

# **Civilian loyalty and agency in insecure spaces**

**A study of armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region**

- Kumulative Arbeit -

Inaugural-Dissertation

Zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde

der

Philosophischen Fakultät

der

Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität

zu Bonn

vorgelegt von

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Ilesha, Nigeria

Bonn 2024

Gedruckt mit der Genehmigung der Philosophischen Fakultät der Rheinischen  
Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn

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## Propositions

Proposition 1: Civilian loyalty becomes multiple and overlapping when the roles of the state and armed groups become indistinguishable in insecure spaces.

Proposition 2: Civilian migration choices are politically motivated, and material driven, as much as it appears involuntary in armed conflicts.

Proposition 3: Transit sites are intertwined with, and profoundly co-constitutive of, agentic actions and civilians' realities in insecure spaces.

Proposition 4: A return to normalcy is more or less a future promise when violent conflicts appear unfinished, or stabilisation strategy limits the chances for divergent futures.

Proposition 5: Transition narratives are built upon the dominant actor's construction of emerging risks and opportunities.

The propositions relating to the Doctoral dissertation, entitled:

Civilian loyalty and agency in insecure spaces.

A study of armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region.

Oyewole Simon Oginni

December 2023.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr Joerg Blasius, for his encouragement, academic mentorship and supervision of this dissertation. His simple and critical comments improved the quality of the cumulative dissertation. When I was looking for a supervisor, someone told me that I must read a lot about research methods before reaching out to him. His first response during my first appointment was “don’t worry, everything will be fine”. I did not only learn how to develop a standard questionnaire and interview guide through his supervision, but I had also developed interview tools for a number of projects at the level of EU and UN afterwards.

I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Eva Youkhana for accepting to read this dissertation and for her teaching on actor-network theory as well as critical comments. Eva and Girma Mensuro exercised enough patience by rescheduling my pre-doctoral interview due to poor internet connection. Special thanks to Prof. Dr Clemens Albrecht and Prof. Dr Paul Marx for accepting to be part of the dissertation defence committee.

My doctoral study at the Centre for Development Research (ZEF) would not have been possible without the financial support of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). During covid-19 pandemic, I also received financial supports from ‘the Friends of ZEF’ to cover for flight cancelation between Nigeria and Cameroon. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr Gunther Manske, Maike, Dr Silke Tönsjost, Max Voit and Andreas Gohlke for all the supports I received during my doctoral study at ZEF.

I received enormous support from my darling wife, Flavia B.O. Masese, during the writing stage of my dissertation. It is delightful to mention that the presence of Flavia and my new baby girl, Oyebosi Moraa Oginni, made me work harder and faster on writing the last part of this dissertation. Special thanks to my parents (Oyedele and Taiwo Oginni) who laid the foundation for my formal education.

I would like to acknowledge the following friends, colleagues and family for their supports: Linus Agbleze, Olaitan Monsuru, Ayeni A Emmanuel, Mensah Jacob, Matthew O. Gidigbi, Alicia Pommer, Philip Inns and his family, Patrick Koua; Evelyn Ewere, Olabisi Obaitan, Mellon Bedi, Makafui, Elisabeth Ndunda, Emily, Imran, Fernando, Genevieve, Namarata, Nermeen Bahnasy, Fatima Ali, Ahmed, Maxwell Opoku, Alupo Beatrice and ZEF batch 2018. Lastly, I would like to thank all my field research assistants (Halirou, Aboubakar Dalili, Plan B, Ibrahim) and others from Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad for the supports I received during a six-year field research that produced this cumulative dissertation.

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## List of Abbreviations

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Boko Haram | Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād       |
| CJFT       | Civilian-Joint Task Force                         |
| FFP        | The Fund for Peace                                |
| FSI        | Fragile State Indicator                           |
| IDPs       | Internally displaced persons                      |
| ISWAP      | Islamic State of the West Africa Province (ISWAP) |
| JNIM       | Jama'at Nusratul Islam wal Muslimin               |
| LCB        | Lake Chad Basin                                   |
| LGA        | Local Government Area                             |
| MBBF       | Mubi Brick Burnt Factory                          |
| MNJTF      | Multinational Joint Task Force                    |
| NGN        | Nigerian naira                                    |
| NSAGs      | Non-state armed groups                            |
| ZEF        | Center for Development Research                   |

## List of publications included in this dissertation.<sup>1</sup>

1) **Oginni, SO** (2023). Prisoner's dilemma: hedging loyalties in (un)governed space of the Lake Chad Basin region. *Armed Forces and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231177896>

2) **Oginni, S.O.** (2023). Return to normalcy: transition and futures in insecure spaces. *Futures*, 153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2023.103239>

3) **Oginni, SO** (2022). Arrival or Return? Temporality and Materiality of Transit Sites in Overlapping Displacement Context in Border Cities of the Lake Chad Basin Region. *Urban Forum* **33**, 463–484 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-021-09450-8>

4). **Oginni, SO**, Opoku, MP, Nketsia, W (2022). Crisis at the intersection of four countries: healthcare access for displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin region, *Ethnicity & Health*, 27:7, 1698-1717, DOI: [10.1080/13557858.2021.1947471](https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2021.1947471)

5) **Oginni, SO**, MP. Opoku & B.A. Alupo (2020). Terrorism in the Lake Chad Region: Integration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 35(5): 1-17. DOI: [10.1080/08865655.2018.1457975](https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2018.1457975)

6). Opoku, MP; Nketsia, N; **Oginni, SO**; SN, Bernard, SN; B Alupo. (2020). Societal perceptions of counterterrorism in Cameroon: The voices of those far from the battlefield. *Journal of Human Rights*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2020.1716700>

7) Alupo, BA; **Oginni, SO**; MP Opoku, EL Torgbenu. 2019. Psychological experiences of refugees and the response of the community in the Lake Chad region. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 3(11): 215-231. DOI: [10.1080/19434472.2018.1463552](https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2018.1463552)

**Note:** Only the abstracts of the published articles and their DOI links are included in the published version of this dissertation.

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<sup>1</sup> An additional single-author article is currently under review in a peer-review journal. For this reason, it is excluded in this list and is only cited in-text and in the bibliography section. A book chapter titled "Targeted interventions and civilian risk preferences in insecure spaces" is also excluded from the publication lists but it is cited in-text and in the bibliography section.

## Abstract

This dissertation examines how civilians, as a diverse category of people, influence political, social and economic environments around them and relate to futures during armed conflicts characterised by multiple competing authorities of the state and different non-state armed groups (NSAGs). It draws on a six-year ethnographic study, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, to investigate the dynamic interactions between the state, non-state armed groups and civilians during a decade armed conflicts in Lake Chad Basin region. The seven studies presented therein offer novel insights on civilians' entanglements with armed conflicts through an emphasis on loyalty, risk preference, political (dis)content, mobility practices and futures in insecure spaces. Insecure spaces are not just ungoverned spaces in the sense of statelessness or a complete absence of state in conflict-torn areas as advanced in many studies on fragile states. Rather, this dissertation characterises insecure spaces as a territory and a society governed by overlapping and competing authorities. In this regard, the state has no monopoly of control over territory, civilian population and civilian behaviours, because non-state actors organically and historically co-exist and function as an alternative to the state due to the permanent incompleteness of statehood within a given state territory prior to and during armed conflicts.

Despite co-evolution of state and non-state (traditional) institutions in post-colonial states within the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region, statehood appears enduringly incomplete and unfinished because the process of building, integrating and enforcing the Weberian institutions continuously fails to run in parallel with socioeconomic, cultural and political development at local scale. The incomplete permeability of statehood into the society reinforces the subsistence of non-state actors with overlapping and competing authorities within given state territory, and this arguably explains why armed conflicts last longer than expected in the region despite the local and international counterinsurgency efforts. As a result, where state presence appears too weak, different NSAGs assume the functions of the state in complementary or contradictory manners. This, in many instances, slows down the permeability of statehood at local scale, thereby making a conflict resolution through state-recognized channels futile and unattainable. The state's ineffective control of the frontline areas encourages civilians' self-organised strategies outside formal security arrangements. This leads to the proliferation of civilian militias whose functions overlap and compete with the state. The influence of NSAGs over civilian behaviours within state-controlled jurisdictions and beyond the frontline areas capture the depth of hybrid governance in operation in the LCB region.

This dissertation advances that civilian loyalty is always incomplete, hence overlapping and multiple, in conflict-affected states organically governed by hybrid political orders. Such overlapping and multiple loyalties affect how civilians develop strategies to navigate the evolving security scene during



insurgency and counterinsurgency in the LCB region: that is, how civilians exercise agency to relate to uncertain and unpredictable futures. Based on this, civilian risk preferences, adaptive strategies, mobility choices and future practices embed and are constitutive of the multiple competing orders of the state, NSAGs and other non-state actors with a varying degree of influence and control in the frontline areas. This dissertation offers valuable insights into emerging trends on civilian loyalty and agency in armed conflicts that deserve further research.

# 1 Introduction

This dissertation demonstrates how civilians in armed conflict situations interact with state and different non-state armed groups (NSAGs) while navigating evolving security landscape. Different case studies are drawn from a decade of insurgency and counterinsurgency in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region. LCB region traverses Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad (see background section below for details). Each article contributes to a specific theoretical debate and the dissertation research questions are meant to address the broad discussion on the dynamics of civilian agency and loyalty in armed conflicts situations.

If researchers can understand how and why civilians change their allegiances at different times during armed conflicts, and how civilians use their bargaining powers to influence the behaviours of other actors involved in conflicts (that is, the state and NSAGs), we will then shed light on why armed conflicts last longer than expected in specified places, how and why civilians perceive and make choices from the repertoire of options available to them as they wait for a conflict resolution and lastly, whether a transition from conflict situations represent inclusive, collective future for the survivors and victims of armed conflicts or not and how futures are rationalized through the narratives of different groups with varying social, economic and political influence and control.

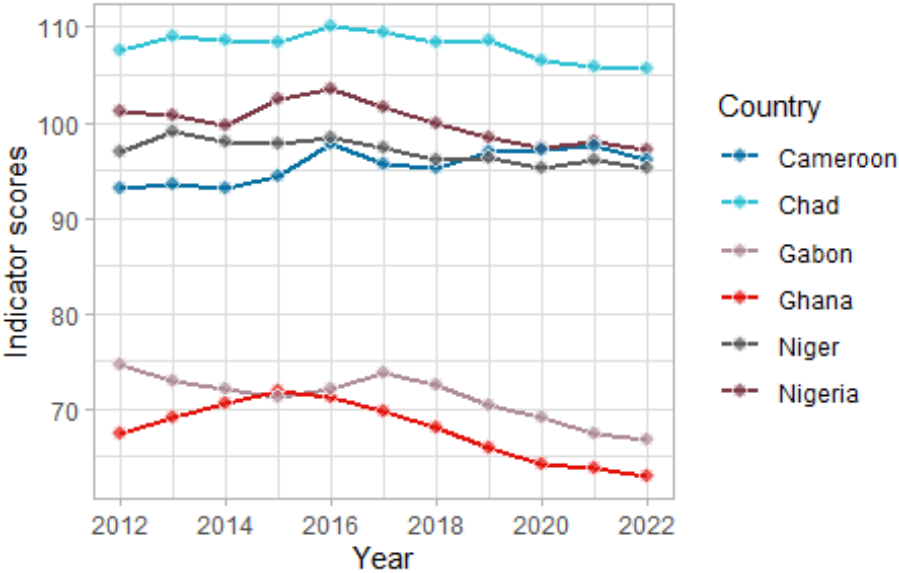
Around the world, states failing or appear to have failed to meet the Westphalian logics of statehood in terms of provisions of welfare, security and functioning state institutions are considered as fragile or failed states (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020). The discourse of state fragility thrives on the conventional idea that a fragile state constitutes a serious threat to state-building, international peace and development (Bahiss et al., 2022; Boege et al., 2009). As a result, development policies and assistances are directed towards state-building based on responsibility to protect and global security framework. These include, amongst others, promoting statehood at local scale and strengthening state capacity to exercise monopoly of violence in order to enforce order over the growing influence of non-state actors (Murtazashvili, 2022). However, recent development in states such as Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Mali, Chad and Sudan battling with continuous scene of violent conflicts has shown that statehood hardly permeates a society which is historically and culturally governed by hybrid political orders (Bøås et al., 2020; Jacob Zenn & Weiss, 2021).

Despite development policies and assistance which targeted state building in Afghanistan for decades, statehood has failed to permeate into the Afghan society. The disconnect between the Afghan state and Afghan society, despites a huge investment in Weberian state building, can be traced to the little attention to hybrid political orders within Afghan society. For example, the local perception and experience of better services, fast response and fair treatment compared to those of the western-

backed Afghan government enhanced the legitimacy of the Taliban group and made it easy for the group to overrun the western-backed government in 2021 (Fluri, 2018; Murtazashvili, 2022; Weigand, 2017).

Similarly, Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon facing a decade of armed conflicts from NSAGs have remained within the range of the top fifth to seventeenth rank on Failed State Indicators (FSI) over a decade, suggesting that elements of state fragility are very much present within the LCB region. Compared to Gabon (in Central Africa region) and Ghana (in West Africa), which have witnessed a declining trend on FSI, the four LCB states have a high record on security threats to state, fractionalized leadership, fragmentation of state institutions or power struggles, poverty and uneven development, amongst others (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: State fragility in the LCB region**



Data Source: The Fund for Peace (FFP).

In this dissertation, I examine how hybrid political orders affect insurgency and counterinsurgency in the LCB region. Specifically, I examine how civilians living in the frontline of Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon navigate multiple competing authorities during a decade of violent conflicts. Although state counterinsurgency incorporates non-state traditional actors such as vigilante groups and customary leaders, the cooperation fails to completely contain the continuous scene of violent from NSAGs against civilian population. This creates insecure spaces because civilians’ perception of the state’s ineffective control of the frontline encourages self-organisation strategies outside formal security arrangements, leading to the proliferation of civilian militias whose functions overlap and compete with the state (Oginni, 2023).

Thus, I argue that insecure spaces are not just ungoverned spaces in the sense of statelessness or a complete absence of state in conflict-torn areas as advanced in many studies on fragile states. Rather, I characterize insecure spaces as a territory and a society governed by overlapping and competing authorities. In this regard, the state has no monopoly of control over territory and civilian population because non-state actors organically co-exist as an alternative to the state due to permanent incompleteness of statehood in given state territory prior to and during armed conflicts. State order is just one of multiple orders claiming control over territory, civilians and civilian behaviours in the LCB region, like other regions facing violent conflicts in Mali and Burkina Faso (Bøås et al., 2020), because in the large part of the frontline areas, only fragments of ‘the state’ can be seen.

Despite the co-evolution of the state and non-state (traditional) institutions in post-colonial states within LCB region, statehood appears enduringly incomplete and unfinished because the process of building, integrating and enforcing the Weberian institutions has continuously failed to run in parallel with socioeconomic, cultural and political development at local scale (Boege et al., 2009). The permanent incompleteness of statehood or the incomplete permeability of statehood into a society reinforces the subsistence of non-state actors with overlapping and competing authorities within a given state territory (Oginni, 2023a). As a result, where state presence appears too weak, different NSAGs assume the functions of the state in complementary or contradictory manners. This, in most cases, slows the permeability of statehood at local scale, thereby making a conflict resolution through state-recognized channels unattainable. The influence of NSAGs over civilians beyond the frontline areas and within the state-controlled jurisdictions capture the depth of a hybrid governance in the LCB region.

Civilians’ perception of the state’s ineffective control of the frontline encourages self-organisation strategies outside formal security arrangements, leading to the proliferation of civilian militias whose functions overlap and compete with the state. This dissertation advances that civilian loyalty is always incomplete, hence overlapping and multiple, in conflict-affected states governed through hybrid political orders. Such overlapping and multiple loyalties affect how civilians develop strategies to navigate evolving security landscape during and after armed conflicts, that is, how civilians exercise agency to relate to futures within hybrid political orders. Based on this, civilian risk preferences, adaptive strategies, mobility and future practices are altogether influenced by multiple competing orders of the state and NSAGs. (Oginni, 2023a; Oginni, 2023b; Oginni, 2023c, under review).

### 1.1 Background: armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region

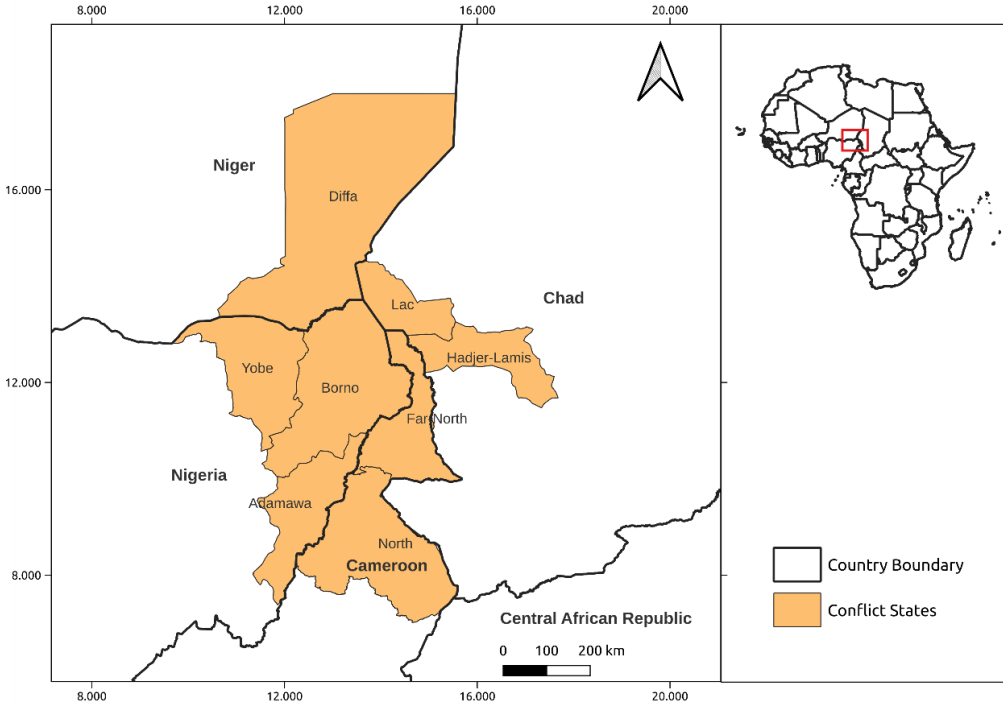
The LCB traverses Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. As a historical node of interconnection between Sahara and Mediterranean, the region has been faced with protracted conflicts attributed mainly to the violent extremism of armed groups (Boko Haram), state fragility and adverse climate change

(adelphi, 2020; Onamuti et al., 2017). Since 2009, the protracted conflicts caused by the violent extremism of Boko Haram and, more recently, the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) have resulted in a large-scale displacement in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Galehan, 2021; Jacob Zenn, 2017). Boko Haram and ISWAP are ranked among the top-seven most dangerous violent extremist groups in the world and the continuing scene of violent conflicts in the LCB region is emblematic of the global wave of violent extremism orchestrated by non-state actors in the 21st century (Carter, 2015; Watts, 2017).

*Porous but geographically interconnected and political charged borders*

The LCB’s borders are poorly manned, and all the governments that have authority in the region have failed to achieve any meaningful development therein (Agbibo, 2017). Before the emergence of Boko Haram, the clans in the area had armed themselves to fight for ethnic superiority and for the limited fertile lands therein (Angerbrandt, 2017; Okpara et al., 2015). Widespread poverty and lack of basic amenities in northern Nigeria contributed to the rise of Boko Haram and its further expansion to the LCB (Oriola, 2022; Oriola & Akinola, 2018). The violent conflicts with the non-state armed groups initially started in Northeast Nigeria in 2009 but later expanded into Cameroon, Niger and Chad (see Figure 2). Since the insurgency, over 4.8 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes (International Organization for Migration, 2019).

**Figure 2** Map showing conflict-affected areas in the LCB region.



Source: (Oginni, 2023b)

Besides water resources on which over 40 million population depend for livelihood in the LCB region (Chitra Nagarajan et al., 2018), the lake has a large commercial quantity of natural gas and crude oil that remain a source of tension among the four riparian states participating in counterinsurgency operations. For example, Chad has commenced the extraction of oil at 115,000 barrels per day in the basin since 2010 while Niger has started the extraction of crude oil from its portion of the basin through Agadem oil fields since 2011. Both countries signed agreement with Cameroon in order to use its pipelines for exportation of crude oil through the Gulf Guinea (Omenma, 2020). While the three Francophone countries are earning from the extraction of crude oil from the basin area, Nigeria is yet to commence exploring its portion from the Lake despite a projection of \$20 billion yearly earning (Ani & Ojakorotu, 2018; Omenma, 2020). In 2017, Boko Haram hampered the exploration activities of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in Borno's area of the Lake Chad Basin; the armed group abducted ten Nigerian geologists during the exploration activities.

However, between 1980 and 1994, Nigeria and Niger involved in interstate conflicts over the access and use of the Lake Chad Basin. Similarly, Nigeria and Cameroon engaged in territorial dispute between 1981 and 1982 around the lake. Further, between 1965 and 1979, Nigeria involved in the Chadian Civil War in which some Chad citizens were expelled from its soil (Ani & Ojakorotu, 2018). In 1983, Chad military troops invaded Nigeria islands around the Lake Chad, which strained the relationships between the two countries (Ani & Ojakorotu, 2018). Cameroon and Nigeria shared the longest borders; the two states also involved in a territorial dispute over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula, in which Nigeria lost the battle to its neighbour at the International Court of Justice, though the dispute was later resolved through an out-of-court settlement (Baye, 2010). Hence, the four countries affected by armed conflicts have complex historical relations. As a result, during covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021, each state adopted individual approach to border control in which civilian population flee the scene of violent conflicts were forcibly returned, despite the existing joint agreement on safe return of displaced persons in the region (Oginni, 2022).

#### *Food security and armed conflicts in LCB region*

The prolonged conflicts in the LCB have hampered farming activities in the rich areas of the region. LCB serves about 40 million agrarian populations most of whom have forcibly been displaced from their homes and farmlands (Ruppel & Funteh, 2019). This has resulted in food insecurity with a sharp rise in the price of food items and farmers also face challenge with respect to accessing secured and safe farmlands in the crisis areas. According to the Global Hunger Index (Resnick et al., 2022), Nigeria is reported to have a serious level of hunger level (about 28.3%); Cameroon has a moderate level of hunger (about 18.5%) while an alarming level of hunger is reported in Chad (about 39.6%). However,

the regions affected by crisis in these countries might have a higher level of hunger (International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2021).

Recently, International Crisis Group (2020) reported that some women were involuntarily associated with the armed groups due to the limited livelihood opportunities offered in Boko Haram's captivity (International Crisis Group, 2023). One of the explanations cited for their decision was the availability of daily meal in Boko Haram's captivity than in the state-controlled frontline cities (International Crisis Group, 2020). However, there is relatively little evidence on civilian migration choices in the frontline areas. Thus, understanding specified civilian migration preferences in the frontlines might shed light on the dynamic impacts of food insecurity on civilian loyalty and mobility as well as the legitimacy of a regime facing internal struggles from violent conflicts (Oginni, 2023b).

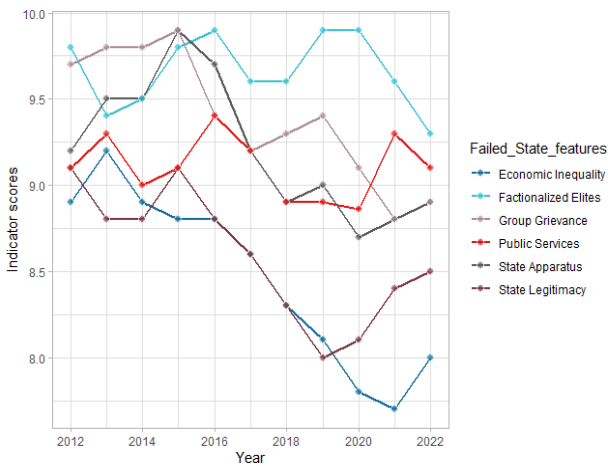
### *Governance deficits and re-insurgence of NSAGs*

Recently, there has been a growing concern over protecting human rights during counterinsurgency operations in the LCB region. Like the activities of the NSAGs and civilian militias, which resulted in torture, sexual exploitation, forced displacement, and other vices, the state counterinsurgency operations have undermined the local security livelihood around the LCB, especially concerning the restrictions on the access of the civilian populations to farmland and the Lake for fishing (Onuoha & Kwaja, 2018; Opoku et al., 2020). While some civilians facing existential threats from the violent conflicts have supported the state forces fighting the NSAGs, others have acted as informants and recruiters of the local population into the networks of NSAGs (Onuoha & Kwaja, 2018). Here, I refer to civilians who carry arms to fight alongside the governments as civilian militias. While they are also Non-State Armed Groups, I only treat the terrorist groups/networks such as Boko Haram, Ansaru, Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) as NSAGs.

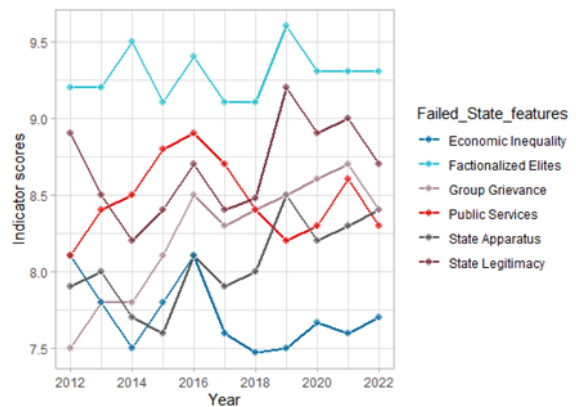
The LCB region has multiple challenges, ranging from adverse climate change to natural resource scarcity and livelihood insecurity (UNDP, 2021). The overlapping crises have caused anti-state grievances (Riebe & Dressel, 2021). However, the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgents and other NSAGs has further exposed the governance deficit in the region. By governance deficit, I refer to the weak or low presence of state institutions, especially the limited power of municipal government to bring the needed change, the poor state of public services and porous borders (Obamamoye, 2019; World Bank, 2016). Figure 3 shows a graphical illustration of a decade of performance of the four states battling the scene of continuous violent conflicts in the LCB region on security apparatus, economic, political and social dimensions. Overall, Figure 3 shows that elements of fragility are very much present in the LCB. Specific patterns can be observed on FSI scores with respect to group grievances and factionalized elite which have been on the rise in the last decade. Similarly, state legitimacy has declined during the same period.

**Figure 3:** Comparison of LCB countries on state fragility

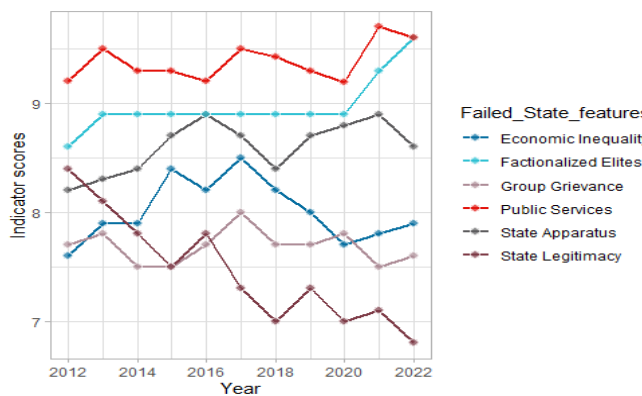
**Figure 3a:** Nigeria



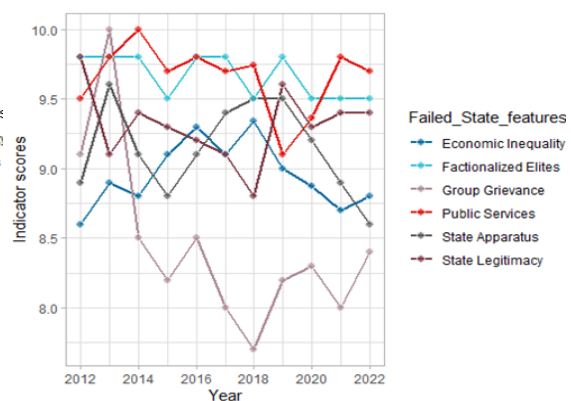
**Figure 3b:** Cameroon



**Figure 3c:** Chad



**Figure 3d:** Niger



Data Source: The Fund for Peace (FFP).

The governance deficit in the LCB region has led to the emergence of civilian militia groups such as the Hunter Association and Civilian Joint Task Force, amongst others, who use both light and heavy weapons to contain the threats and expansion of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020; Oriola & Akinola, 2018). While the collaboration of civilian militias and the state forces has yielded short-term benefits for enhancing local reconnaissance and countering the expansion of violent extremist groups, the proliferation of civilian militias in the region has also led to gross abuse of human rights and fostered the escalation of conflicts and the reprisal attacks from other NSAGs (Onuoha & Kwaja, 2018; Oriola, 2022).

### *Evolving security landscape*

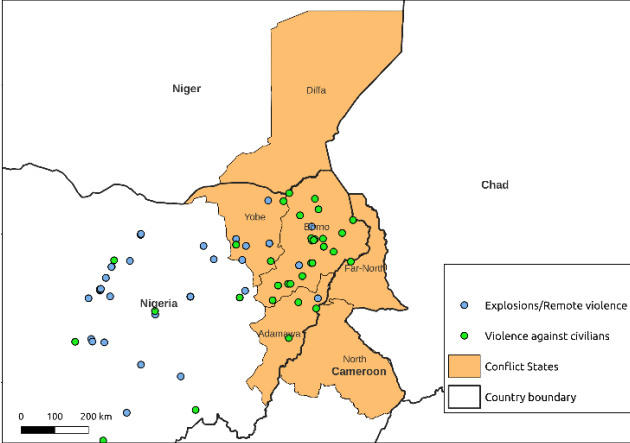
Despite complex historical and political relations, in 2016, a Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) was established by the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad on a joint counterterrorism operation, which led to the reclaiming of most areas previously controlled by the armed groups in the



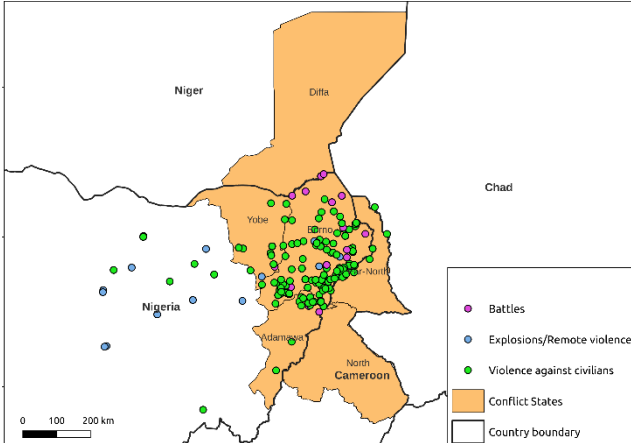
region (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020). While the post-conflict transition has commenced in some areas that were previously occupied by Boko Haram and ISWAP (Oginni, 2021), there have been evolving security threats from bandits and armed herdsmen militias, which have exposed the weakness of the traditional counterinsurgency approach adopted by the states fighting against the insurgency of Boko Haram and ISWAP in the region. For example, the Ansaru group is a faction of the Boko Haram group that controls some parts of the Niger Republic and Northwest and Northcentral Nigeria. Ansaru group recently offered a shield to the civilians against bandits and armed herders with a strict condition that the local population remains loyal to its imposed rules and ideologies. This also includes rejecting the modern system of government (International Crisis Group, 2020; Onuoha & Kwaja, 2018; Oriola & Akinola, 2018; J Zenn, 2017).

**Figure 4: Armed conflicts incidents**

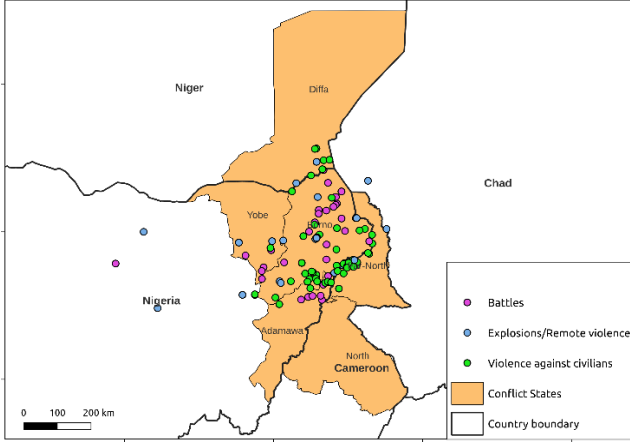
**Figure 4a (2011-2012)**



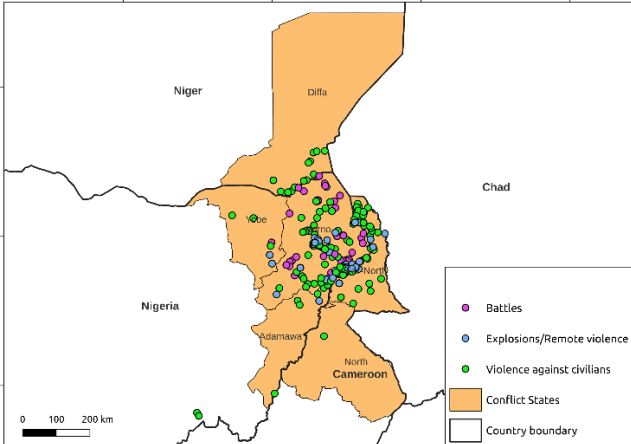
**Figure 4b (2013-2014)**



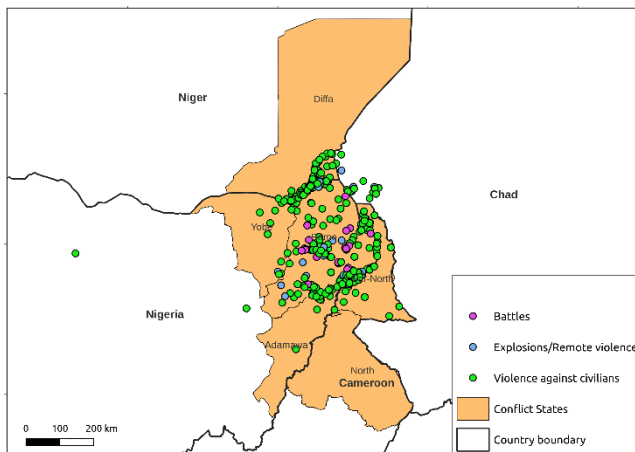
**Figure 4c (2015-2016)**



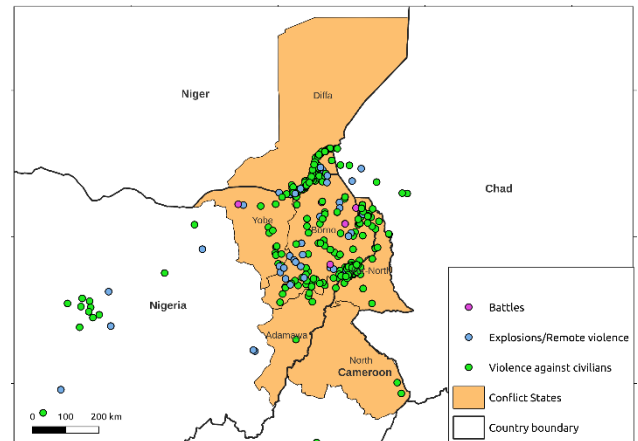
**Figure 4d (2017-2018)**



**Figure 4e (2019-2020)**



**Figure 4f (2021-2022)**



Source: Oginni (2023b)

Data source: ACLED

Figure 4a-f shows change in spatial pattern of attacks from NSAGs between 2011 and 2022. While Boko Haram insurgency was limited to Nigeria territory between 2011 and 2012 (Figure 4a), the insurgents expanded to the Far North region of Cameroon after two years (Figure 4c). Later, Boko Haram launched its first attack in Chad after the Chadian government indicated interest to participate in joint counterinsurgency operation in the LCB region. While the success of the operation of MNJTF limit the activities of the Boko Haram to remote areas between 2016 and 2018, the emergence of ISWAP and other NSAGs beyond conventional frontlines has increased civilian casualties in recent years (cf. Figure 4a-f).

The new security threats, coupled with the challenge of early warning and response, have been exploited by Boko Haram and ISWAP for their recruitment drive in the LCB region. Much literature has examined the operations of NSAGs in the region (Galehan, 2021; Magrin et al., 2018; Jacob Zenn, 2017), but civilian agency and loyalty remains a topical debate that is yet to be fully understood nor addressed in any study and hence, the implications of the civilian loyalty for the success of the state counterinsurgency operations as well as a successful post-conflict transition need be studied.

## 1.2 Research questions

Recent studies on the armed conflicts in the LCB region have linked Boko Haram's expansion beyond Nigeria's borders to economic, political and ecological factors (Onamuti et al., 2017; Ruppel & Funteh, 2019; World Bank, 2016). Specifically, the prolonged period of conflicts has been linked to widespread poverty, a high unemployment rate and illiteracy (Adesoji 2019; Nagarajan et al. 2018). Other factors identified in the previous studies include porous borders, poor leadership and poor governance (Oriola, 2022; Oriola & Akinola, 2018; Zenn, 2017). These previous studies have offered a basis for mapping

the crisis's stability vectors and root causes. Nevertheless, there is a knowledge gap on how civilians' perception and interpretation of their own's future existence influence the environments of violence or armed conflicts generally.

This dissertation addresses the following questions: why and how does civilian loyalty change during a prolonged waiting for a conflict resolution? How do civilians' expectations and concerns about future risks and benefits influence their loyalty during violent conflicts? How do states facing a continuous scene of violent conflicts govern insecure spaces? How do civilians adapt to an evolving strategy in insecure spaces? What constitute civilian mobility practices in insecure spaces? At what point does (dis)continuity of arrival practices occur during encounter with transit sites? What forms of entanglements and political claims the material objects of transit sites enable or upset? How does civilian choice of staying in the state-controlled territory confound outmigration to the areas controlled by armed groups?

## **2. Civilian agency and loyalty**

In the past years, there has been more focus on how state and different NSAGs control the battlefield than how civilians as alter the course of armed conflicts through a nonlethal means in the frontline. One explanation for this is that civilians are often treated as homogenous group in a crisis or war situation. Both domestic and international laws promote a binary connotation that portrays civilians as always extremely vulnerable and powerless while the state and NSAGs are considered powerful (Bahiss et al., 2022; Krause, 2019). This may be the case for civilians who do not carry arms and who rely on state to fulfil its social contracts more than civilian militias who carry arms to protect themselves or fight along with the state forces against NSGAs as witnessed in recent armed conflicts Sudan, Somalia, Cote d'ivoire and Philippine (Bakonyi et al., 2019; Pech & Lakes, 2017; Revkin & Ahram, 2020).

Yet, civilians are heterogeneous groups of people who find themselves in violent conflict situations: they have varying bargaining powers, some of which are acquired through social, cultural and economic positions (Arjona, 2017; C Nagarajan, 2018). These forms of social capital represent an essential resource and a form of power that helps civilians exert influence on the behaviours of other actors in armed conflict situations, including the state forces, NSAGs and humanitarian actors (Dorff, 2015; Jackson et al., 2022).

Recent armed conflicts in Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Mali, Somalia, DRC and many other areas around the world have demonstrated that neither state nor NSAGs have a zero-sum control over territory and civilian population (Bahiss et al., 2022). As a result, state's counterterrorism strategy is often not only aimed to recover contested territories occupied by NSAGs but also to gain influence over civilian population within the state-control jurisdictions in the frontline. This raises a fundamental

question: if controlling civilian behaviours is critical to gaining a dominant control of the frontline in armed conflict situation, how do civilians then influence the behaviours of other actors (especially, the state and NSAGs) in their favours or at least to mitigate future risks from multiple competing authorities exercising control in the battlefield?

While civilians rarely directly support NSAGs against the state and its institutions, there have been chunks of studies on civilian-state initiatives against violent extremist groups (Arjona, 2017; Fluri, 2018). Particularly, some states that do not have sufficient resources to recruit the required numbers of military personnel for counterinsurgency operation often engage civilian militias or vigilante groups through non-state customary institutions to augment personnel shortage and to enhance local intelligence sharing (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020). However, this leads to proliferation of civilian militias where different civilian militia groups exist as a pro- and anti-state with differing political, social and economic ideologies and interests as recently witnessed in the case of the LCB region (Oginni, 2023a) and other places like Libya, Sudan, South Sudan and Mali (Bahiss et al., 2022; Bøås et al., 2020; Revkin & Ahram, 2020; Vitalis et al., 2018).

Proliferation of civilian militias engenders multiple competing authorities in the frontline, and this forms the bedrock for maintaining multiple loyalties in the sense that one loyalty to a militia group may trump another, or even compete with the overarching idea of the state counterinsurgency strategy on a civilian-joint operation (Henry, 2020; Mitton, 2015). Thus, multiple loyalties appear as a hedging strategy against future risks of non-compliance or to prevent entrapment in further conflicts with other NSAGs with different interests and ideologies (Oginni, 2023a).

A shift of allegiance to different NSAGs can occur when the state's influence and control in the frontline appear weak and counterinsurgency strategy is not well understood by the civilians facing continuous scene of violent conflicts. However, maintaining multiple loyalties come with a consequence of reputational risks or severe punishments by the state or NSAGs, depending on which actors exercise dominant position in specified spaces and at a particular time. In this dissertation, I argue that the binary view of civilian loyalty in armed conflict situations further undermine state legitimacy in the frontline, especially when state appears repressive and violate civilians' rights due to perceived civilian disloyalty in conflict-affected areas (Opoku et al., 2020). This will aggravate anti-state grievances, thereby increase civilian risks preference in favour of NSAGs as shown in armed conflicts situation in LCB region (Oginni, 2023a). Thus, I suggest a contextualised understanding of civilian loyalty to accommodate modicum of liminality and permanence of allegiance especially in unstable security landscape.

Changing security landscape often influence civilians' interpretation of risks and opportunities. Thus, this dissertation argues that the objects of loyalty are neither static; rather they are subject to future conditions and actions and the varied interpretations of the constraints and opportunities imposed or created by the unstable security landscape. Civilians rely on an evolving web of interactions with conflict actors, including NSAGs and state. The potential capability of the alliance to offer immediate safety shape these interactions, and the emerging security scene may necessitate a new adaptation and alignment with emerging dominant actors based on their reassessment of future risks (Oginni 2023b; Oginni, 2023c, under review).

Civilians negotiate access to resources in conflict-torn areas through several means, including false compliance, collective bargaining, co-optation and sometimes resistance (Oginni, 2022, Oginni et al, 2020, Oginni et al 2021, Oginni 2023a, 2023b). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that a temporary shift of loyalty can lead to a permanent associational life with armed groups or even death of civilians, especially when civilian loyalty is in favour of NSAGs (Revkin & Ahram, 2020).

### *2.1 Civilian agency*

Agency is the ability of people to exercise social actions, or the capacity of people to create possibilities. Long (2001) explains agency as “the knowledgeability, capability and social embeddedness associated with acts of doing (and reflecting) that impact upon or shape one’s own and others’ actions and interpretations”. Although most studies on armed conflicts have treated civilians as victims and passive agents, the emerging scholarships have begun to acknowledge that civilians also bring along their skills, culture, knowledge and other things to shape the environments of violence (Deno, M, Buccitelli, 2013; Sridarran et al., 2018). For example, Brun (2015) develops the concept of agency-in-waiting to explain how civilians affected by prolonged conflicts “simultaneously move on, feel stuck in the present, and still actively relate to alternative and changing notions of the future”. Brun introduced time perspectives into the study of protracted conflicts by examining how the internally displaced Georgians from Abkhazia employed “hope” as a propeller that kept them alive and helped build their capacity to navigate unfamiliar environments (Brun 2015).

Slightly different from agency-in-waiting, which accounts for only temporal transformation in the agentic-actions during protracted conflicts, I examine civilians’ self-producing, self-organising and self-sustaining strategies which include how they enrol and interact with the state, NSAGs, humanitarian actors as well as the violent environments into their life projects at specified times, events and places. In the face of uncertainty and precarious situations, civilians make use of the option available to them to innovate and recreate possibilities (Agier, 2012; Brun, 2015; Horst & Grabska, 2015; Jansen, 2019; Raeymaekers, 2011; Ryan, 2018). They draw on social capital to negotiate access to agricultural

resources in the armed-group-controlled areas and on the frontline areas controlled by the state, elites and clans (Bahiss et al., 2022).

Civilians enrol other actors involved in conflicts, including armed groups, to create possibilities for alternative future (Arjona, 2017; Jackson et al., 2022). Civilians may attempt to minimize the harms that armed group can inflict on them through collective and individual bargaining which may include livelihood protection and future risks of violent attacks, depending on the objectives of the armed group as well as the civilian needs (Jackson et al., 2022). Such a collective or individual bargaining may involve civilians providing or sharing intelligent information about rival groups [e.g., Boko Haram vs ISWAP in the LCB region] (Oginni, 2023a). In this dissertation, I suggest four ways through which civilians influence the environment of violence and relate to future during armed conflicts. These include translation, make do with whatever at hands, reorganization or reconstitution and on the lookout.

Civilians give meaning to and interpret their social life during armed conflicts. In doing so, *translation* take places. Translation involves civilians being actively and constantly with the social environments and other actors involved in conflicts such as the state military, humanitarian actors, NSAGs and other non-state actors (Jansen, 2019). Here, the interest is not only about being temporarily protected from NSAGs but also the kind of protection experience they may enjoy in specified places. This in turn influences civilian risk tolerance, especially where non-state armed groups exercise a greater control over vital resources and yet the state is unable to provide alternative public good or secure lives and livelihoods of the civilian population (Bøås & Strazzari, 2020; Weigand, 2017). In the LCB region context, I examine how civilians interpret and act on unstable situations in their former homes; their experience on arrival in the new frontline areas, their accessibility to food and healthcare, their everyday interactions with state military, humanitarian actors and elites or clans having some forms of influence and control in the frontline (Oginni, 2023a, Oginni, 2022). In short, translation is about interpreting the everyday encounters with the environments of violence through the experiences of civilians themselves.

Due to protracted situations, there is the imperfect knowledge and uncertainty about the constraints and opportunities unfolding in the new environments (El-Shaarawi, 2015). Civilians, therefore, rely on their existing experiences, skills, know-how and social networks to approach the new problems. They achieve this by relying on the available inventory of repertoire. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962; Zollo et al., 2018). Here, the concern is the extent to which civilians shape the social ordering of the environments of violence through their navigating strategies. Thus, to make do with 'whatever is at hand is to deploy good-enough strategies to navigate the unfamiliar terrains and create possibilities based on whatever is available. In the LCB region context, I examine the ways in which civilians use the existing repertoires

to approach the new challenges associated with multiple competing orders of the state and NSAGs in agricultural rich areas as well as regarding the early transition from armed conflicts in frontline cities (Oginni, 2022; Oginni 2023b).

Since prolonged armed conflict is characterized by liminality, civilians reconstitute and reassembles the repertoire of available resources to confront unexpected changes through deconstruction process (Zollo et al., 2018). The deconstruction approach involves actively engaging and enrolling relevant actors and actants and subsequently giving meanings to the outcomes, leveraging the knowledge and resources drawn from such interactions to creatively tackle emergent issues (Cartel et al., 2015; Zollo et al., 2018). *Reorganization* can be explained by the ability of civilians to shape the social ordering of the environments (Dean, 2010). This involves the analytic reinterpretation and “systematic reconstructions of the hidden purposes” in order to creatively deal with the everyday challenges and relate to the future unfolding (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). On the frontline of the LCB region, civilian migration choices are politically motivated, and material driven, as much as it appears involuntary. Mobility practices are greatly shaped by access to agricultural rich areas and civilian choices of future resettlement is based on social capitals and interaction with different actors involved in Boko Haram insurgency (Oginni, 2023b).

*To be on the lookout*, as Levi-Strauss (1962) puts it, is to engage the present actively constantly in order to relate with the future unfolding. Brun (2015) demonstrates how the displaced in Georgia exercise agency-in-waiting based on ‘hope and waiting’. Brun observed that they employed “hope” as an impetus that kept them alive and helped build their capacity to navigate unfamiliar environments. This is complementary to Lévi-Strauss (1962)’s assertion about “look out for messages” through some signifiers. During armed conflicts, civilians engage their evolving social networks to obtain information regarding security situation and to harness opportunity and minimize risk in an evolving security landscape. In the LCB region, civilians relied on information from friends and family who lived in Boko-Haram controlled areas for informed decisions on their mobility in the frontline (Oginni, 2023b, Oginni, 2022).

### **3. Methodology**

First, this dissertation adopts an exploratory qualitative design to understand how civilian loyalty is formed, negotiated and mobilised during a prolonged waiting caused by unresolved armed conflicts in the LCB region. Afterwards, I conducted a survey of 2500 households with six research assistants to examines how political efficacy and food security influence civilian mobility choices in the frontline of Nigeria and Cameroon (Oginni, 2024, under review). Both design helped gain new insights about a phenomenon from the perspectives of civilians and other actors involved and affected by the conflicts

(Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Makri & Neely, 2021). Thus, I studied the lived experiences of the different actors, acknowledging “reality is socially constructed, subjective and may change” (Makri & Neely, 2021). While I did not have a prior hypothesis for qualitative study, I had a hypothesis for the quantitative part of the study.

For the qualitative study, I analysed the data and developed categories and codes for the data based on the knowledge of the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Marcus, 2012). The interviews were coded from the evolving themes and the discourses, which included loyalty, path - and interdependence and hedging, amongst others. Data analysis procedures include close reading, theme coding, identification, organisation, and draft writing (Floersch et al., 2010). I also obtained yearly data on conflict incidents from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) to explore the trends of attacks from NSAGs.

I focused on the possible generalisation that may arise from the data gathered through field observations and notes, in-depth interviews, formal and informal group discussions on the subject of inquiry, and the limitations of the scope of the data (Rendle et al., 2019). In addition, to cover diverse views of the critical actors who responded or took actions based on evolving security and political situations, I also accessed the official government gazette, the leaflets distributed by the ISWAP and Ansaru groups in frontline communities and the Nigeria command notice that was made public between 2014 and 2022. Finally, I selected the reviewed documents according to related themes that emerged during the first stage of data analysis.

The fieldwork took place in a piecemeal manner: I had a 6-month field visit in the Far North region of Cameroon (Maroua, Mokolo, Mora, Kolofata) in 2016, 2019 and 2021 and a 9-month field visit in Northeast Nigeria (Mubi, Gombi and border communities), Yobe (Damaturu, Potiskum and Gujba) and Bornu (Maiduguri, Jere and its neighbourhood) in 2019, 2020 and 2022. Although I obtained an official authorisation to conduct field visits in Nigeria and Cameroon, my interviews with government representatives and military personnel were conducted informally. The informal interviews helped the participants express themselves much better and more freely, reducing the bias that may arise from formal arrangements (Oriola, 2022).

#### **4. Dissertation outline and specific contributions**

This dissertation consists of seven cumulative papers. The articles presented therein are not arranged according to time they were published but based on the dissertation objectives. The first article examines how civilians’ perceptions and interpretations of their own future in armed conflict situations influence their relationships with the state and different non- armed groups. In this regard, I argue that civilian loyalty becomes multiple and overlapping when the roles of the state and armed groups



become indistinguishable in insecure spaces, that is, when both the state and non-state armed groups act as ‘a protector’ and ‘an invader’ of civilians’ rights at different times in specified spaces (Oginni, 2023a). Drawing on a six-year ethnographic study of armed conflicts in the LCB region, I find that civilians result in hedging loyalty between the state military forces and different NSAGs in order to navigate evolving security landscape and reduce the potential harm that a non-zero-sum control of conflict-torn spaces would otherwise cause. The strategies and actions include false compliance, individual and collective bargaining and co-optation with Boko Haram, ISWAP and other militias. Where the state forces appear trustworthy and responsive, civilian loyalty is swayed in favour of the state.

However, civilian loyalty favours NSAGs where the state forces appear oppressive, less trustworthy and unresponsive. By highlighting the various options available to civilians during prolonged armed conflicts, I challenge previous studies which only treat the shifting civilian allegiances as “disloyalty” instead of analysing the dynamics of civilian agency through the way they maintain multiple loyalties within hybrid political orders. The first paper offers insights on the liminality and permanence of civilian loyalty, especially in a situation where state has no zero-sum control over conflict-affected areas, civilians and civilian behaviours. The article also offers a new theoretical perspective on civilian loyalty in insecure spaces: overlapping and competing scenarios, which can further be explored for understanding why and how armed conflicts last longer than expected in post-colonial states (Oginni, 2023a).

Civilians’ preference for the areas controlled by NSAGs over the state-controlled jurisdictions in the frontline is arguably a political act and behaviour that reflect discontent with local conditions and institutions due to perception of inefficacy and distrust. I examine civilians’ perceived ability to influence political processes (political efficacy) and to access daily meals (food security) on their migration choices in the battlefield. Combining empirical data from the frontline cities in Nigeria and Cameroon, I find that civilians with a strong political efficacy are significantly likely to choose staying in state-controlled jurisdictions over leaving to the Boko Haram insurgent-controlled areas. This finding also holds for food secured civilians. However, farmers and pastoralists in frontline areas are likely to migrate to the areas partially controlled by the Boko Haram insurgents to gain access to arable land and grazing areas, but women are less likely to make independent mobility decision in the frontline due to prevailing social norms. By disentangling civilian migration choices with respect to the state-controlled and non-state armed-groups-controlled areas, I challenge previous studies which focus exclusively on forced migration experience outside conflict zones. Very few civilians often manage to exit conflict zones during armed conflicts while the large proportion of civilian population live in relatively safer zones in the frontline. Hence, the second paper offers new insights on the

heterogeneity in civilian migration choice across social categories and differentiated spaces during prolonged armed conflicts (Oginni, 2024, under review).

Civilian agency can be analysed through their everyday mobility practices, especially their everyday encounters with arrival infrastructures in transit sites. Prolonged waiting due to unresolved armed conflicts often brings an experience of stuckness and immobility among civilians who desire an end to hopeless future. Yet, civilians internalize an exile experience through (dis)continuity of arrival practices in transits, depending on displacement experience as well as the state regulation of mobility in force in specified spaces. Thus, in third article, I conceptualise transit sites as both a place of care and control, of incentivisation and eviction, of inclusion and exclusion, through which the state and humanitarian actors regulate mobility of people considered out of place. Drawing attention to the actor-networks influencing arrival practices from the primary point of displacement to the secondary and multiple locations in frontline cities, I find that transit sites are intertwined with, and profoundly co-constitutive of, agentic actions and civilians' realities. Specifically, the encounters with urban infrastructures (such as marketplace, transit camps and space of living room) transform how displaced persons navigate an exile experience by engaging in spatial practices, living in-between places, to survive the state policy that regulates their everyday mobility practices in specific transit sites. Contrary to the previous studies which equate stuckness to immobility, the article highlights that mobility and immobility are part of everyday strategies of civilian population seeking an end to hopeless future. The article makes important contributions to the study of civilian mobility and immobility during armed conflicts by highlighting the liminality and permanence of arrival practices in specific transit sites in frontline cities in the LCB region (Oginni, 2022).

Linking arrival practices to the access to state services in the frontline, I draw on Penchansky and Thomas' (1981) theory of access to examine the accessibility of civilians to healthcare in the frontline of the LCB region. The article explains accessibility as a governing strategy which has the potential to regulate everyday practices of the people considered out of place in insecure spaces. In the frontline areas, I find that frequent attacks from Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgents create a major health crisis that leads to a scarcity of health professionals and inadequate health facilities to serve the displaced population. However, state's containment strategy, which ties access to basic services to having identification documents, makes it difficult for civilians fleeing the scene of violent conflicts access timely treatments. As a result, civilian population draws on a range of resources such as religious and ethnic affiliations, shared culture and lax borders to access to healthcare services in both urban and rural areas. Thus, non-state traditional actors such as traditional rulers and district chiefs influence who get access to healthcare in dire situation, creating special privilege for some civilians with ethnic and religious affiliations over others. I argue that civilians' social network and ethnic affiliations

dictating the accessibility to healthcare mirror the permanent incompleteness of statehood in the LCB region. The article is the first attempt to examine displaced persons' accessibility to healthcare in the battlefield. In the African context, attempts at studying displaced persons' healthcare access have been made only in neutral states far away from the battlefield (Oginni et al., 2022).

Further, I explored the integration of refugees and internally displaced persons who have resettled into new communities in the Lake Chad Basin region. Specially, I examined how internally displaced persons and refugees established social connections, built bridges and navigated uncertain future. The study highlights similarity and differences in three key determinants of integration proposed by (Ager and Strand, 2008) – 1) markers and means in the forms of job opportunities and access to public services; 2) social connection in the form of social bridge and bonds; 3) facilitators which relate to shared culture and languages and 4) foundation (equal associational life). With respect to similarity across the four countries, cross-border languages, religion and shared culture facilitate social connection in the host communities. However, there seems to be missing links with respect markers and means because nationality and social networks play a great role in accessing job opportunities and public services. The article contributes to the emphasis on the deliberate interventions on infrastructure development and financing livelihood activities in border communities to reduce vulnerability to the recruitments of the NSAGs and increase the state legitimacy in the frontline areas (Oginni et al., 2020).

Lastly, states often set political goals to re-establishes its legitimacy and achieve economic and political stability, especially when the violent conflicts pose a serious threat to statehood and the state's sovereign power. Returning to normalcy or a scene of stability is always a political goal for the states battling the scene of continuous violent conflicts. Yet, the notion of normalcy can be a mirage or future promise when violent conflicts appear unfinished, or resolution appears permanently incomplete. The last article argues that normalcy is not just a political goal but also a governance strategy in conflict-torn spaces. As a governance strategy, normalcy absorbs the narratives of a better future, thereby enabling actors and institutions to coevolve, transform and coordinate themselves to achieve specific versions of stabilisation (Oginni, 2023b). In the ongoing armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region, I find that Nigeria state's declaration of return to normalcy enacts and transforms uncertainty and contingency into practical challenges and opportunities, impacting civilians' temporal and practical orientation but also play a crucial role in the process of adaptation to evolving security threats. Normalcy, thus, unfolds as future-making, open and inevitable but also actionable, enacting collective and self-organised strategies to the state's transition policy and visions in insecure spaces. This article reflects on the fact that institutionally generated future always plays out as collective and official visions driving transition narratives and subjects in conflict-torn spaces (Oginni, 2023b).

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# Prisoner's Dilemma: Hedging Loyalties in (Un)Governed Space of the Lake Chad Basin.

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## The research article is published as:

Oginni, S.O (2023). Prisoner ' s Dilemma : Hedging Loyalties in (Un)Governed Space of the Lake Chad Basin. *Armed Forces & Society*, June, 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X231177896>

## Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of interactions between civilians, armed groups, and the state in frontline states. Drawing on a 6-year ethnographic study of armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region, the article argues that civilian loyalty becomes multiple and overlapping when the roles of the state and armed groups become indistinguishable in insecure spaces. A range of actions and outcomes can be observed from civilians' navigating strategies: individual and collective bargaining, false compliance and co-optation with Boko Haram, Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and other militias to mitigate the risks of multiple competing authorities. The coupling of emerging individual and collective actions exemplifies self-organization that shapes the state response, armed groups' behaviours, and their legitimacy at the local scale. Thus, civilians result in hedging loyalty between the state and armed groups to reduce the potential harm that the non-zero-sum control of conflict-torn spaces would otherwise cause.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, civilian militias, future risks, Lake Chad Basin, protracted conflicts.

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## Return to normalcy: Transition and futures in insecure spaces.

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### The research article is published as:

Oginni, SO (2023). Return to normalcy: transition and futures in insecure spaces. *Futures*, 153. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2023.103239>

### Abstract

Returning to normalcy or a scene of stability is always a political goal for the states battling the scene of continuous violent conflicts. Yet, the notion of normalcy can be a mirage or future promise when violent conflicts appear unfinished, or resolution appears permanently incomplete. This article argues that normalcy is not just a political goal but also a governance strategy in conflict-torn spaces. As a governance strategy, normalcy absorbs the narratives of a better future, thereby enabling actors and institutions to coevolve, transform and coordinate themselves to achieve specific versions of stabilisation. With respect to the armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region, the article finds that Nigeria state's declaration of return to normalcy enacts and transforms uncertainty and contingency into practical challenges and opportunities, impacting civilians' temporal and practical orientation but also play a crucial role in the process of adaptation to evolving security threats in the frontlines. Normalcy, thus, unfolds as future-making, open and inevitable but also actionable, enacting collective and self-organised strategies to the state's transition policy and visions in insecure spaces. This article reflects on the fact that institutionally generated future always plays out as collective and official visions driving transition narratives and subjects in conflict-torn spaces.

**Keywords:** Lake Chad Basin; Futures; Armed conflicts and post-conflict transition

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# Arrival or Return? Temporality and Materiality of Transit Sites in Overlapping Displacement Context in Border Cities of the Lake Chad Basin Region

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## The research article is published as:

Oginni, SO (2022). Arrival or Return? Temporality and Materiality of Transit Sites in Overlapping Displacement Context in Border Cities of the Lake Chad Basin Region. *Urban Forum* 33, 463–484 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12132-021-09450-8>

## Abstract

Since over a decade of conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region, different measures have been adopted to regulate the mobility of displaced persons in border cities. Mubi—like other transit sites—is both a place of care and control, of incentivization and eviction and of inclusion and exclusion. To nuance these contradictions, I argue that we might have to pay attention to arrival practices in transit sites, particularly the encounter with infrastructures, which are intertwined and profoundly co-constitutive of the displaced persons' realities. In transit sites, arrival is practised and lived temporally and relationally among the displaced persons, despite the conditions of exile and immobility. Urban infrastructures (such as marketplaces, transit camps and living rooms) transform and enact the strategy adopted by the displaced persons to navigate daily life and to 'move on' from conditions of exile and confinement. Moving on, in this sense, is a strategy to overcome the disruption of the temporality of arrival practices from the Nigerian state regulation of mobility through incentivization and encampment policies. I demonstrate that both incentivization and encampment aim towards a common goal, which is to render displaced persons invisible in urban centres while becoming a raw material for capital production. The regulation enables a new form of unplanned spaces to emerge that are hyper-visible and super-precarious at the urban margins. This paper calls for a critical perspective on humanitarian urbanism in the Global South.

**Keywords:** Cities, Forced displacement, internally displaced persons, Lake Chad Basin, Protracted conflict.

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# Crisis at the intersection of four countries: healthcare access for displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin region<sup>5</sup>

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## The research article is published as:

Oginni, SO, Opoku, MP, Nketsia, W (2022). *Crisis at the intersection of four countries: healthcare access for displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin region*, *Ethnicity & Health*, 27:7, 1698-1717, DOI: [10.1080/13557858.2021.1947471](https://doi.org/10.1080/13557858.2021.1947471)

## Abstract

For a decade, the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region, which is at the intersection of four countries and home to ethnic groups in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has been occupied by Boko Haram. The lax borders and deprivation in the region contributed to the emergence and expansion of Boko Haram's insurgency. While much is known about the human casualties of the invasion, little is known about the accessibility of healthcare for the displaced persons. This qualitative study adopted Penchansky and Thomas' ([1981]. "The Concept of Access: Definition and Relationship to Consumer Satisfaction." *Medical Care* 19 (2): 127-140) theory of access as its conceptual framework (with the following components: geographical accessibility, availability, financial accessibility, acceptability and accommodation) to explore the experiences of the displaced persons in the LCB with respect to access to healthcare. One-on-one interviews (n=51) and two focus group discussions (n=16) were conducted with 67 refugees and internally displaced persons recruited from nine host communities in Nigeria and Cameroon, who shared their perceptions of their healthcare access. The displaced persons faced barriers to their access to the healthcare in the LCB. It was found that for each of the components of the theory of access, the study participants encountered barriers to healthcare access. For example, with regard to financial accessibility (affordability), poverty was identified as the main personal barrier to the displaced persons' healthcare access, and with regard to acceptability, it was communication that was reported to be a barrier. The limitations of the study, the recommendations for future research and the implications of the findings are discussed in detail.

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# Terrorism in the Lake Chad Region: Integration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons<sup>6</sup>

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## The research article is published as:

Oyewole Simon Oginni, Maxwell Peprah Opoku & Beatrice Atim Alupo (2020). Terrorism in the Lake Chad Region: Integration of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 35:5, 725-741, DOI: [10.1080/08865655.2018.1457975](https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2018.1457975)

## Abstract

The Lake Chad region is an intersection of four countries, namely Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger, and has been a battleground of terrorism in recent years. While much is known about the devastating impact of the activities of Boko Haram, there is a dearth of empirical research on how individuals displaced by terrorism in the Lake Chad region have been integrated into new communities. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the experiences of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) regarding their integration into new communities in the Lake Chad region. The study adopted a qualitative design, that is, interviews and focus group discussions, to interact with participants from nine communities in Cameroon and Nigeria. Sixty-seven participants consisting of refugees, IDPs, host community leaders, and camp leaders were recruited to share their experiences. The study found similarities in the experiences of refugees and IDPs. Specifically, the study found that common identity (i.e. common culture and languages) enhanced social connection, safety, and integration of the refugees and IDPs into new communities. However, little has been done in terms of job creation, to enable refugees to have a source of livelihood, access to property, and essential services. The study has implications for policymaking in terms of governments in the Lake Chad region capitalizing on common identity and developing employable programs which will revitalize the economy of the region.

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## Psychological experiences of refugees and the response of the community in the Lake Chad region<sup>7</sup>

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### The research article is published as:

Alupo, BA; Oginni, SO; MP Opoku, EL Torgbenu. 2019. Psychological experiences of refugees and the response of the community in the Lake Chad region. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 11(3): 215-231. DOI: [10.1080/19434472.2018.1463552](https://doi.org/10.1080/19434472.2018.1463552)

### Abstract

The Lake Chad region, which is an intersection of four countries, namely Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, has been a major battleground of violence and terrorism. Poverty is prevalent in the region—a situation which it has been argued is one of the factors accounting for the successful operation of Boko Haram. In the midst of limited economic activity, it is important to understand the psychological impact of the insurgency on the lives of displaced persons who have resettled in new communities. Sixty-seven refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) were interviewed from nine communities in Cameroon and Nigeria. Participants have been psychologically affected by loss of relatives and property, and even by displacement from their homeland. Also, limited economic opportunities in the region has manifested in an inability of the people to have access to income generating activities. The host communities have, however, provided support to the participants by accepting them as equal members of the society, and concerted efforts have been made to integrate them into the community. The study has implications for policymaking, in terms of governments and international partners exploring ways to create economic opportunities, so as to advance the lives of displaced persons in the region.

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## Societal perceptions of counterterrorism in Cameroon: The voices of those far from the battlefield.<sup>8</sup>

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### The research article is published as:

Opoku, MP; Nketsia, N; Oginni, SO; SN, Bernard, SN; B Alupo. (2020). Societal perceptions of counterterrorism in Cameroon: The voices of those far from the battlefield. *Journal of Human Rights*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2020.1716700>

### Abstract

The extant literature has reported on human rights violations perpetrated by state security systems against citizens during counterterrorism efforts. This has contributed to discussions on effective strategies to protect human life and property in the wake of terrorist attacks from insurgent groups such as Boko Haram. It is widely recommended that states adopt a combination of strategies to combat terrorism. However, in the African context, there have been few explorations of the nature and effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies adopted by states. Drawing on a multifaceted approach to fighting terrorism as the framework of analysis, this qualitative study explores people's perceptions of the effectiveness of counterterrorism efforts and their human rights implications in Cameroon in the wake of attacks from Boko Haram. One-on-one interviews were conducted with 51 participants recruited from Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. The participants mentioned that security measures instituted by the state have had adverse impacts on their fundamental human rights. The human rights violations are manifested in several ways, including extortion, unlawful arrest, and restrictions on movement. Study limitations, recommendations for future research, and the need for the Cameroon government to create economic opportunities and involve citizens in the fight against terrorism are discussed.

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