitment to ISIS despite the move away from him also indicates that any overtures to AQ may not be immediately apparent. Moreover, members of the breakaway movement of Ansaru had previously complained about Shekau's leadership to external al-Qaeda leaders, indicating the complicated history between the JAS leader and AQ.
- 190 Boko Haram had never engaged in territorial control prior to this phase, but may have been inspired by ISIS's declaration of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq in June 2014, leading to a more robust strategy for territorial control after that.
- 191 Joe Parkinson, Drew Hinshaw, and Gbenga Akingbule, Islamic State faction in Nigeria follows Boko Haram's playbook: kidnapping schoolgirls, *Wall Street Journal*, 18 March 2018, www.wsj.com/articles/nigeria-mass-abduction-seen-as-copycat-attack-1521403236; Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency, International Crisis Group, 27 February 2017, 18.
- 192 For example, see English-Speaking IS Fighters in Libya Promote in Video Group's Implementation of Shariah, SITE, 30 March 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/english-speaking-is-fighters-in-libya-promote-in-video-group-s-implementation-of-shariah.html> and Killed Nigerian IS Fighter in Libya Eulogized on Telegram, SITE, 15 February 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/>

- Jihadist-News/killed-nigerian-is-fighter-in-libya-eulogized-on-telegram.html; The *BBC* reported an eyewitness claiming that a parade had been organised in Sirte in April 2015 to welcome Boko Haram fighters, Control and crucifixions: Life in Libya under IS, *BBC News*, 2 February 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35325072; Aaron Zelin in his report on foreign fighters in Libya noted that 21 had come from Nigeria – the third highest of sub-Saharan Africa, but less than that of Senegal and Sudan, and on par with Kenya; Aaron Zelin, *Foreign Fighters in Libya*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, January 2018.
- 193** Carla Babb, Islamic State targeting Africa: Top AFRICOM commander tells VOA, 1 December 2015, www.voanews.com/content/islamic-state-targeting-africa-top-african-commander-warns-voa/3083034.html.
- 194** Tony Opuoyo, DSS Nabs Abuja-Kaduna kidnappers and other Criminal Gangs Nationwide, *PR Nigeria*, 12 June 2017, <https://prnigeria.com/2017/06/12/dss-nabs-kidnappers-nationwide/>; Latifat Opoola, Boko Haram affiliates planning deadly attacks – FG Warns, *Daily Trust*, 11 February 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201702110243.html>; Tony Opuoyo, DSS Arrests ISIS recruiter, terrorists and kidnappers nationwide, *PR Nigeria*, 9 February 2016, <https://prnigeria.com/2016/02/09/dss-arrests-isis-recruiter-terrorists-nationwide/>.
- 195** Furthermore, the pursuit of external theatres by such individuals, rather than joining cause with likeminded movements within their country of origin, is another indication of limited connections to ISIS-WA/JAS.
- 196** Interview with researcher in Diffa, March 2018.
- 197** Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 28 March 2018.
- 198** The 12th round of the Libya survey noted 31% of Nigeria's migrants had come from Lagos, with just 10% from Kano, amid little other reporting on northern states. Another document from April 2017 noted that 62% of surveyed migrants from Nigeria on their way to Europe came from Edo state, with very small proportions from northern Nigerian states; Displacement Tracking Matrix – Libya's Migrant Report Round 12, IOM, July to August 2017; Enabling a better understanding of migration flows and (its root causes) from Nigeria towards Europe, IOM, April 2017. Additionally another report focusing on migrant routes stated that 99.7% of surveyed migrants to Libya from Nigeria travelled through Niger, with only 0.3% noting they went through Chad, combined with limited reporting on this activity in the Lake Chad area, probably indicates that preferred routes are more centred elsewhere along Nigeria's long border with Niger, providing a distance between migration activity and violent extremist elements; Libya's Migrant Report Round 18, IOM, March 2018.
- 199** For example, as mentioned above, JAS's messages since early 2017 have contained ISIS logos. Certain attacks by ISIS-WA, however, continue to be claimed and promoted by the ISIS media apparatus, making it a direct partner, rather than JAS's more aspirational approach.
- 200** Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 29 March 2018.
- 201** One interesting aspect of this to monitor would be if the reported negotiations between the Nigerian government and ISIS-WA continue to advance, the reaction and/or direction of Islamic State would say a great deal about the extent of its relationship and influence on ISIS-WA.
- 202** It is difficult to determine the size of each faction, but MNJTF commander LO Adeosun estimated ISIS-WA alone to have had 3 000 soldiers in March 2017; Margaret Besheer, Regional task force battles Boko Haram, *Voice of America*, 14 March 2017, www.voanews.com/a/regional-task-force-battles-boko-haram/3765775.html.
- 203** Interview with local researcher, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 204** Interview with humanitarian actor, Maiduguri, 24 March 2018.
- 205** Interview with respondents from Magumeri LGA, Maiduguri, 22 March 2018.
- 206** North-East Nigeria: Humanitarian Situation Update, OCHA, 28 February 2018, www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nigeria/document/nigeria-north-east-humanitarian-situation-update-february-2018; *Reuters* also reported in April 2018 that the ISIS-WA faction has handed out farming inputs and supported local livelihoods in other aspects as well; Paul Carsten and Ahmed Kingimi, *Reuters*, Islamic State ally stakes out territory around Lake Chad, 29 April 2018, <https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKBN1I008A-OZATP>.
- 207** For example, a May 2018 video from JAS showed public scenes of justice in front of a crowd in an unknown location, through flogging and amputations, which followed up on a March 2018 video showing the execution of suspected drug dealers. A series of photos from ISIS-WA in December 2016 depicted similar scenes of sharia justice punishments; author tracking of VEO messaging.
- 208** One account claimed that satellite imagery showed structural build-up in areas of northern Borno State occupied by Barnawi; interview with diplomat, Abuja, 23 May 2017.

About the report

This report is the first in a two-part study examining current dynamics with regards to violent extremist organisations (VEOs) operating in the Lake Chad region (Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger). This report examines factionalism within the Boko Haram movement, while the second report profiles current responses and challenges.

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