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The Conventional Border between Nigeria and Cameroon as a Haven for Illicit and Terrorist Activities Managed and Conducted by Boko Haram Jihadists

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Abstract

Nigeria and Cameroon currently share a conventional border, which has two sections: one land-based and one maritime. The land border is 1975 kilometers or 1227 miles long; the maritime border extends to 2062 kilometers or 1281 miles. European colonization began after 1884, the year Otto von Bismarck met European leaders in Berlin to divide Africa. The colonial situation began to dissipate after 1960. Nigeria is a federal republic composed of 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). From a population standpoint, it is the most populous country in Africa and the sixth most populous in the world. Nigeria's economy is among the strongest in Africa, a fact that has been recognized since 1987 (World Bank, 2013). Cameroon owes its name to Portuguese navigators, who christened the territory after the place with its abundance of shrimp. The country's shape is unusual, with a broad base in the tropical zone and a pointed tip at Lake Chad. Before the colonial period, nomadic ethnic groups roamed the territory, coexisting at various times with settled kingdoms: the Bamoun, Bandjoun, Adamaoua, and Mandara. Religiously, Islam in the north and Christianity in the south coexist with animism. The first European colony was set up by the Germans in 1884 (Roche, 2011: p. 105). For Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the merchant should settle first, followed by the soldier, to prevent indigenous rebellions (Deltombe et al., 2011). As a neighbor of Nigeria, with which it shares a large border, border conflicts have been commonplace, as we will see later.

Keywords

Cameroon, Nigeria, Boko Haram, Border, Terrorism

1. The Study of the Frontier in the Humanities and Social Sciences

In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner—an American historian and professor at the University of Wisconsin—defended his doctoral thesis at the Art Institute of Chicago, taking advantage of a major meeting of the American Historical Association taking place there at the time. The title of his work, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, failed to capture the attention of historians, who deemed the contribution mediocre (Pérez, 2024: pp. 40-45).

The work's success stemmed from the interest it sparked among politicians and military figures, given that the map of the United States was much smaller then than it is today. The thesis gained traction in less than a decade, as its content echoed the proposal of the third U.S. President, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson had masterminded the exploratory expedition known as the Lewis and Clark expedition, during which the two military men reached the Pacific coast in areas that now belong to the states of Washington and Oregon.

President Jefferson did not inform his closest associates or the Congress of the time; furthermore, he warned *Lewis and Clark* not to disclose the reasons for which they had been selected and dispatched as explorers. The secret mission aimed to discover a neutral zone between Spanish and British territories where Americans could settle, thereby enabling a connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific (Junquera Rubio, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023a, 2023b: pp. 88-110). Consequently, the success of Frederick Jackson Turner's work stemmed from early 20th-century politicians and military figures who recognized the utility of his ideas; these concepts could be used to interpret United States history and—more importantly—proposed that the frontier was the primary factor in shaping the American character. Furthermore, the frontier fostered a mindset that encouraged the Union to define its national destiny once conventional borders were established with Mexico and Canada (the latter still under British rule, whereas issues with Russia had been resolved through the 1867 purchase of Alaska) (Junquera Rubio, 2019).

Turner's framework posited that as the frontier shifted and advanced toward the Far West—or the "Wild West"—it transformed virgin lands into civilized territory through the impact of various settlers. Many of these individuals had arrived from Europe as immigrants but, now as American citizens, were shedding their old customs to help build a new nation—one that was still taking shape and had not yet fully defined its conventional boundaries. It should be noted that Turner's ideas applied only to white Anglo-Saxon men; his work was inspired by a lithograph by the German painter John Gast, which is housed in the U.S. Congress and can be viewed online (https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmaca.09855/).

Turner's thesis idealized the concept of the frontier, portraying the Far West as a setting that allowed those who had freely chosen to settle in wild, unknown lands to adapt to their new environment. In this context, colonization was also ex-

tolled—no longer a European endeavor, but one driven by the American continent itself, with the United States at the helm; as the new patrons, the U.S. charted the new paths that Western civilization was to follow. Although it may seem strange or unusual, Turner's proposal was influenced by theories of social evolution stemming from Darwin—ideas suggesting that the indigenous social structure should be altered and replaced by a "civilizing" one, specifically the North American model (Junquera Rubio, 2026).

The cultural frameworks of the various Indian societies remained viable until the arrival of Western civilization. This is not to say that conflicts—even bloody ones—had not previously occurred among them; however, the European presence intensified warfare by introducing weapons previously unknown on the American continent. This factor was compounded by other negative impacts, most notably the mass slaughter of certain animal species for the commercial trade of their valuable pelts, the introduction of diseases, the spread of alcohol, the disruptive impact of a money-based economy, the preaching of various forms of Christianity, and so forth. Furthermore, the expansion of agriculture facilitated the seizure of lands from indigenous peoples (Junquera Rubio, 2017, 2019, 2022).

The survival of these indigenous societies depended on whether they adopted the new tenets proposed by the Anglo-Saxons—tenets rooted in the emergence of the fur trade, the introduction of European-style livestock farming, and the establishment of the ranch. This new social triad was intended to usher in a novel economic model—one previously unknown to the region—and to consolidate these objectives, Turner and his followers readily made false claims, attributing barbaric practices to the indigenous peoples, such as the taking of human scalps as war trophies.

This practice was introduced to North America by the English colonial administration; they imposed it in Connecticut by inciting the Mohicans to kill members of the Pequot society, thereby allowing the English to seize the lands left ownerless in the wake of the violence. This grim practice was also adopted by the Dutch during their settlement in what is now New York State, as well as by French colonists in New France (Foulds, 2000: pp. 36-37; Tucker, 2011: p. 708; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014: p. 64; Junquera Rubio, 2019).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the continental boundaries of North America were being defined, though they were not yet final; indeed, certain geographic areas that had formerly been Mexican were not yet deemed ready for statehood and were instead designated as "territories"—Arizona and New Mexico being prime examples. By 1898, moreover, Hawaii, the Philippines, and other archipelagos across the Pacific Ocean had already been brought into the fold. The military and territorial expansionism of the late 19th century solidified into what is now the definitive map—at least for the time being—though we must recognize that, in the long run, borders could undergo changes. This has recently occurred in old Europe; the former Yugoslavia, for instance, has transformed, and the territory it once encompassed is now divided among Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia (Lukic & Lynch, 1996; Trbovich, 2008). To these six republics, we must add two autonomous regions: Kosovo and Vojvodina (Bataković, 2012; Zakić, 2017).

Russia and Ukraine are currently engaged in open warfare over territories both nations claim as their own, and there is no sign of the conflict ending soon; rather, it is likely to persist. Even if a peace agreement were signed, it would not be lasting, as the weight of hatred and memory among the populations foreshadows an imminent new offensive. Humanity is still far from establishing a framework for coexistence that would allow all the ethnic groups involved to resolve their cultural, political, and social differences harmoniously; indeed, arms manufacturers know all too well how to sell their products. In the case of the Sahel, it is striking to see cattle herders tending their herds armed with Russian- or Ukrainian-made Kalashnikov machine guns (Pastor Martínez & Junquera Rubio, 2008; Junquera Rubio & Pastor Martínez, 2016).

2. The Colonial and Post-Colonial Border between Nigeria and Cameroon

The 20th century saw two world wars: from 1914 to 1918 and from 1939 to 1945. Once the second war ended, international life underwent a profound transformation, influencing diplomatic relations, introducing significant modifications to international law, and dividing the world into two blocs: East and West; or, in other words, communism versus capitalism. This confrontation has also been known first as the Zero Curtain and later as the Cold War.

The fifteen years from 1945 to 1960 saw the impact of decolonization. Present-day India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh achieved their independence from Great Britain in 1947, thanks to Gandhi's pacifist policies. This success will serve as an incentive for African territories to be encouraged and move in the same direction. Although they all agree on decolonization, the affairs of each of the current African countries have inherited borders heavily marked by colonization, which have been subject to the varying degrees of understanding between the European states present in the region.

Great Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and Spain began their colonial withdrawal from 1960 onwards. The colonial borders disappeared, but new ones appeared to redraw the map of Africa. The management of these borders became central to the geopolitics of most African states after their respective independences. I think it is worth noting that conventional borders do not necessarily have to be a problem since they are neutral lines on the ground. Conflicts between neighboring countries often arise in border regions, as these areas typically present at least the following difficulties: 1) fraudulent businesses dependent on smuggling; 2) criminals seeking refuge from justice while remaining close to their families; 3) terrorists who attack in one country and hide in the neighboring one, and so on. These complications stem from how individuals or groups use these borders (Foucher, 1991). Depending on daily events, cross-border interactions can be easy or compli-

cated; moreover, these areas can be either easy to manage or highly conflictive, as there are examples for a wide range of possibilities. In this sense, the border is always like a coin with two opposite sides: it can be a factor of convergence or division; that is, it depends on the various interactions that occur between states and their citizens.

Generally, border regions show two main and rather opposing types of relationships: 1) social, political, economic, and violent tensions, perpetual enmity, etc.; 2) commercial and linguistic exchange, cooperation, etc. The border between Cameroon and Nigeria does not prevent this dynamic. In fact, they are two neighboring states, sharing a common border of approximately 2062 kilometers.

On the other hand, affinity does not preclude the presence of different elements and the emergence of conflicts, since disagreements have arisen in the Lake Chad and maritime areas, forcing the two countries to seek diplomatic agreements, which are more beneficial for their populations than armed conflict. Consequently, belonging to different subregional communities, the border acquires a powerful significance, as it is not merely a line on the map separating two states. While retaining this characteristic, it can also become a zone of friendly encounters if both countries are willing to collaborate as needed to ensure the well-being of their citizens (Pérez, 2024: pp. 62-88).

As far as we know, and we are aware that we still have much to learn, the border between Cameroon and Nigeria has been studied from various perspectives. Haliroun Abdouraman analyzes the history of the border between the two countries, highlighting two peculiarities: 1) Nigerian dynamism and 2) Cameroonian apathy (Abdouraman, 2008: pp. 57-76). Issa Saibou reflects cross-border insecurity and points out that material poverty is the driving force, given the lack of policies focused on human development (Saibou, 2010).

The border between Cameroon and Nigeria is a coveted area despite the inequalities it presents, including poverty, wealth in the southern regions due to hydrocarbons, and fishing in Lake Chad, which reflect the friction between the two states on the Darak Peninsula, among other factors. Likewise, we must not forget that colonial errors still weigh heavily on the political consciences of the leaders of both states, despite the agreements signed. This issue is equally relevant in other areas of the Sahel (Junquera Rubio, 2024: pp. 578-613, 2025: pp. 660-698). These contexts prove that situations like that between Cameroon and Nigeria are mired in constant border battles over access to economic and strategic resources (Junquera Rubio & Pastor Martínez, 2016).

Consequently, in this section we try to clarify the geostrategic importance of the border between these two countries as an area that needs diplomatic intervention. In a context marked by political disagreements about border management, how has the border between Cameroon and Nigeria become a strip of significant geostrategic importance for both nations and their adjacent subregions? To begin this reflection, it is important to consider that various actors use cross-border areas, as their strategic nature fosters different struggles for control among the many

conflicting powers. From this starting point, it is necessary to assess the identified problems and evaluate the interactions to better understand the role of the various groups involved.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that current border studies incorporate proposals from the Copenhagen School about security, which, while offering theory, can help put it into practice. Applying these elements will allow us to better understand that insecurity along the borders between the two states stems from historical and geopolitical factors, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, indicates that the border, given its specific characteristics, has been shaped and managed by security forces.

The border between Cameroon and Nigeria has been reinforced, given its geostrategic importance stemming from the insecurity caused primarily by cross-border weakness, as we will see later, and by the deconstruction resulting from various sovereign actions.

2.1. Cross-Border Weakness

A conventional border is a delineation that separates two state identities, and this reality can be natural or artificial: but, in any case, identifiable. In the case of Africa, the border limits of the different African states do not correspond to any historical project of each of these nations, but rather are the consequence of circumstances shaped by decolonization.

In the specific case of Cameroon and Nigeria, the aim is to highlight how these perspectives, in the immediate process of formation following the withdrawal of the two European powers, France and Great Britain, fostered the establishment of a cross-border weakness. Indeed, this possibility had some historical and geopolitical support, allowing the cross-border territories to be considered weakened, at least initially upon gaining independence.

First, the colonization of Africa has left a lasting mark on the creation of the continent's states after 1960. This experience shaped their immediate political structures and set up new paradigms that would lay the foundations for the young nations we know today. Nigeria and Cameroon share a colonial history that is both recent and distant, and it is from this paradox that the new states were born, each with its own distinct political life. The specific situations experienced by both countries during the colonial period and the differences seen in their political life after independence constitute the elements stemming from that period of European presence, which were the cause of later cross-border weakness.

By the status of the two states, we must understand the political and administrative organization of Cameroon and Nigeria characteristic of the colonial era, since both states experienced colonial administration, but not through the same methods. Following the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), the European powers proved borders based on agreements for the partitioning of the African continent, thus creating fixed boundaries. Germans, French, and British signed pacts to divide territories, and as had been happening since antiquity, no African citizen was consulted

about anything or anyone. For the purposes of this study, these three European countries managed many later events between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Initially, Cameroon was placed under a German protectorate, and Germany was the dominant power in the country until the end of World War I. However, some Cameroonian areas were administered by the British from Nigeria. The Germans fostered trade, the economy, the military presence, and much more, producing a series of impacts stemming from the industrial capitalism prevalent in the metropolis.

The improper division of territories excluded local populations, and the ethnic groups present in the landscape. This imposition led to the disintegration of kingdoms, regions, societies, villages, and so on. The traditional way of life of the indigenous societies, living then near the current conventional border, was not significantly altered during this period, as people resisted by moving back and forth, since the dividing line was largely ignored.

In short, to avoid going into too much detail, after World War I, Germany was stripped of all its colonies, which were divided among the victors on June 28, 1919, in Versailles. In this new context, Cameroon experienced further changes to its borders and administration. The territory was divided between France and Great Britain.

After World War II, under the influence of the United Nations, Cameroon's status was changed, becoming a French and British mandate. This context led to the annexation of a part of the territory, known as "Northern Cameroon", which became part of Nigeria. The native societies, administered first by the Germans and then by the British, continued to keep relations with other neighboring communities, but under different administrations. The political and administrative evolution of Nigeria began with the arrival of English Anglican missionaries, who explored the Atlantic coast as far as the mouth of the Niger River, their intention being to evangelize the indigenous societies of the Niger region and its tributaries. Shortly afterward, English merchants arrived, drawn by the prospect of raw materials and the desire to firmly set up capitalist expansion. In 1861, a British shipping company, the Royal Niger Company, proved itself and dominated economic trade in the area, also founding the colony of Lagos. This colonization demanded peace in the region, ending the tribal wars between the various social groups.

The colonial powers, commissioned to organize the sociopolitical life of these territories, administered the people and lands through governors, generally from the metropolises. These figures introduced customs and ways of life that bore no resemblance to traditional African ones, causing numerous disruptions.

Following the struggles for independence, the colonies began to move towards emancipation from the 1960s onwards, under the guidelines of the United Nations and the well-known principle of self-determination of peoples. These sovereignties had profound impacts on the newly emerging states, as they characterized the origin of political governance in each of the new nations.

It wasn't only Cameroon and Nigeria that achieved freedom; All African countries felt the impact of colonial liberation, which occurred almost universally during the 1960s. The new political order and status brought greater autonomy for state governance in each of the new states, which practically began their journey under the banner of democracy. Moreover, with the withdrawal of the colonial powers, time came for the newly formed states to expand their economies and prosper socially. But dreaming of something is one thing, and achieving it is quite another; dreams are just dreams. Cameroon and Nigeria have followed different paths since gaining independence, and this has also led to increased vulnerability in border regions compared to the earlier period.

On January 1, 1960, the French-administered part of Cameroon gained its independence. About a year later, after a referendum on self-determination, the sector under British administration split in two: 1) the northern part, with a Muslim majority, decided to join Nigeria; 2) while the southern part opted to integrate into the already independent French Cameroon. Viewed objectively, Cameroonian emancipation was, in principle, more symbolic than real, since, as a new state, it signed several cooperation agreements with France. The French ambassador, along with his advisors, wielded power unofficially but undeniably. Newly emancipated and reunified Cameroon moved forward under the patronage of France and with the full support of the former colonial power, as the directives to be implemented emanated from the French embassy.

The Magna Carta of the newly formed state of Cameroon was practically a copy of the one that governed the former colony. This situation prevailed when a conference of representatives from French Cameroon and the British sector was met in Foumban between July 16 and 21, 1961. Despite the federal structure, power was centralized in the hands of former Prime Minister Ahmadou Ahidjo, who assumed the first presidency upon independence.

Power remained centralized, and French interference continued. This context fostered the abandonment of the formerly British zone, with no aid of any kind provided. An analogous situation occurred with regional and bilateral cooperation, which was extremely limited or nonexistent at that time; moreover, no relationship whatsoever was wanted with Nigeria, despite it being a neighboring country, as the economy and trade continued to develop primarily with France. Nigeria also achieved its independence in the 1960s. In a sense, the founding fathers of the nation decided, given the multiethnic and multi-religious situation, that a federation was the most proper course of action once emancipation was achieved. This diversity is the most notable characteristic of this country; Nigeria is a vast state, with an area exceeding 900,000 km^2, inhabited by more than 250 ethnic groups and two main religions: 1) Islam in the north; 2) Christianity in the south (Gifford, 2015; McKinnon, 2021: pp. 303-315). It is true that proportionality is not correlated with number, since approximately 70% of Nigerian ethnic groups fall into three broad categories: 1) the Hausa or Fulani, settled in the north and followers of the Muslim religion; 2) the Yorubas settled in the southwest and of the Chris-

tian religion, although there are also adherents to Islam; 3) the Igbos settled in the southeast and of the Christian belief (De Volder, 2015: pp. 99-111).

The vast array of sociological factors shaping the country has generated crises, upheavals, and conflicts. Nigeria is familiar with both civilian and military coups, regional conflicts fueled by hydrocarbon profits, and secessionist wars. Furthermore, as a nation, it has experienced political violence that has limited its cooperation with neighboring states. Similarly, the lack of border control has resulted in transboundary areas being controlled by armed groups.

Consequently, borders manifest themselves as an environment that presents opportunities with highly abstract, vague, and ambivalent forms. These imprecise contexts can either unite or divide neighboring states. In this sense, the conventional border between Cameroon and Nigeria is a weak zone created by conflicts that generate insecurity. This is what we will discuss next. The management of African borders, inherited from colonization, formalizes one of the most notable aspects of the geopolitics of most African countries. Control of these borders is essential for any state; in fact, this management is complex due to the great diversity of border crossings and cross-border problems. In addition to territorial disputes, there are many illicit activities: smuggling of goods, highway robberies, the presence of terrorists, and much more. These and other acts generate insecurity, which refers to a scenario in which public order is nonexistent or severely impaired. These signs produce a feeling of being threatened because of a lack of social stability or of the country being governed by a weak leader.

In the specific case of border violence between Cameroon and Nigeria, it stems more from its inherent potential, to which we must add historical, geopolitical, and economic factors, than from any other peculiar factor attributable to human physiology. Several reasons help explain the insecurity and conflict along African borders in general, and those of these two countries in particular. A wide range of factors contribute, including each country's pursuit of its own interests, the exercise of power both locally and internationally, colonial missteps, and so on. In the realm of international relations, each state inherently protects its own interests and doesn't consult its neighbors before acting.

Having supremacy over border issues is akin to controlling the foundation upon which many international relationships rest; that is, power is subject to the norms applied universally. Currently, US President Donald Trump has become a leader who aspires to control the world order because he believes he has sufficient power to impose his will, suspecting that other powers are in no position to raise strong objections. Time will tell whether he acted justifiably, but based on past experiences, we don't believe he will achieve much. Their slogan, "Make America Great Again", may sound appealing in some circles, but not in all. Politics is always a struggle to gain power and keep it for as long as possible.

Colonial times also bear the marks of mistakes, and among these, the border demarcations imposed on Africa stand out. Today's cross-border areas carry many problems from those times when Europeans of various nationalities decided to

carve up Africa simply because they felt like it. In the case of Cameroon and Nigeria, both states govern their respective subregions, and this affects the border, since, whether good or bad, rich or poor, it is a strategic area for both, and if it is mismanaged, territorial violations, criminal activity, and a wide range of conflicts arise. These contexts may be the cause of the many border clashes that have appeared since 1960. From a historical perspective, the clashes and disputes have arisen from two broad concepts: 1) economic interests related to hydrocarbons on the Bakassi Peninsula and in Lake Chad; 2) the issue of internal security, as Nigeria had to confront an insurgency in the southeast and subsequently crossed the border, carrying out armed actions in Cameroonian territory. It is important to note that the Bakassi region is fraught with geopolitical interests, especially due to the presence of oil wells.

Frank Ebogo argues that economics and geostrategy are the two most principal elements that fueled the conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. In this regard, he notes: "Bakassi presents itself as an important geopolitical chessboard, that is, a space of struggles and competition structured around specific issues, such as control of water resources or the appropriation of strategic resources" (Ebogo, 2015: pp. 46-54). Furthermore, we know that oil is a resource with significant power potential, which is why it is at the heart of the conflict. The border between Cameroon and Nigeria has generated tensions between the two states.

Let's analyze what led to fifty years of border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. First, we must consider that the border between the two countries was poorly drawn at the time of decolonization, and while not the only one in Africa to suffer from this flaw, it has produced numerous misunderstandings, mainly due to its strategic significance. According to Mouelle Kombi, the demarcation between the two countries is flawed in several areas, and the first consequence has been the outbreak of numerous incidents, two of which stand out: 1) in the northern region of Lake Chad and 2) on the Atlantic coast in what is known as the Bakassi Peninsula.

About the northern area, the conflict began because of two plebiscites held on February 11 and 12, 1961. Both referendums were related to British Cameroon. A specific and categorical question was posed to Anglophone Cameroonians in the north and south: "Do you wish to become independent by joining Cameroon or Nigeria?". Despite the wishes of the Cameroonian authorities, who wanted the United Nations to announce the results, the international body declared them separately for each of the two regions consulted.

Had the Cameroonian authorities' position been respected, the two parts of British Cameroon would have been allowed to join the Republic by a vote of 333,230 to 244,037. The Cameroonian authorities naively kept their stance until the end of May 1961; moreover, it appears, though not proven, that then-President Ahmadou Ahidjo delivered a radio address and uttered the following phrase: "Might has prevailed over justice". We do not yet know whether this phrase was uttered, but what we do know is that the two countries have been at odds for fifty years

over disputes about their conventional borders (International Court of Justice, 2002).

Lake Chad belongs to four countries: Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria. A purely natural issue influences the political decisions made about the entire territory. Depending on the season, water resources are abundant, and this affects the riverbank areas. In the case of Nigeria, during the rainy season, its territory surrounds the lake in many areas, except in the sector at once next to Cameroon; while in the dry season, its district extends by about 20 kilometers.

These data show that the problem is not so much a management issue, but rather one affected by the advantages and disadvantages associated with this lake region. Based on the opinion of Onana Mfege, who points out the following: "the fundamental problem lies in the access provided by the lake and, to some extent, in Nigeria's hegemonic ambitions" (Onana Mfege, 2004: p. 82).

Halirou Abdouraman's contributions follow the same line of argument, noting that "this border conflict stems from geoeconomic issues, such as the control of trade flows and their benefits, and geopolitical issues, arising from migration and territorial integrity, which are linked to the receding waters of Lake Chad and the migration of its resources: water, fish, pasture, and agricultural land towards Cameroon" (Abdouraman, 2008: p. 61). These problems are not new, as we know they have been present in the region since pre-colonial times. The advantages provided by the lake contributed to the deterioration of the friendly relations between the two countries in the early 1990s, when Nigeria asserted its sovereignty over certain areas that housed its citizens, whose numbers had grown significantly in the region and, with this population increase, outnumbered the local populations. In 1994, Nigeria occupied the area with military detachments, who raised the flag despite Cameroon's condemnations. All of this led the Cameroonian authorities to refer the conflict to the International Court of Justice on June 6, 1994 (Onana Mfege, 2004: p. 82).

In turn, the Bakassi Peninsula, found on the border between the two countries, has been the subject of a severe problem. It is an area of approximately one thousand square kilometers found in southwestern Cameroon. It is bordered to the east by the King River and to the west by the Akwayafé River. In this case, the origins of this problem date back to the First World War, specifically to the border demarcation dispute between France and Great Britain when they divided the German colonies. It's important to note that this region is rich in resources, with good fishing grounds, abundant hydrocarbons, and so on. In other words, economic interests handled the Nigerian army's decision to occupy Bakassi.

This conflict began in 1993 when Nigerian troops occupied part of the area, prompting opposition from the Cameroonian army. It culminated in the ruling of the International Court of Justice on October 10, 2002, which confirmed Cameroon's sovereignty over the disputed territory (International Court of Justice, 2002). During the conflict, the armed forces of both countries clashed several times before the case was taken to the International Court of Justice. Furthermore, con-

flicts are often exploited by groups from outside the region, even if they operate within it. When there is no real authority, rebel groups, pirates, smugglers, terrorists, and many others tend to emerge. Generally, when armed conflict erupts, reason is set aside, as what emerges is an atmosphere of constant tension (Vázquez-Atochero & Rubio, 2025: pp. 417-429).

The next step we must take is to examine the deconstruction of cross-border instability by offering unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral proposals, with the capacity in the short and long term, to transform this border into a demarcation that provides peace and security, which, as we will see later, does not seem likely to happen anytime soon due to the activities of Boko Haram.

2.2. Hypothesis on Stability

Stability in two or more cross-border areas depends largely on the ability of the states involved to provide representative and consensual responses to sincerely address all threats. Given the strategic importance of the border under consideration, we must acknowledge that both states have developed diverse diplomatic approaches, valuing each other's sovereignty and the agreements they can reach bilaterally.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of a state is to guarantee the security, defense, and integrity of its territory. In this sense, all states are compelled to refine strategies that guarantee their conventional borders; so, sovereign actions are exclusive to each state, as it is the state that starts them to combine the security of its territory. In our case, in the example of Cameroon and Nigeria, each state must prove an interest in supporting its own interests. Let us first examine the Cameroonian case and then the Nigerian one.

Cameroon shares a border with Nigeria that is both land and sea. The first point to consider about military defense is that both land and sea forces are necessary to check it.

The Cameroonian National Navy was created on May 5, 1961, and its primary purpose at that time was to guarantee Cameroon's maritime access. Its mission includes, among other things, coastal defense of the shoreline and within what is known as the Exclusive Economic Zone. As a logical consequence of Cameroon and Nigeria sharing a maritime border, the Navy's main task is to guarantee maritime security. To achieve its aims, it has a headquarters found in Yaoundé and maritime installations positioned along the coastline. These installations are supported by flotillas equipped with patrol boats, fast attack craft, marine infantry forces, and marines. In addition, the navy has a combat submarine company. From a material standpoint, Cameroon proved three naval bases, a shipyard, workshops for repairing damage to its vessels, and so on.

Furthermore, after the resolution of the border dispute between the two states over the Bakassi Peninsula, the Cameroonian head of state recognized the urgent need to strengthen security in the maritime zone to prevent future conflicts and reduce the climate of insecurity. Consequently, in 1999, he proved the Rapid In-

tervention Battalion (BIR), an elite army unit whose aim is to combat cross-border organized crime. In this context, to address the threats in the Bakassi region, the head of state decided to entrust its security to this elite unit.

Since 2009, BIR-Delta, a subgroup of BIR, has managed the security and protection of the territory against acts of piracy, smuggling, looting, and sabotage of all kinds. This elite unit is equipped with fast boats and attack craft, radar systems, helicopters, and a converted ship docked in Río del Rey for overnight stays.

Furthermore, the French Navy's Marine Command Forces, combat submarines, and the Special Amphibious Battalion help the BIR in all its tasks. Since 2014, in response to repeated Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon has mobilized its armed forces along the border between the two countries. This measure aims to prevent the infiltration or retreat of jihadists into Cameroonian territory. This responsibility falls to the BIR, which has the mission of combating cross-border banditry in all its forms. As a result of all the above, Cameroon deployed soldiers along its border with Nigeria in 2014 to address cross-border insecurity linked to terrorist attacks. As a result of the terrorist presence, some 3000 soldiers were deployed to Cameroon's Far North region.

Furthermore, Cameroonian authorities have increased security measures in the Far North region to prevent the infiltration of Boko Haram jihadist fighters from Nigeria. This instability has forced the Nigerian civilian population to flee insurgent attacks and the offensive launched by the Nigerian armed forces, seeking refuge across the border in Cameroon. In this context, a rapid reaction force has also been deployed in the northern regions; even tourist hotels in these areas now have armed guards. These measures aim to strengthen border security to better combat Boko Haram.

Generally, when states wish to strengthen border security, the first step is to prove several border posts to control the movement of people and goods. In this context, Cameroonian authorities admit that fully securing Cameroon's longest border is difficult. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that the communities residing on both sides—those in the Far North in the case of Cameroon and in the Northeast in the case of Nigeria—are of the same ethnicity, share the same culture, and speak the same native language. This situation might be an advantage at other times, but currently it hinders the detection of cross-border movements and, therefore, increases the likelihood that terrorists and ordinary citizens will go undetected. Nevertheless, Cameroonian authorities have a duty to guarantee security along this border. This is the meaning of the statement by Albert Sidi, head of social and cultural affairs for the Far North Governor's office: "Our main mission is to protect our borders so as not to import the Boko Haram problem". That said, let's look at what is happening on the Nigerian side.

The Nigerian state has outlined a security policy for its borders in general, and particularly for its border with Cameroon, considering the associated risks, including its strategic importance. Nigeria has created a national navy to guarantee security in its maritime territory; moreover, it is currently one of the most power-

ful on the African continent. It has approximately 7000 personnel and is very well-equipped, with three frigates, two offshore patrol vessels, two minesweepers, nine fast patrol boats, four patrol boats, four corvettes, and sixteen coastal patrol boats. The Nigerian Navy must ensure the protection of its coasts and prevent any real or potential threat. This is entirely legitimate considering the importance of the seas for developing countries.

Geographically speaking, it must be acknowledged that a weak border of approximately 1500 kilometers is shared between the two countries, from Borno State to the Niger Delta region in the south. Therefore, as an important component in the fight against Boko Haram and to ensure greater security on the border with Cameroon, the Nigerian army announced on February 23, 2023, the closure of a section of the border it shared with Cameroon in order to block the movements of this terrorist group, whose attacks had been deadly in the northeast of the country. In fact, the closure affected Adamawa State, which had been in a state of emergency since May 2013 because of numerous attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram.

As General Rogers Iben Nicholas, the state's highest-ranking military commander, emphasized: "What I have done is completely close the borders; no one enters or leaves Adamawa State". This measure aimed to halt the rise of Boko Haram and thus promote security. The general believes that this decision "has already reduced the influx of criminals and terrorist elements into Nigeria" (Sani, 2014).

It should be added that the defense forces involved in securing this border between Cameroon and Nigeria include the army, the navy, and, when necessary, elite forces such as the BIR in Cameroon are deployed[1]. In addition to the militaries, both countries have police forces to manage migration flows. Both states have increased security along this border by deploying security forces and proving checkpoints to watch the movement of people and goods. Faced with the presence and actions of a common enemy, such as Boko Haram, both states have acknowledged the need for cooperation.

On the other hand, in the case of Nigeria, based on the opinions expressed by Onuoha (2014), jihadists have operational commands in practically the entire northern half of the country; that is, they are present in the following states: Borno; Yebe/Yobe; Adamawa; Taraba; Come/Gombe; Plateau; Bauchi; Kaduna; Kano; Shigawa/Jigawa; Niger; Katrina/Katsina; and Sokoto. This situation does not prevent them from having sleeper cells in the southern half and even in the Abuja region, as the terrorist network's reach is very extensive.

2.3. Bilateral Border Actions between Cameroon and Nigeria

Border security between Cameroon and Nigeria is the result of political action. The two countries have set up regular meetings between their political leaders to address the numerous abuses that often occur in border regions. These meetings

[1]Rapid Intervention Battalion.

often help the development of concrete actions to secure the conventional border, which can be broadly categorized into two types: 1) military, and 2) diplomatic. About the second aspect, the diplomatic one, various activities have taken place: the signing of agreements, the organization of summits, and working visits by heads of state in both directions.

Cameroon and Nigeria have created a cooperation body: the Grand Joint Cooperation Commission (GCMC)[2]. Cooperation between the two countries, aimed at securing the border, has led to the creation of this institution, which will ease events designed to address border security challenges. Examples of these initiatives include the construction of a secure freight corridor from Bamenda, Cameroon, to Enugu, Nigeria, and the construction of a bridge over the Cross River to help the movement of people and goods between the two countries.

Cross-border insecurity, understood as "a set of criminal acts whose perpetrators, victims, and repercussions extend beyond state borders and are therefore rooted in networks and diverse criminal activities, such as terrorism, kidnapping and hostage-taking, armed banditry, maritime piracy, insurgencies, and looting", has compelled Cameroon and Nigeria to coordinate mutual defense through mechanisms that eliminate cross-border insecurity, a consequence of its long-standing and weak structure.

The agreed-upon actions of solidarity and cooperation involve the need for bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, which require study and analysis. In recent times, both states have fully understood the necessity of cooperation to achieve security along their shared border. And this is evident as something essential. Collaboration has been conducted bilaterally by both countries, but also through other actors, which has led to multilateral cooperation, and in this sense, decisions from the United Nations can be considered. Also, from other international organizations, especially the World Bank.

Military diplomacy should be understood as involving reciprocal actions that manage strategic initiatives, both preventive and coercive, but with the aim of guaranteeing a shared zone. Cameroon and Nigeria have made progress, sometimes with the support of international organizations and other times jointly on their own. In this context, preventive measures have facilitated the creation of joint bodies such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), whose main objective is the security and development of the countries that share the Lake Chad Basin; likewise, the Conference of Heads of State of the Central African Peace Council (COPAX), which is a forum for the leaders of the Central African states to discuss and make decisions on security matters. But in times of tension, such as the present, it is useless to make decisions, since each country has its own problems, even though Boko Haram terrorism affects everyone.

At the coercive level, combining the border between Cameroon and Nigeria involves the participation of security and defense forces. However, coercion and prevention alone are insufficient to achieve stability and security in a conflict-ridden

[2]Grand Joint Cooperation Commission.

and vulnerable region. Therefore, the area needs to be developed to allow for better control by both countries and to improve the well-being of their populations. Cameroon and Nigeria have recognized this need and, so, collaborate bilaterally and sometimes seek support from NGOs and even United Nations agencies.

Joining the border area was not an effortless process, but rather the result of social circumstances and the will of the governments. This led to a pooling of resources as both countries acknowledged the need to control this resource-rich region.

3. The Impact of Jihadism on the Cameroon-Nigeria Border

Given that this essay deals with a particular border, the one shared by Cameroon and Nigeria, we will now reflect on its use and abuse by a group labeled as terrorist in the media, namely Boko Haram[3]. The history of this group is recent and short, as it is believed to have appeared in 2002. While the organization's archives are not accessible, we must accept that its founder was Mohammed Yusuf and that its first steps were taken in Maiduguri, in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria, a strategic area where this country shares a border with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, and where all four claim an undetermined portion of Lake Chad.

The founder was killed by police in 2009, and his follower, Abubakar Shekau, rose to power, forcing the militarization of the group. Given the geographical location of Borno State, it is not surprising that the entire area surrounding Lake Chad became the primary zone of terrorist activity, with attacks in all four neighboring countries, but primarily in Cameroon and Nigeria (De Montclos, 2012: pp. 1-33; Guibbaud, 2014; Koungou, 2014; Apard, 2015: pp. 43-74; Mane, 2016).

We are currently seeing a significant shift in the concept of the meaning of borders, as they are being constantly violated, and even allowed in certain cases. Traditionally, empires, kingdoms, cities, and small towns set up their own borders and did not allow anyone to enter their territories; Moreover, they defended their territories with soldiers, weapons, and speeches, for example. In the 17th century, the state handled guarding its conventional borders, and this continued until the two world wars, but currently there are notable changes in this regard.

In principle, Boko Haram is just one more group among those integrated into Al-Qaeda, which has numerous followers and radical organizations in the Maghreb and the Sahel. They all share a common hatred of the West. The Al-Qaeda organization was founded by the Saudi Osama Bin Laden, who was killed by US military commandos during the presidency of Barack Obama.

To the best of our knowledge, in North Africa—including the countries along the Mediterranean coast, those located in the Sahara Desert, the Sahelian countries, and those bordering the Gulf of Guinea—several organizations are active that adhere to the ideology of their founder. Among these are: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qaeda in West Africa, Al-Shabaab, and Daesh or the Islamic

[3]Boko Haram should be understood as a rejection of schools, education, and teaching of a Western nature (Junquera Rubio, 2025: pp. 660-697). https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2025.153037

State (ISIS) and its satellite groups: Majilis Shura Shabab al-Islam in Libya and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. These organizations have been named in the international press and by numerous scholars, as shown by the extensive literature analyzing their terrorist acts (Amin, 2020; García Peña, 2025).

Over the last fifteen years, and practically every day, news of terrorist attacks originating from Islamist groups has been a constant occurrence. Violence, terror, fanaticism, and so on, are elements we can extract from each of these acts. That said, we believe we must qualify some of the images and elements that appear in these acts of intimidation. The preliminary question might be this: is there any difference between a terrorist act of any kind and one perpetrated by an individual or group affiliated with Boko Haram, for example? Terrorism, in and of itself, is a phenomenon that is both incredibly old and very recent; that is to say, it can be found in the history of humankind at any point in time.

The phenomenon can show subversion, sabotage, urban or rural guerrilla warfare, brutality, fanaticism, and so on; that is, it can be relative and subjective. In the first case, we must be clear that individuals who are persecuted for terrorism today may be political leaders tomorrow in their areas of activity and influence[4]. In the second case, that is, in the subjective dimension, the label "terrorist" is also used to discredit the adversary and question their legitimacy.

The main peculiarity of Jihadist groups is that their religious part is what drives them to function as they do. A nationalist activist may die trying, but their task is to end the enemies and stay alive; in the case of jihadism, they have no qualms about dying for the cause since Allah will reward them in Paradise. This dimension is what can decide radicalization, both individual and collective, and for this reason, they are considered fanatics in many circles (Martín de Pozuelo & Yitzhak, 2021).

Let it be clear that any of the jihadist groups does not simply respond to a current situation; rather, we must study them considering that they are the result of a long historical process embedded in Islam, which has been present in the Maghreb and the Sahel since the 7th century (Junquera Rubio, 2025: pp. 660-697). On the one hand, and on the other, Islam is also a sociopolitical ideology with many totalitarian elements, nuanced by a fundamentalist religious belief (Choueiri, 2001: p. 255).

Even before the decolonization of Africa, Islamic doctrinal foundations took root in what we now call modernity. Subsequently, the Quranic doctrine interpreted the role of the state and opted for a different vision and structure, distinct from what had been done in the West. Interestingly, whether we like it or not, an alternative emerged to both dictatorships and secular democracies, which were the predominant Western models.

[4]In the Islamic world, we have examples such as Ben Bella in Algeria; Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization; Ahmed al-Sharaa in Syria; and Mohamed Morsi in Egypt. In other regions, we find José Mujica, who acted as a Montonero guerrilla in Uruguay and became president, and Nelson Mandela, who rose from prison to become president of South Africa.

With the decolonization of the Middle East and Africa, European powers fostered the establishment of monarchies, of which only two remain: Saudi Arabia and Morocco. What has been said so far does not suggest that this sociopolitical ideology is one-dimensional; quite to the contrary, it is multifaceted, both in its doctrinal foundations and its methods of action. We cannot consider the regime of the ayatollahs[5] in Iran and propose that it is the same as that of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. Both are based on Quranic doctrine, but their methods are quite different.

Generally, even various scholars understand that the Islamic proposal is flawed in its relation to the Western doctrine of the state. They take this position based on the assumption that this project lacks experience, which is more of an isolated opinion than a widespread one. African jihadism presents distinctive characteristics, as it does not only recruit new members from among like-minded people; for example, many Christians are followers, which may seem incongruous to an observer, but not to those involved. Moreover, in the Sahel countries, especially in northern Nigeria, Christianity is viciously persecuted by jihadists (Echeverría Jesús, 2014: pp. 273-282). It also happens that, in times of upheaval and out of fear, some Christians collaborate with Boko Haram.

From an ethnic perspective, which is an important factor, the Kanuri[6] are the majority within the ranks of the jihadist movement controlled by Boko Haram, but this group does not exclude individuals from other nearby communities, such as the Hausa and Fulani, for example, nor Christians, since people from these groups confess to being followers of jihadism. It is well known that in Nigeria, Christians of the Fulani ethnic group are persecuted by jihadists, and this also occurs in the northern region with the Hausa who reside there (Diez Alcalde, 2015: pp. 1-22; Junquera Rubio & Pastor Martínez, 2016).

However, the success of jihadist groups is ensured by individuals already sympathetic to Islam, as these individuals are ideal for further indoctrination and for making them more faithful and militant. Jihadism proposes a project to change religious identity, in the sense that it must fill the void left by the failures and disillusionment stemming from Western society, from which a better reception and improvement in daily life were expected. This disappointment is redirected so that Islam becomes the new promise, and in this sense, jihadism presents itself as a new millenarianism (Sánchez Hernández, 2025: pp. 15-58).

In this context, jihadist groups pursue an extraordinarily complex ideological goal, which must include the following elements: 1) to propose a global jihad; 2) to set up Sharia law in any conquered territory; 3) to show an Islamic state (Habermas, 2008: pp. 3-20). They claim their international space, implement forced recruitment that transcends the national borders imposed by decolonization, and use

[5]An ayatollah is a cleric of the Shia branch who is attributed with wisdom in jurisprudence, Islamic philosophy, morality and especially knowledge of the Quran (Calmard, 2009; Luizard, 2014: p. 311).
[6]The Kanuri are mostly settled in the Nigerian state of Borno, have practiced Islam for centuries, and are heirs of the ancient Borno empire (Hiribarren, 2017).

this as a pretext to prove their hatred of the West and modernity. At the regional and local levels, Boko Haram is part of the macro-regional jihadist movement centered around Lake Chad.

We still lack precise data pinpointing the exact moment when jihadism appeared, and this stays a subject of debate, pending the consultation of archives that would clarify the matter. Nigerian police have traced its origins back to 1995, the year Abubakar Lawan founded a branch he called "Ahlulsunna wal Jma ah Hijra" at the University of Maiduguri. Later, Mohammed Yusuf assumed leadership in 2002, and since then the movement has become increasingly violent (De Montclos, 2012: p. 17).

The theory has also spread that Boko Haram originated in a mosque's Koranic school, attended by poor young people, and that poverty was the first motivation for becoming militants and belligerents. The political dimension came later; moreover, the first aim was to overthrow the Nigerian government, set up an Islamic state, and strictly enforce Sharia law in the 36 states of the Nigerian Federation. In this sense, he spoke out against the government, which he accused of promoting a secular state, arguing that the political elite, whom he considered corrupt, should be punished. Later, when he set up himself in neighboring states, he also aspired to create a caliphate, a wish that, for the moment, stays unfulfilled (Núñez Villaverde, 2025).

Boko Haram operates in an area near Lake Chad, and in response to this presence, the bordering countries have created the Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad (CBLT) to manage the border region, prevent conflicts, and implement sustainable development where possible; since, with actors like jihadists, little can be done (Issa, 2016: pp. 221-234). The terrorists' aim is to destroy the post-colonial state, and to achieve this, they weaken authority, reject peace, and have a certain capacity to change traditional military doctrine due to their fighting methods.

Alliances that have been in place, such as ECOWAS, have fractured in recent months, and the three countries of the Heart of the Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger) have withdrawn from it. All three have agreed with Russia to send mercenary troops, such as the Russian Wagner Group, which has been replaced by the Afrika Korps, also Russian. The mission of these troops is to cut terrorism, but they appear to be facing a challenging task (Junquera Rubio, 2025: pp. 660-697).

How is Boko Haram perceived at the regional level? Given the significant international activity, both diplomatic and military, in this case, due to its indiscriminate operation in neighboring countries with very porous borders, defense strategies are strained. Why do national leaders, whether heads of military juntas or elected officials, deny the presence of Boko Haram in their speeches and claim that the defeat of this jihadist group is imminent? We ask this question, which currently stays unanswered, because terrorists resurface when least expected.

Jihadists employ a strategy aimed at conquering and controlling territory, setting up their power within that domain. Consequently, for them, hostility is intended to cut existing borders, and to combine the new situation, they rely on fanaticism

expressed through terrorism and indoctrination. Furthermore, any other activity must be conducted to build the Islamic state. Domestically, the discourse focuses on teaching coreligionists the benefits of Sharia law, but this teaching does not take place in any madrasa, but rather in training camps or wherever best suits the interests of the leaders (Doosje et al., 2016: pp. 79-84). Radical Islamist identity proposes an identity based exclusively on the Quran, but this proposal is made through the exclusive use of violence. Consequently, this method inevitably influences international relations, not only in the northern regions of Cameroon and Nigeria, but practically from the African equator to the Mediterranean, since jihadists control a large part of the migration routes to Europe, and all those who pass through them must pay the corresponding toll and accept falling into the networks of influence of Boko Haram (Perianes Bermúdez, 2015: pp. 149-182; Junquera Rubio & Pastor Martínez, 2016; Ramos Varela, 2025).

Some geographical areas help terrorist operations due to the ease of access offered by nearby borders. This is the case of the entire Lake Chad region, which has conventional borders on the map and on paper, but in practice, jihadists cross them without passports or visas; moreover, they believe they can do so according to their own criteria, since one of their defining characteristics is denying the existence of these post-colonial borders. It is true that there have been reactions of rejection among the affected local populations, but it is no less true that Boko Haram ignores this resistance and, as soon as it can, operates in the opposite direction to regain the position it has temporarily lost (Matiz Rojas, 2025: pp. 169-190).

3.1. Border Regions between Cameroon and Nigeria with the Greatest Boko Haram Influence

Currently, the northwestern region of Nigeria is administered by two of its federal states: Borno and Adamawa, with the former bordering Niger and Chad at Lake Chad. These Nigerian territories correspond, from a border perspective to three Cameroonian provinces: Far North, encompassing its corresponding Lake Chad region, North, and Adamawa. These five territories have been sites of jihadist activity, and these groups have influence in these states and provinces, working as they see fit, since they never announce their intentions beforehand. It is easy to understand that "Adawara" in both states signifies that related people live on both sides of the border.

The factors that have favored the presence of Boko Haram in the states and provinces are numerous, and we will mention some of them. First, it should be noted that it appeared in Nigeria because this country offers opportunities for this terrorist group to become the main actor in all these areas. Since Boko Haram denies the existence of the conventional borders agreed upon after decolonization, this principle allows them to cross them without asking anyone's permission. Moreover, the jihadists understood that Lake Chad had to be included in the decision-making process.

Boko Haram is Nigerian by birth, and from this land it was to spread to the rest

of the world. It should be clear that the presence of jihad in the Sahel predates the emergence of this movement, but now Nigeria is the epicenter from which it must radiate to the rest of the planet, and it is in this sense that the proposal for a caliphate, which has failed for the moment, must be understood. On the other hand, Islam has a long history in Nigeria, since this belief took root in 1096, precisely in what is now Borno State (Olomojobi, 2013: pp. 1-3).

Furthermore, we also have the opinion that modern jihadism arose in Nigeria, in the Kano region, due to the influence of a Cameroonian, Muhammad Marwa, who preached insurgency against the central government then based in Lagos, which was the state capital. This self-proclaimed zealot advocated a radical, sectarian, and millenarian Islamist insurgency, employing the term Maitatsine ("the one who curses") since the 1980s. His preaching was directed against the central government, which he accused of handling social injustice and extreme poverty (Adesoji, 2010: pp. 99-119).

Police actions against the Maitatsine group contributed to their dispersal, but not their disappearance, as small, isolated groups formed in the northern regions of Nigeria. By 2000, these groups had coalesced under the name of the Nigerian Taliban, who demanded the imposition of Sharia law in the northern part of the federation and rejected, as pernicious, the influence of Western culture on society, especially in schools (Agbiboa, 2015: pp. 415-437).

We insist that it is necessary to consult Boko Haram's own archives to clarify the origins of this group. To date, no social scientist has had access to these documents, which possibly exist, but which, apart from their authors, no one has seen a single scrap of. Nevertheless, Nigeria has a long history, as we will now see in summary.

In the 19th century, Islam appeared among the Hausa people, settled in the northern regions. Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio, a well-educated Sufi of Fulani (or Peul) origin, preached a pure Islam to cut the syncretism resulting from the maintenance of certain ancestral tribal practices. He then preached a jihad against the local Hausa elites, whom he viewed as corrupt and infidels (Olomojobi, 2013: p. 4). Uthman Dan Fodio managed to set up a caliphate that was eliminated by British colonization in 1903. This situation is invoked by the current leaders of Boko Haram (Mens, 2016: p. 93). Consequently, jihadism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, as it has a long tradition (De Montclos, 2012: p. 5).

Islamist demands are characterized as political, since they aim to "monopolize Islam in order to reform the institutional systems and sociocultural patterns of a larger entity", and those at the forefront of this movement believe they must resort to violence to achieve these ends (Migaux, 2009: p. 825).

Although it may seem strange and unusual, political Islam, in all the countries that today appear as Sahelian, even considering larger African territories, appeared as the heir to a reformist movement that arose during the colonial period and was called Wahhabiism. This movement appeared in Africa after the Second World War, but it was founded by Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab in 1740, when he allied

himself with Muhammad bin Saud, founder of the current ruling dynasty in Saudi Arabia (Esposito, 2003; Commins, 2006).

The reform, to be set up in the Sahel after 1950, aimed to Islamize traditional societies that had abandoned their faith or were heavily influenced by European colonization. From then on, this trend had to be stopped and the opposite direction promoted; that is, African societies had to be re-Islamized. It was necessary to restore Quranic purity, and to achieve this, it was essential to cut local cults, identical or like Maraboutism, as the missionaries understood this to be the only way to return to purity (Halverson, 2010). Boko Haram claims this heritage.

On the other hand, jihadism manifests itself in three variants: 1) internal (fighting against Muslim regimes considered blasphemous); 2) irredentist (fighting for the liberation of a territory governed by non-Muslims); and 3) global (fighting against the West and total rejection of everything Western). In essence and in form, although it rejects any Western element, Boko Haram is also a syncretic and anti-Sufi movement, even though it advocates otherwise.

3.2. Factors That Contributed to the Internationalization of the Jihadist Group

From a historical perspective, two aspects must be considered: 1) the arrival, settlement, and expansion of Islam throughout the Sahel and, for our purposes here, in the regions near Lake Chad (Junquera Rubio, 2024: pp. 578-613, 2025: pp. 660-697); 2) the impact and influence of the Sokoto Caliphate. This set of events, quite heterogeneous, has its roots in the 18th century.

Fulani herders managed the spread of Islam in northern Cameroon, taking advantage of their search for grazing lands for their cattle herds. At the beginning of the 19th century, under the influence of the Sokoto Caliphate and its "fundamental state", the Emirate of Yola[7], a jihad was waged against the Hausa and Bornu leaders, whom they considered heretics (Njeuma, 1989: p. 19).

In northern Nigeria and Cameroon, the jihad aimed to set up both political and religious structures. Politically, they sought a government composed of Muslims who were as faithful as possible to Sharia law and the Quran. They also desired that their fellow believers be governed by coreligionists, thus freeing them from the constraints imposed by leaders who were not devoted to Islam. In this regard, the Maiduguri School of Theology was considered a privileged center.

Boko Haram is a terrorist organization like others of the same religious persuasion, advocating the dismantling of the state as it is currently structured. Its actions have increased its visibility, and people nearby are afraid, while those farther away think twice before venturing into the areas where its armed followers use. Moreover, at times they even defy national armies and confront them. In the case of Cameroon, the number of soldiers killed by the jihadists in recent years has been quite high. Retaliation is often conducted excessively.

[7]The Emirate of Yola was in what is now Adamawa State, in eastern Nigeria. It was founded by Modibbo Adama (Kirk-Green, 1958; Njeuma, 1978).

Repression in Nigeria is also severe. When security forces killed Mohammed Yusuf during his arrest in 2009, there was a period of inactivity of about two years, until 2011. However, the resumption of operations was much more brutal, and the struggle has become transnational, with operations taking place in Nigeria and Cameroon, as well as in Niger. After 2011, jihadist groups proliferated worldwide, eager to conduct terrorist acts; and, on occasion, they have succeeded.

Boko Haram has become a transnational group, working practically throughout the Sahel. There are sufficient reasons to explain its transnational status. Nigeria was able to suppress and decapitate the organization in 2009, but it later became clear that the army was weak and that the ambushes prepared by the jihadists allowed them to obtain weapons for free. Furthermore, to survive, they have also engaged in cattle rustling, hostage-taking, kidnappings for ransom, and so on.

The recruitment of new jihadists initially took place in Nigeria and the territories mentioned previously, but especially in the areas near Lake Chad. This does not prevent the possibility of members from other, non-neighboring nationalities joining the group. The group known as the Muslim Brotherhood of Sudan[8] has been declared a terrorist organization by the United States due to its ties with Iran, and the Sahelian countries are much closer to it. We mean that there are Sudanese jihadists using with Nigerians, Nigeriens, and Malians, for example. The US proposal was made on March 9, 2026, possibly after information leaked by General Michael Langley, who asserted that "the Sahel is now the epicenter of terrorism in the entire world" (Zuloaga, 2025).

New recruits are crucial to the strategy, as they have eased the expansion beyond any conventional borders and, of course, beyond Nigeria. These individuals provide intelligence from their home territories and help with attacks. Boko Haram's announcement of setting up a caliphate is a fiction that has created realities in its various recruitment efforts, and although it is an imaginary construct, its followers are willing to die for the cause.

The countries bordering Lake Chad, and especially Nigeria and Cameroon, have created international organizations to hold Boko Haram. The Commission du Bassin du Lac Tchad, for example, has curbed terrorist activities, since, as an international agreement between governments to combat a common enemy, the military forces of Nigeria and Cameroon cooperate to prevent their border from becoming a haven. It is in this context that we should understand the words of the Nigerian general, Roger ibn Nicholas, quoted earlier in this essay, when he said: "What I have done is completely close the borders; nobody enters or leaves Adamawa State".

However, from its founding by Yusuf to the present day, Boko Haram has organized and reorganized itself. It is currently a centralized organization structured in a pyramidal form. At the top of the pyramid is the governing body, composed of 32 members named "shura". Some emirs are part of this group, notably Iyad

[8]In English they are known as the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood and in Romanized Arabic they are known as Jamā'at al-Ikhān al-Muslimīin.

Ghjali, considered its ideologue (Benrahmoure, 2021). It is an assembly that decides in its meetings what should be done, especially when confronting the armies of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad (Esposito, 2003). We must not forget that Boko Haram is a transnational organization without its own territory, as one of its aims is to create a caliphate encompassing portions of the countries in which it uses.

What we cannot doubt is its capacity to mobilize and unite individuals who dream of being united precisely in this chimerical caliphate. This discourse is delivered by converging ideology with Sharia law. In this sense, the jihadists are close to the Salafists, for whom the Sunna and the Quran must be understood and interpreted not through individual reason, but exclusively as Muhammad showed (Segovia, 2007). The jihadist flag is the most recognizable logo for the entire group. It is black, standing for the Quran, and features two crossed Kalashnikov machine guns against this background. The black banner (Al-Raya) was used by the Prophet, but the profession of faith (Shahada), inscribed in white, was incorporated in the 18th century. Its success stems from its adoption by the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other organizations. Salafism advocates a return to its origins, those of the 7th century.

This way of thinking clashes with Sufis, whom it considers heretics. In this context, Boko Haram identifies with Salafism, since it "places the duty of jihad at the center of religious belief and considers that any Muslim is authorized to declare an obligatory and individual jihad (fard 'ayn) if the imam, or the leader of a Muslim state, fails to fulfill their religious obligations" (Rougier, 2008: p. 18).

By legitimizing ijtihad (independent reasoning) with reference to an original Muslim community, the jihadists, under Shekau's leadership, classify Christians as original infidels (Rougier, 2008: p. 86), and Muslims of other denominations (Sufis or Morabites) as "infidels of example or deterrence", whose blood it is permissible to shed. That said, armed and violent action against all of them is a legitimate decision. Regretfully for the world, but not for the jihadists, the rise of Boko Haram on the African continent stems from the fact that they have perpetrated numerous terrorist attacks in this territory. Between 2009 and 2013, jihadism rose to third place among all criminal groups using globally at the time, and in the last twenty years, terrorist organizations of an Islamic nature have handled more than 929,000 deaths and some significant economic costs (O'Connor, 2021).

3.3. The Influence of Boko Haram in Border Areas

Despite any contrary opinions, Salafist ideology has a future. The main reason for this advance lies in the contradictions of internal governance, as the Sahel countries are among the least developed, with elevated levels of poverty that drive populations to emigrate to Europe (Junquera Rubio & Pastor Martínez, 2016).

Furthermore, Boko Haram finds fertile ground in a region historically marked by errors in political, socioeconomic, and cultural governance. Despite widespread repression, Salafist ideology has managed to transcend its original stronghold,

northeastern Nigeria, and spread to neighboring countries, joining itself in several. The lack of initiatives on the part of governments further fuels ideologies like Salafism. Poverty, insecurity, corruption, illiteracy, and other problems abound in the Sahelian countries. These peculiarities help drive a change in mindset, and this shift is not difficult to understand.

In Cameroon, the Far North province has the highest monetary poverty rate of the country's ten provinces, with an estimated rate of 74.3%, compared to the national average of 37.5%. Furthermore, this territory is home to 35% of the 8 million people living in extreme poverty, despite standing for only 18% of the country's total population. Consequently, the area is characterized by deficient human capital and infrastructure and has the lowest rates of access to electricity in the country. The World Bank has aptly highlighted these inequalities and contrasts them with the educational model (World Bank, 2014: pp. 11-22).

Two factors are facilitating the expansion of Salafism: 1) persistent corruption in state, government, and local administrations, which, unfortunately, has become the preferred mode of governance throughout the Sahel; 2) the desire for wealth, coupled with capitalist ideology, has destabilized the internal economies of these countries. A clear example is Nigeria, where Lagos[9] was the country's economic megacity, but its replacement by Abuja produced a considerable crisis in northern cities, especially Kaduna, which had once been prosperous.

Salafism combats global neoliberalism and prioritizes people-centered care (Amghar, 2011: pp. 35-48), since this capitalist current increases social and economic inequalities; moreover, personalized attention is attractive to young people. In addition to the poor governance practiced by African governments, Boko Haram ideologues reiterate the main criticisms directed at the state and the contemporary capitalist system, particularly the lack of social justice and policies for the redistribution of wealth; that is, social justice is used to criticize and highlight the social chaos in which local economies find themselves (Small et al., 2010: pp. 6-27).

Boko Haram leaders warn of the corruption of Islamic values (al-qiyamal islamiyya) and the weakness of faith (al-iman), especially in contexts where traditional mechanisms of social and religious solidarity (sakkat) are no longer functioning. For this reason, they advocate for change to bring about a moral and spiritual rearmament, making individual virtue the prerequisite for good governance and collective salvation. The most immediate consequence is that new recruits come from groups excluded from education and the economy; that is, they are often illiterate or have incomplete primary education and are materially poor (United Nations, 2024; Banque Mondiale, 2024: pp. 7-10).

3.4. The War against Boko Haram

The fight against Boko Haram can be understood as a civil war, as it takes place within each of the affected states, in our case, Nigeria and Cameroon; But it can

[9]Abuja replaced Lagos as the capital of Nigeria in late 1991.

also be understood as a cross-border war, when national armies act against this organization in border areas, as is happening in the state and province of Adamawa (Nigeria and Cameroon); that is, the battlegrounds can be very diverse. From the jihadists' point of view, "civil war is global", since for them the territory is that of the caliphate, which does not exist unless it manages to impose itself (Agamben, 2015: pp. 30-31). But in this Jihadist surge, a "soldier of Allah" (Schwarzer, 2003) always appears, which can be understood as an irregular and territorial guerrilla fighter, working within a transnational logic, which does not prevent them from understanding that their struggle must encompass the entire world. In this sense, Salafism uses totalitarianism, which has shown the capacity to keep those involved in a state of permanent war, as Hannah Arendt points out, paraphrasing Leon Trotsky (Arendt, 1951: p. 435).

The existence of transnationalism and highly porous conventional borders limits the civil war thesis and reduces or increases, depending on the moment, the ability of an insurgent group to expand or reduce its actions in adjacent and geographically state-controlled territories. If successful, it could re-establish a caliphate, albeit more virtual than real, which could alter agreed-upon borders and then lead to conflicts between two or more states, as could occur throughout the Lake Chad region.

The war waged by Boko Haram is yet another element of a premeditated strategy to seize territory and set up its dominance; moreover, if possible, it contributes to weakening states in their border areas. The weakness displayed by the Nigerian armed forces between August 2014 and January 2015 proved a retreat of the state and an advance of the insurgency in Borno State. The territory seized by the jihadists encompassed parts of Nigeria, including Gwoza and Gambaru, near the border with Cameroon; Malam Fatori and Damasak, bordering Niger; and Baga and Monguno, near Lake Chad. At the beginning of 2015, Boko Haram controlled more than 30,000 km^2. However, it has never managed to gain control of any significant city in any of the states considered here (Berghezan, 2016: p. 7).

On the other hand, the territorial recapture of locations and cities between February and September 2015 by Nigerian, Chadian, and Nigerien armed forces proved insufficient to defeat the jihadists, who continue to operate. The presence of terrorists near Lake Chad led the involved states to create an organization called the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), and a shift in the military strategy of the four countries also occurred. However, the decisions made have been unable to stop terrorism, which persists.

In Cameroon, for example, the army evolved from being accustomed to defending borders to one focused on setting up security and stopping any threat in its tracks (Koungou, 2014: p. 14). For the Cameroonian state, the situation necessitated the creation of the 31st Motorized Infantry Brigade (BRIM), with its command post in N'Gaoundéré, and the relocation of the 32nd BRIM from Maroua to Kousseri, where it became the 41st BRIM, to provide responses closer to the center of the action. From a local perspective, a new police region appeared along-

side the division of the large Joint Military Region (RMIA), splitting RMIA 3 into two, resulting in RMIA 3 and the new RMIA 4, with their respective command posts in Garoua and Maroua.

Similarly, strategic planning was reoriented around two main operations: Operation "Emergency 4" and Operation "Alpha", led by the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), a highly trained elite force, to protect the border region; and the equipping of defense and security forces with the support of Cameroon's bilateral partners, such as China, the United States, France, Germany, Russia, etc.

What is clear is that the war, as planned by the jihadists, has posed new security challenges, as coalitions have had to be formed among the various states affected by this terrorism. Although it is a much-debated concept, military coalitions to reestablish border or cross-border security, as in the case we are analyzing, can create problems. It is true that Operation Logone, conducted in Cameroonian territory by the armies of Chad and Cameroon, showed the effectiveness of neighboring cooperation.

In Cameroon, the war against Boko Haram inspired a grassroots movement of citizens who readily collaborated with their armed forces. President Paul Biya's declaration of war against the jihadists on May 17, 2014, while visiting Paris to take part in the Conference of Heads of State for Security, triggered the mobilization of social resources and served as a wake-up call for the nation to confront terrorism (République du Cameroun, 2014).

Consequently, the Cameroonian nation's confrontation with the jihadist group resulted in a coalition between the state and the people, which has materialized in social movements that support state action through defense and security forces, with the support of vigilance committees. These are civilian structures external to the regular army, created in localities affected by insecurity, and organized and militarily trained by the army, with the aim of preparing their members or sympathizers for a struggle that, in some of its phases, is armed.

On the other hand, from both an internal and external perspective, we can understand that Boko Haram is a controversial organization, even problematic for the daily politics of all the countries in which it is present. However, it is not easy to predict what it will attack, and even less so when and how it will do so. The controversy surrounding Boko Haram as an active actor is less a matter of destructive capacity than a cognitive process among those it considers enemies. These enemies identify with the governments that control the conventional borders that appear with decolonization and who see this organization, perceiving it in one or more ways on either side of each border. Defeating Boko Haram is not about winning a battle, but about defeating a strategy that involves a program to emotionally dismantle it, which is no easy task in Islam, a creed deeply rooted among its adherents.

At the end of April 2026, jihadists carried out several attacks on various cities in the Republic of Mali, and among the dead was the Minister of Defense, General Camara. The capital, Bamako, as well as Kidal, Gao, and others, were attacked

simultaneously in a coordinated assault, intended to demonstrate their strength to the military junta. Similarly, in Nigeria, an attack occurred in the Guyaku district of Adawara State, where Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri confirmed the deaths of 29 civilians at the hands of Boko Haram terrorists. The attack appears to have taken place on April 27. These events have been widely reported in international media.

The affected governments can implement policies to stigmatize jihadism, enacting laws that portray it as an obscurantist group, cruel in its methods and destabilizing to the established order. If the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon were able to erase it from the map, it would disappear as an actor along the border, especially in the northern regions. The official discourse against Boko Haram includes schemes that promote national unity in each state and that citizens should live following peace, sovereignty, and democratic values—to put it in intelligible language. But the question we must ask ourselves is this: will they accept sincere dialogue and abandon violence to integrate as ordinary citizens in their respective states? This doesn't seem likely to happen in the short term. The governments on both sides of the border may reach an agreement, but it will almost certainly be rejected by jihadism.

This rejection is justified because two philosophies, two diverse ways of understanding life, are in conflict. One side believes they are defending modernity and should follow the path more or less taken by everyone else; the other rejects this worldview and clings to one that stems from a historical project that rejects difference, embraces religious intolerance, resorts to terror in all its forms, and positions itself directly against those who propose modernity in order to reject it. Not surprisingly, Abubakar Shekau, in his formal declaration of March 14, 2014, warned: "Know that now, for me, the world is divided into two categories: those who are with us and the others, whom I would gladly kill every time I meet them" (Apard, 2015: p. 63). In response, Cameroonian President Paul Biya declared: "The reality is simple. On one side, there is our side, the defenders of a modern and tolerant society that guarantees the exercise of human rights, including freedom of religion, as well as representative democracy" (République du Cameroun, 2014). In the short term, we do not believe that a point of convergence can be reached.

On the other hand, Boko Haram is closer to tyranny than to dictatorship and despises those who dare to defend human rights. In the social media, it is frequently pointed out that jihadism is a "horde of bloodthirsty criminals", a "true organization of crime and barbarism", a "barbaric sect", a "nebulous entity", an "obscurantist group", an "ideology of another era", "offers a civilizational regression", etc.

To what has been said, we add that the military tactic deployed by Hassan al-Sabbah (1034-1124), master of the Hashashin sect[10], a medieval precursor to jihadism, can be described as follows: "We must act in public, setting an example.

[10]The word Hashashim is polysemous, since it can be translated interchangeably as hashish smokers or murderers.

If we kill one man, we terrorize one hundred thousand" (Lockhart, 1930: pp. 675-696). Boko Haram is described as a perverse group, lacking faith and law, that attacks under cover of darkness, murders, burns entire villages, loots everything it can, kidnaps, and traffics people. It spreads terror even by murdering people inside buildings considered sacred, churches and mosques, shooting pregnant women, and showing contempt for any humanitarian decision proposed in any international convention.

The cruelties of this group make it easier for border villages to welcome and support the terrorists due to the fear they inspire. They don't do it because they identify with them, much less with them, but temporarily they must lower their heads, even if they disagree. The authorities know about these temporary hiding places; but, although they could act militarily, they don't for fear of cutting innocent civilians who could fall victim to friendly or enemy fire.

The speeches of the Nigerian and Cameroonian government authorities are geared towards their citizens prioritizing the role of modernist ideas, so that they reject Boko Haram; moreover, they use their rhetoric as a tool to differentiate, categorize, stigmatize, mobilize, and do whatever is necessary to portray this terrorist group as the enemy that is preventing solidarity, whether national or regional.

Conversely, Boko Haram's argument stems from a process of differentiation and classification, constructing a negative and repulsive otherness, completely alien to the community it claims to be. The Islam of the jihadists is not one of peace, harmony, and brotherhood. Fundamentalism recognizes neither national identity nor cultural diversity, which are values of modern society, even though it too has its flaws. Salafism seems to understand only uncontrolled violence. For his part, Cameroonian President Paul Biya clarifies his position to avoid confusion in his rejection of jihadist principles: "This is not at all a crusade against Islam nor an episode of any kind of clash of civilizations"; that is, the president does not favor jihadist-style aggression, but rather seeks to neutralize Boko Haram's violent actions to prevent further victims at the hands of this cruel group.

Anti-Jihadism has also appeared in those circles where it is rejected and its eradication is desired. The discourse against Boko Haram seeks to cut it through regional and international agreements, but this approach also has its limits, even when diplomacy is involved (Torregrosa López et al., 2016: pp. 67-79). In the case of Cameroon and Nigeria, high-level meetings to combat terrorism have led to visits by heads of state in both directions; that is, the Cameroonians visited Abuja and the Nigerians Yaoundé. The purpose was to seek common action to cut terrorism.

Discourse, understood as an ingredient that can be used to govern, proves the capacity to seduce and mobilize populations beyond national borders, since there is a motive and an aim that concerns the cross-border areas where the common enemy uses. One of the possibilities of this task is to generate armed solidarity, which is usually expressed in multiple ways, some of which we cite: 1) affective

solidarity, whether patriotic or derived from a nationalism of identification based on citizen demonstrations; 2) let's save our nation from those who endanger it; 3) demonstrations of attachment to the homeland, etc. In the case of Cameroon, one of the ways to proclaim solidarity in the fight against the internal enemy arose from a proposal made to achieve a political strategy, but only after the head of state spoke out against Boko Haram. The initiatives of support directed toward Paul Biya by social elites from various regions, intended to demonstrate their solidarity in the fight against jihadism, have as their main objective, at best, to achieve national unity, since this fight is understood as necessary; and at worst, to shield themselves from the potential internal enemy, assuming it exists. Something unusual must have been detected in Cameroon, since on August 31, 2014, the then Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Henri Eyebe Ayissi, called for a demonstration of support under the slogan "Lékié's Call for Total War Against the Foreign Islamist Sect and Its Accomplices in Cameroon", which was published in Obala[11].

This official discourse was criticized by Boko Haram as Westernized; so, it was unacceptable to this organization, which looks to set up new borders, destroying colonial ones and creating a caliphate. This desire has not yet materialized, but it remains one of its most coveted aims, and we do not know whether it will be achieved or not. However, what we can be certain of is that it has influence among rural and pastoral societies, though not yet among urban ones. Salafist ideology has the capacity to proper certain representative images characteristic of less educated societies, which have nonetheless adopted the proposed worldview, making it their own and allowing it to define their identity, rejecting any Western influence.

Jihadism, like any other similar organization working under the umbrella of ISIS, rejects the West, and when we use this term, we must add that it also opposes modernity. From its start, Boko Haram revealed its opposition to Western education and supported any break with the secular state. The rejection of Westernization, which is accused of embodying erroneous and perverse values, including libertinism, school education, environmental degradation, social segregation, and so on, is based on the premise that the only thing to be maintained is religious purity, since in this scenario the possibility of dialogue is nil.

To this, we add that the main criticism of Western modernity is that it has managed to build and perpetuate unequal development in the regions discussed here, as well as in the remaining parts of the Sahel, for example. In these areas, the West has imposed an educational model based on performance to integrate and insert these students in the short term into a capitalist market economy. In this sense, Boko Haram's Salafism is not misleading, since from the beginning it has denounced the school as a colonial remnant that must be eliminated.

However, Salafist discourse also has its dark side, and some Western elements

[11]Obala is a commune located in the province of Lékié.

and objects are readily accepted. At the time of his arrest in 2009, Mohammed Yusuf was wearing blue jeans, had a laptop computer, a luxury watch, a mobile phone, and large sums of money invested in the automotive sector; moreover, at least two of his children were enrolled at the Al-Kanemi public school in Maiduguri (De Montclos, 2012: p. 6).

If we consider this in the context of the war he is waging against everyone, we see that the weapons are Western, the vehicles they use to travel the roads and trails are also Western; even the Japanese Toyota pickup trucks are changed in Western workshops. Therefore, the tools they use are also Western. Let's say that speeches, however authentic they may be, also resort to fallacy, possibly to give reality to the traditional saying: there is nothing new under the sun, which has become internationalized in the Latin expression: nihil novum sub sole, but which comes from the Bible, specifically the book of Ecclesiastes (Eccl. 1: 9).

Boko Haram's Salafism is based on the book by Mohammed Yusuf, entitled Hazihi aqeedatun wa minhaju da'awatuna (This is our belief and method of calling), considered by its followers as essential to setting up the re-Islamization of Nigerian society at that time (Ele, 2018: pp. 13-19). Its dissemination was conducted using Western means and methods: mobile phones and social networks, with local, national, and international reach. Shekau himself promoted these platforms to spread his sermons (Kolawole, 2024: pp. 344-363). From the outset, jihadism was aware of the importance and influence of social media. Lacking television, a radio station was set up, hidden in the Sambisa Forest, to broadcast speeches to followers and sympathizers. This radio station was named al-Urwa al-Wuthqa[12] (Mane, 2016: p. 32).

3.5. Jihadism Has Proved Contacts with All Islamic Terrorist Groups, Drug Trafficking[13], and Organized Crime

As a further consequence of globalization, criminal history is being changed to become another dimension of power (Gayraud, 2017). Paradoxically, organized crime is now an essential tool in the war waged by jihadist groups in Africa. That said, can Islamic terrorism be equated with organized crime? There are opinions to suit all tastes, and each scholar places the emphasis where he believes he should (Sageman, 2008; Badar, 2011).

The connections are clear, except for those who choose not to see them. The United Nations issued Declaration 1373 on September 28, 2001, which states in point 4: "It notes with concern the close links between international terrorism and transnational organized crime and stresses the need to strengthen the coordination of efforts (…) to reinforce global action against this serious problem and the grave threat it poses to international security" (United Nations, 2001).

Before concluding our contribution for today, we wish to denounce an atrocity

[12]The expression al-Urwa al-Wuthqa should be translated as Stronger Spear.

[13]In recent years, Colombian and Mexican drug traffickers have established support bases on the West African coast to supply their European markets. We won't dwell on this in this essay, but we may reflect on it soon.

perpetrated by Boko Haram: newly recruited children are often ordered, under the influence of narcotics, to slit their parents' throats to prove their loyalty to the group and gain the respect and esteem of their peers. While we do not believe that Islam can justify this practice, the reality became known in Nigeria when these young people were detained and interrogated by security forces. We can consider influence yet another practice of child exploitation, as was the case with the schoolgirls kidnapped in Chibok in April 2014. Jihadists understand Sharia law in their own way, but nothing more.

4. Conclusion

In this essay, we propose two broad and contrasting views on borders. First, borders are understood as a fluid element: the more you change them, the more progress you achieve, and in this sense, civilized societies have no qualms about constantly altering them. Second, the border shared by Cameroon and Nigeria is a conventional boundary that appeared with decolonization and can be compared to others in Africa and beyond.

From antiquity to the formation of European states, the modification of conventional borders was an ongoing process. This process has not ended, since in the European Economic Community, after the Schengen Agreement, border control disappeared and free movement of people and capital was set up. This decision does not prevent police and judicial cooperation.

In the case of Cameroon and Nigeria, the border, along with that of other nearby and distant countries, should disappear if jihadists were to set up a Caliphate. However, until this happens, the conventional post-decolonization borders will remain, and their surveillance will even be implemented to prevent the movement of Salafists.

Finally, we believe that cross-border areas ease diverse movements of people, goods, philosophies, politics, and much more. In the current Sahel countries, not only in the two discussed here, the opposite scenario to what occurred in the United States of America at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries could unfold, since at that time, border modifications were understood as national progress. Should a modification arise on African soil due to jihadism, then the Caliphate would be a consequence of barbarism. However you look at it, the border is not just a shared space, but a constantly evolving process, and we don't know when it will finally solidify. This doesn't prevent it from being a valuable tool for scholars, easing historical, political, economic, religious, and social exploration.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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