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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Focusing on northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, this Special Report outlines the rise of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and the security and governance challenges in the wake of its possible decline. It was supported by USIP's Middle East and Africa Center.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Jibrin Ibrahim and Saleh Bala

Civilian-Led Governance and Security in Nigeria After Boko Haram

Summary

- Since the 1990s, Nigeria's development has been hindered by a series of violent conflicts with militant groups in the oil-rich Niger Delta, Boko Haram in the northeast, Igbo secessionists in the south, the Islamic Movement in Nigeria in the north, along with ongoing confrontations between farmers and herders.
- The Nigerian military has been deployed on internal missions in most of the country's thirty-six states to subdue an array of conflicts, especially in the northeast.
- Because the armed forces, supported by multinational efforts, have significantly degraded the capacity of the Boko Haram insurgency, and internally displaced people and refugees are returning to their communities, Nigeria now needs to plan for a transition to full civilian authority.
- Vigilante groups such as the Civilian Joint Task Force and organized hunters who have supported the fight against Boko Haram present a unique challenge to postconflict security.
- These issues are compounded by corruption and other dysfunction within police ranks, leaving a vacuum in civil provision of public safety.
- Increasing the size and capacity of the Nigerian police (as well as other official but non-military security forces) and improving its effectiveness is an urgent necessity.
- Additionally, Nigeria's youth, some of whom have been involved in the vigilante groups, are a vital demographic. Getting the buy-in of this demographic will require creating opportunities for them to fully participate in rehabilitating and rebuilding their communities.
- A new Public Protection Service Commission could provide a unified but flexible interagency cooperation mechanism for the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and the Nigeria Immigration Service to establish a single coordinated service for community stabilization and policing. It also could take in the Civilian Joint Task Force and other nonstate security actors.

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DECEMBER 2018

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Introduction

Nigeria's development has been hindered since the 1990s by a series of violent conflicts that have fluctuated—and too often escalated—in intensity. They range from the long-running militant movement in the Niger Delta over international oil extraction to the explosive Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast. Other conflicts include the Igbo secessionist movements, clashes between authorities and the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria, and confrontations between farmers and herders. Growing criminality and cattle rustling compound the violence and kidnapping for ransom has become widespread.

Many of the conflicts involve threats of direct armed confrontation with the state. All told, these simultaneous outbreaks of violence pose a direct challenge to political order in Nigeria. The humanitarian crisis that would result from a wider, more intensive conflict in Africa's most populous country could quickly spill across West Africa and the continent and give rise to an unmanageable flow of refugees.

The Boko Haram insurgency in particular cuts across the borders of Nigeria to Niger, Cameroon, and Chad—the region known as the Lake Chad Basin. The complications of collaborating across governments and other players has made this conflict particularly confounding to these countries. Through the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), the four countries are trying to cooperate on competitive resource issues related to Lake Chad, which has been drying rapidly and losing surface area. They also face a range of challenges to their democratic order and state legitimacy; powerful business groups frequently shift their alliances between the state and the insurgents based on who they think can best protect trade and provide stability. This influential merchant class is too often overlooked in assessing conditions and the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

Boko Haram's affiliation with the self-styled Islamic State extremist movement adds the dimensions of international terrorism and connections with violence in other countries of West Africa. Groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which originally operated mainly in Algeria but has extended its tentacles into sub-Saharan Africa, contribute to tensions as weapons and extremist ideologies spread across the region. Even Boko Haram is fracturing, compounding the complications of resolving the conflict and establishing stability.

The Boko Haram insurgency, furthermore, is both a symptom of state fragility and exacerbates that vulnerability. Long or repeated struggles against a range of economic, social, and political forces have sapped the Nigerian government's capacity to carry out basic constitutional functions, such as providing for the security and welfare of its citizens. As a result, the social contract between the state and its citizens is frayed, and the government's legitimacy is eroding.

Amid this complex web of issues, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari is seeking to consolidate military gains against Boko Haram by implementing a sweeping program of humanitarian relief and social and economic assistance. Known as the Buhari Plan, it was unveiled in June 2016 and is “designed to achieve the peace, stability, socio-economic rehabilitation, reconstruction, and long-term sustainable economic development of the region.”¹

The mission is daunting. The government estimates that the conflict with Boko Haram has affected some 14.8 million men, women, and children.² The complexity of the conditions faced by local communities and the national and international authorities and organizations seeking to help them rebuild raises a number of specters, including the prospect of backsliding and recurring conflict: “In complex wars, it can be unclear what winning might even look like.”³

One of the most important lessons from the war in Afghanistan is that defeating insurgents or terrorists is not an end in itself. The United States was able to wield its military “shock and awe,” alongside local forces, to dislodge the Taliban regime in 2001. But the

Map 1.



Areas of the Lake Chad Basin adversely affected by the Boko Haram crisis include communities in northeastern Nigeria, Cameroon's Far North, western Chad, and southeast Niger. Map adapted from artwork by Peter Hermes Furian and taras79/Shutterstock.

lack of a comprehensive peacebuilding agenda to consolidate those gains has allowed the conflict and associated violence to continue.⁴

In conceptualizing the best approach to ending the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin, especially in Nigeria, the goals cannot be limited to defeating Boko Haram. They must extend to winning the peace. State building and the cultivation of an inclusive society are vital so that citizens feel they belong and have a fair chance at a livelihood. The interrelated issues that created the crisis—state fragility, poverty, competition over Lake Chad's overstretched resources, violent extremism, and so on—must be addressed comprehensively.

One major element of such an evolution must be a transition away from the Nigerian military's dominance in the northeast and restoration of civilian control of governance and security. Such a process will be complex and needs to take into account the origin and progression of the conflict, the key stakeholders and institutions involved, and the context in which they will interact.

The Boko Haram Insurgency and the State's Response

The ongoing eleven-year Boko Haram insurgency is one of the most violent, destructive, and debilitating of the nation's internal security challenges since independence. The civil war of 1967 to 1970, often known as the Biafran War, had higher levels of casualties but was not as protracted.

The sect, which calls itself Jama'atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da'awati wal-Jihad, or Group of the Sunni People for the Calling and Jihad, is commonly known as Boko Haram—which loosely translates as “Western education is forbidden.” It emerged in the early 2000s in northeastern Nigeria among the Kanuri ethnic group and its neighbors. The Kanuri, an ethnic elite, ruled a powerful, Muslim multiethnic state known as the Kanem-Bornu Empire for about nine hundred years as various ethno-political forces competed for power and influence. The present insurgency needs to be understood within this historical context.⁵ A further dimension is a tendency toward apocalyptic beliefs similar to those of long-established Muslim communities in the Sahel, in which a Mahdi figure, a spiritual savior, is always expected to arrive to restore well-being and justice. In the meantime, the sect aims to reestablish a caliphate governed by “true” Islamic law to replace Nigeria’s Western constitutional system.⁶ The group turned to insurgent violence in 2009, and in August 2011 staged a deadly car bomb attack on the United Nations (UN) office in Abuja. By 2015, the Institute for Economics and Peace’s annual Global Terrorism Index ranked it as the world’s deadliest militancy.⁷

In 2009, the Nigerian government under President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua intervened by launching a primarily military effort aimed at destroying the insurgents. The succeeding administration of President Goodluck Jonathan intensified these operations, pursuing the same goal of destroying the insurgents as well as regaining territory, stabilizing the region, and asserting state authority.⁸

In May 2013, authorities declared a state of emergency in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.⁹ Unlike previous states of emergency declared in Plateau State in 2004 and Ekiti State in 2006, civil authority was not taken from the local elected officials. But Boko Haram’s killings, destruction, and threats drove out many officials, as well as traditional rulers, who feared for their lives. This created a legitimacy vacuum, and the insurgents quickly took advantage to exercise de facto authority. State governors retained their roles as chief security officers, as provided for in the Nigerian constitution. But because they had no control or oversight over national security agencies, and the Nigerian military had unfettered authority in the theater of operations, their roles were severely weakened. In 2014, the state of emergency lapsed, and the Nigerian House of Representatives refused to renew it.¹⁰ Military operations continue, however, thwarting the restoration of full civil authority.

In 2015, when President Buhari took office, he quickly scaled up military operations against Boko Haram as part of a policy to pursue security, safety, peace, and economic revitalization in the northeast. This goal of degrading and destroying the insurgents and reclaiming territory led to counterinsurgency offensives by the Nigerian military known as Operation Lafiya Dole, a follow-on to Operation Zaman Lafiya and its predecessor offensives conducted under the Jonathan administration.¹¹ In each operation, the Nigerian military cooperated and coordinated with neighboring countries’ forces via the Multinational Joint Task Force, originally established in 1994 to check cross-border crime and banditry. In 2015, the task force was reconstituted—under the auspices of the African Union and the four governments of the LCBC—to meet the challenge of the Boko Haram insurgency.¹²

As a result of the coordinated regional military push and fracturing within Boko Haram, the number of people killed in terrorist acts in Nigeria dropped from 4,940 in 2015 to 1,832 in 2016. Deaths in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger also declined 75 percent.¹³

According to the Nigerian government, all territory within its borders that had been held by Boko Haram had been reclaimed by late 2017.¹⁴ However, the Mamman Nur faction of Boko Haram, which has declared affiliation to the Islamic State, was still operating in some areas of the Lake Chad Basin. This faction is believed responsible for the abduction of 110 girls from the Dapchi secondary school in Yobe State on February 19, 2018. After a series of negotiations with the government, 105 of the girls, as well as another girl and one boy who

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also had been held by the group, were released on March 21, 2018. Five of the abducted girls reportedly died, and the only Christian girl who had been seized was still being held.¹⁵

In addition, the ravages of Boko Haram and the military operations to defeat the group have left 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 229,000 refugees (many of them in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger), and widespread property destruction. As of April 2018, aid organizations recorded more than 1.4 million returns in Nigeria, including more than 1.3 million IDPs and nearly 115,000 refugees.¹⁶

Understanding that a long-term solution requires more than military action, the Nigerian government is taking a multisectorial approach involving state, nonstate, and international actors. As the conclusion of counterinsurgency operations comes into sight, Nigerian authorities and the Lake Chad regional alliance must quickly evolve and define a comprehensive postconflict security and governance strategy that includes a structure for sustaining peace and security under civil control.

The military still provides substantial urban and rural security in liberated areas and conducts operations to continue degrading the capabilities of the insurgents who, since June 2017, have been staging sporadic attacks from camps scattered across difficult terrain. The burden of securing liberated areas is overstressing the military and impeding its primary responsibility of guaranteeing territorial integrity. The Armed Forces of Nigeria (Army, Navy, and Air Force), which have an estimated force strength of 181,000 personnel, are deployed in thirty-two of the nation's thirty-six states.¹⁷

Compounding the problem of numerical capacity of the armed forces is their traditional focus on protecting a regime rather than civilians. The same mindset weakens interagency coordination and cooperation among these forces because working across borders can seem contrary to the primary aim of protecting the government. The lack of focus on serving civilians means that most residents of the northeast have, over the decades, seen little genuine state security or any real government services, including development projects.

The Rise of Nonstate Defense Groups

An important corollary to the official military effort has been emergence of the so-called Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a militia set up to protect communities from Boko Haram, alongside local hunters and other vigilante groups. The LCBC governments have leveraged these nonstate actors extensively in the Boko Haram counterinsurgency effort, though levels of trust in them have varied.¹⁸ As the counterinsurgency ebbs and postconflict peacebuilding gets under way, the civilian composition of the CJTF raises many questions. From its inception, these units varied in capability, composition, and allegiance—some were informal, others state-supported, still others semi-independent—and often lacked accountability.

The roots of the CJTF can be traced to early 2013 in Maiduguri, when Boko Haram escalated its use of terrorism against Islamic clerics who contested their interpretation of Islam and against civilians who worked for the state. As Boko Haram began wielding IEDs against such “soft” targets, local groups of young men armed with sticks (*yan gora* in Hausa) established vigilante groups to patrol and protect their communities in Borno State when the state seemed incapable of doing so. The Nigerian military ultimately came to rely on the CJTF in some areas for intelligence gathering and help in manning checkpoints. The CJTF played a critical role in preventing the fall of Maiduguri to the insurgents. It also developed a complete administrative structure, including sectors and units covering local government administrations and wards. The youth force is estimated to number about twenty-six thousand volunteers in Borno State alone.

These civilian vigilantes use their knowledge of local inhabitants, geography, languages, and cultures to great effect. However, while mostly helpful so far, the CJTF could become an internal security problem during the transition away from military control, particularly in border areas where smuggling is lucrative and small arms are easy to obtain.¹⁹ Their actions at times have spurred concern over human rights abuses, in the process also discrediting the military and drawing the attention of international organizations.²⁰

The active participation of women in all aspects of these militia activities in the northeast is important to recognize.²¹ Women have been deeply involved in the counter-insurgency—and not just as victims. Aisha Bakari Gombi, a former antelope hunter, for example, caught the nation’s attention as a tracker employed against the insurgents.²² These diverse roles for women must be taken into account in designing new administrative and social structures in the otherwise traditionally patriarchal societies of the northeast.

In the same way that Boko Haram reflects state fragility and the corresponding need for order and services, so does the CJTF, only with less radical notions of what local governance should be. Where Boko Haram would impose strict Islamist rule, most members of the CJTF would be inclined toward a constitutional form of political administration and security governance. Going forward, the role of vigilante groups, as well as other nonstate security actors such as local hunters in the counterinsurgency against Boko Haram, raises two issues. The first is how to establish frameworks for accountability and ultimately bring these units under community and state control. The second is how to develop a culture of emphasizing the safety and security of citizens. Although civilian protection was the original impetus for the CJTF, some units have long lost sight of that goal and shifted to protecting power brokers of one kind or another.

Governance and Security in the Lake Chad Basin

The Lake Chad Basin Commission was established in 1964 by Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon to ensure sustainable use of Lake Chad and the fertile surrounding land as well as to promote regional cooperation and security.²³ All four nations are developing countries characterized by varying levels of stability and socioeconomic concerns. All have experienced violent conflict, from decades of guerilla activity in Chad, to the Tuareg rebellions and several coups in Niger, to ongoing clashes in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon.

Lake Chad is an inland waterway measuring about 17,000 square kilometers, but its drainage basin covers some 2,335,000 square kilometers, extending into Algeria and to the border of Libya to the north, to Sudan in the east, and to the Central African Republic in the south.²⁴ It is the major freshwater source in a mostly arid, Sahelian region, and its economic potential has been recognized for a long time. A key part of the military force confronting the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria is under the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force, which most recently has operated under the African Union and the LCBC.²⁵

The complex ethno-religious nature of the immediate Lake Chad Basin and the equally complex historical alliances that define identity are key factors in governance in the region, given the potential for ethnic rivalries and politicization of nonstate actors. Conflicts can also break out between informal groups maintaining checkpoints and traditional merchants. These reasons highlight the necessity of developing a new strategy to confront the unique problems of the region, backed by an efficient coordination and cooperation mechanism that can hold these nonstate actors accountable and gradually absorb them.

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Toward Citizen-Focused Security and Governance

Given the complex history of Nigeria and the region and the challenges to come, each Lake Chad Basin state needs to formulate a comprehensive civilian security master plan. The June 2016 Buhari Plan for the Rebuilding of the Northeast—which the government adopted in January 2017 and is to be implemented through the Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative—includes a safety and security component designed around a military-led operational strategy.²⁶

The civilian security master plan should include holistic security-sector reform emphasizing citizen protection as well as community-level input delivered under close civilian oversight. The ethnopolitical mix of the region demands that civilian protection include both judicial and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and that traditional leaders and institutions are involved in the process.

At the center of this plan should be a Public Protection Service Commission (PPSC), a transitory framework with a ten-year lifespan. Its work in northeastern Nigeria could be a pilot for potential expansion to other parts of the country. It would address the challenges common to early stages of peacebuilding as well as Nigeria's particular challenges in law enforcement and justice. It would also serve as a unified but flexible interagency cooperation mechanism for the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and the Nigeria Immigration Service to establish a single coordinated service for community stabilization and policing. Although the focus is a civil security structure, it is important that the military is represented at the PPSC through its transition period because of the persistent military threat and risk of reescalation.

The CJTF and any other vigilante units operating in the northeast would be subordinated to the PPSC, injecting much-needed accountability for those groups and helping members get the support they need—such as training—to engage productively with society and the regional economy. The community-centric nature of the PPSC should be emphasized to encourage citizens to come to the commission with issues and to ensure that they get prompt attention. The governors of the region should chair the PPSC and meet biannually.

The postconflict management of nonstate security groups is not a new issue and is dealt with extensively under international humanitarian law and the UN system. The UN could provide valuable guidance, particularly to the process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). A DDR process requires intensive steps, such as analyzing the strengths and potential roles of these groups, identifying key personnel, establishing mechanisms to accomplish each stage, and providing administrative oversight with the goal of subsuming the CJTF and other vigilantes into the PPSC.

The reality of the youth bulge within a general population explosion in Nigeria, along with resource competition and ethnic strife, underscores the necessity for a proactive, youth-centric security policy. For the most part, Boko Haram insurgents and the members of the CJTF who have opposed them are in the same age demographic.²⁷ Getting the buy-in of this demographic for any transition to peace requires creating opportunities for them to fully participate in rehabilitating and rebuilding their communities. Another need is to deradicalize and reintegrate both repentant and defeated insurgents who have laid down their arms, to avoid renewing resentments over perceived favoritism to the CJTF.

Economically, the Lake Chad Basin needs to be revitalized as an economic cluster, formalizing trade that has been going on for centuries and making it more efficient. The vulnerability of the population to extremist indoctrination and recruitment is due in part to poverty and the inaccessibility of key economic benefits such as collateral for bank loans. A specific program of economic resuscitation of the zone is therefore required.

For a truly civilian-led PPSC, the civil service should be the hub of administration. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the civil service in the northeastern states, as in most of Nigeria, is compromised by institutional weakness caused by poor recruitment, career planning, and motivation that have in turn led to corruption. A special civil-service sector reform program would be necessary under the civilian protection master plan, to run concurrently with the recommended security sector reform (SSR). Attention should be given to rebuilding leadership capacity and revamping the required general staffing of the state and local emergency management agencies because they are—and will continue to be—the first points of contact for relief, resettlement, and trauma management for survivors of the conflict.

The ultimate goal of civilian protection will require securing local communities against armed and IED attacks and protecting key personnel, institutions, infrastructure, logistics bases, and trade and transportation routes. Specifically, high-priority areas should include those that serve as soft targets with high-impact potential for insurgent attacks, such as markets, hospitals, places of worship, and schools. Additionally, security forces should consider threats such as gender-based violence, narcotic-related crimes in urban areas, cattle rustling in rural areas, illegal arms trading, human trafficking, and the inevitable property conflicts that arise as refugees and displaced people seek to return home and reclaim their land.

Finally, a full transition to civilian administration requires addressing and redressing crimes and atrocities committed by the military and other federal forces, as well as nonstate security organizations involved in the fight against Boko Haram. Where operations flouted rules of engagement and violated human rights, an avenue for quick resolution and compensation of grievances is the only bulwark against a new cycle of resentment and violence.

Statistics show that at the height of the insurgency in September 2015 almost two million people were displaced in Nigeria's three northeast states. Borno alone counted 1,650,799 internally displaced persons and even a year later recorded thirty-two IDP camps.²⁸ In late 2016, the government sought to take advantage of the unprecedented military successes against Boko Haram and planned to close most of the IDP camps by May 2017. Some IDPs are returning home, but no camps have been closed as hoped because of continuing infrastructure, humanitarian aid, and security issues. The police were prime targets in the Boko Haram insurgency's early days, and any postconflict peacebuilding arrangement for the northeast needs to take into account the prospect of hundreds of thousands of citizens returning to communities that have not had functioning law enforcement for years. Bringing back the police is therefore an imperative in restoring civilian-led governance and security.

The police were prime targets in the Boko Haram insurgency's early days. Bringing back the police is therefore an imperative in restoring civilian-led governance and security.

The Police and Return to Civilian-Led Governance

Nigeria's internal security infrastructure is made up of the Nigeria Police Force, the lead agency for law enforcement, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, which is charged with protecting critical national infrastructure and handling related disaster management. The protection architecture for the northeast in the immediate term would be designed to combine the NPF with the NSCDC in policing.

The key obstacles are twofold. First, the capacity of Nigerian police and other official but nonmilitary security forces has eroded over time due to severe resource constraints, attacks by insurgents, and a mindset that prioritizes regime or VIP protection. Second, as the military has sought or been assigned to fill the gaps, Nigerian society has effectively become accustomed to militarized security services and thus lost the habit of civilian-led security provision. Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai has noted frequently that the military now is engaged in internal operations in almost all of Nigeria's thirty-six

states, seeking to quell not only the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, but also the militancy in the Niger Delta, as well as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and armed robbery.²⁹

The NPF no longer regularly responds to violence or civil unrest. A case in point emerged in the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the December 2015 clash between the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) and the Nigerian Army.³⁰ The commission found that the Nigeria Police were aware of the excesses of the IMN, including instances of murder reported to the force that it failed to prosecute or even make arrests. Nigeria's thirty years of military rule created a climate in which the police did not receive adequate resources for development. Police credibility also dropped as it resorted to shortcut methods based on brutality rather than painstaking investigation and adherence to the rule of law.³¹ The use of torture and degrading treatment of suspected criminals in local police units became widespread.³² More recent research confirms that this trend persists.³³

Nonetheless, the police are the principal criminal investigation agency responsible for investigating all crimes covered by penal and criminal codes, hence the need to rehabilitate the force and make it functional. According to Mike Okiro, the chairman of the Police Service Commission, Nigeria has about four hundred thousand police officers.³⁴ However, a significant percentage of them are not available for routine police work because more than 150,000 are assigned to guard VIPs and others who ordinarily would not qualify for police protection. Other officials say that the real picture is even more bleak. The assistant inspector-general of police for Zone 5 in Benin City in southern Nigeria, Rasheed Akintunde, said that only 20 percent of police officers are engaged in the core duties of protecting lives and ensuring the peace. "The remaining 80 percent are just busy providing personal security to some 'prominent people.'"³⁵

Nigeria's thirty years of military rule created a climate in which the police did not receive adequate resources for development. Police credibility also dropped as it resorted to shortcut methods based on brutality.

Imperative of Police Reform

The way forward for the police has been extensively mapped by three police reform panels that have done extensive work on what needs to be done to improve performance. They are the Dan Madami-led commission in 2006 during the Obasanjo administration, the Yar'Adua government's assessment headed by M. D. Yusuf in 2009, and the Jonathan administration's study led by Parry Osayande in 2012. All these initiatives reported the same core problems: too few personnel and too little funding for operations, poor training, dilapidated training institutions and barracks, limited firearms skills and related frequent shooting mishaps, and the obligation that officers pay for their own uniforms. Perhaps the most important factor is the deep culture of corruption that has resulted in salaries being unpaid because they are diverted elsewhere.

Had these problems been addressed over time, Nigeria could have significantly improved the quality of its police service and reduced the need to rely on the armed forces for internal security. Previous attempts to address some of the issues failed. In 2001, for example, a presidential directive was issued to recruit forty thousand personnel annually for three consecutive years. The police training institutions, however, could accommodate only fourteen thousand. The result was a grossly compromised recruitment process that dramatically lowered standards. The 2006 presidential commission found that, although the NPF had specific physical requirements, "corruption of the recruitment procedure has in recent times allowed for the enlistment of unsuitable candidates, including suspected criminals, people of doubtful background, over-aged and under-height persons, and people with physical deformities," presumably to a degree that prevented them from effectively carrying out their duties.³⁶

That the three reform panels led to little change might be due in part to their each being composed of senior serving or retired officers but no noncommissioned officers.³⁷ This neglect denied policemen in the lower ranks a chance to have their views heard and factored into any

reform program, even though they were most affected by the cited failures and other issues. Any future reforms need to prioritize resources and training for the rank and file.

Nigeria's inspector-general of police, Ibrahim Idris, recently called for the recruitment of an additional 155,000 personnel to provide adequate security across the country. He also proposed recruiting thirty-one thousand cadets annually over five years. The additional force would bring the country in line with the recommended UN ratio of one officer per four hundred citizens.³⁸

Despite these serious problems, the police retain a certain measure of trust among the citizenry. Nigerians still frequently call police not only to report crime, but also to settle quarrels and collect debts, for example. Any significant improvement could therefore help create an atmosphere in which the institutions of democracy could grow stronger. A critical step would be to engage the Nigerian Communications Commission on the imperative for all telephone service providers to ensure that the universal emergency number, 911, works on their networks. Finally, a public education and communications campaign, backed by serious action to carry out the NPF slogan, "The Police Is Your Friend," could strengthen community support as well as promote crime prevention. Citizen cooperation, including for intelligence gathering, is especially crucial as the insurgents resort increasingly to hit-and-run tactics in which small groups attack unarmed civilians or military formations in scattered locations with small arms fire or suicide bombers.

Physical security of communities and their inhabitants also could be improved as many communities in the northeast rebuild following the destruction of houses and settlements by Boko Haram or by the fight to subdue the insurgency. This brings an opportunity for rethinking settlements, security, and community more holistically. In much of northeastern Nigeria, settlements are scattered, often just a few hundred meters apart from one another. This physical distribution leaves settlements highly vulnerable to hit-and-run attacks. Settlements, villages, and communities should be rebuilt to be more compact and closely concentrated for improved security. New security protocols also need to be developed for public gatherings such as congregational prayers, funerals, and marriage and naming ceremonies to prevent suicide bombings and other insurgent attacks.

Overall, the military, police, and other security and intelligence agencies need to develop new doctrines and capabilities for more effective detection and response to evolving security vulnerabilities. That means specialized training of soldiers, police, intelligence officers, and other security agents must be continuous, and their weapons, strategies, tactics, and rules of engagement must evolve accordingly.

Recommendations

Setting Nigeria on a path toward sustainable civilian-led governance will require serious and significant reforms by the government of Nigeria, the Lake Chad Regional Commission, and the Nigerian security services. The heaviest burden of reform falls on the government of Nigeria, which could begin by setting up an interagency Public Protection Service Commission for northeastern Nigeria, as part of the comprehensive peacebuilding strategy under the Buhari Plan for the northeast. The PPSC would be a unified but flexible interagency cooperation mechanism for the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and the Nigeria Immigration Service.

The government should also adopt and implement a strategy to demilitarize the region over the short and medium terms to reestablish community confidence in civilian security institutions and respect for the rule of law. In parallel, it should design and implement holistic security sector reforms to increase the capacity of the police, the judiciary, and correc-

tions agencies to meet the special challenges arising from the insurgency since its inception and likely continuing at some level in the future. The SSR program should be designed to shift the service mindset of these agencies toward citizen protection.

Civil service reforms should be designed and implemented to reprofessionalize all levels of the service to enable government personnel to more effectively support security governance and postconflict community programs. Concurrently, a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration framework should be established for northeastern Nigeria, as set out under the Buhari Plan, to focus on skill acquisition for the region's youth that will allow them to contribute to the rebuilding of the region, and provide incentives for small- and medium-size enterprises. The corresponding DDR program should include recruitment of willing and qualified members of the Civilian Joint Task Force and organized hunter groups into the Nigerian Army, Navy, and Air Force and the various civilian security forces such as the NPF and federal and state fire services.

The government also needs to create a comprehensive poverty-alleviation strategy aimed at recharging the economy of the Lake Chad Basin as an economic cluster over the medium and long term and reviving agricultural industries that are traditional to the region—specifically grain production, animal husbandry, and fishery. This would require working with other countries of the Lake Chad Basin under the Lake Chad Basin Commission, so that no one country claims control of the lake's resources.

Incorporating understanding of the region's history and culture as important factors would help form positive narratives that can support postconflict efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. Relatedly, the government should formalize a more open flow of knowledge and expertise between academia and policymakers in carrying out the strategy. Part of this effort would be to ensure that traditional institutions as well as gender-based civil society organizations play a prominent role in implementing every element of the strategy.

Finally, a transparent redress, justice, and reconciliation program over extrajudicial actions committed by state and nonstate actors against citizens during the counterinsurgency is central to making citizens feel secure and confident of and in state protection moving forward.

Separately, the Lake Chad Basin Commission should consolidate the Multinational Joint Task Force structure within a regional defense and security framework, focusing on reducing cross-border crime such as small arms proliferation, illicit drugs smuggling, and human trafficking. It also needs to drive the multinational effort needed to recharge Lake Chad and transform it over the long term into an economic resource that will provide genuine opportunity for member states.

The list of recommendations for the Nigeria Police Force starts with revisiting the reports of the three reform panels and issuing a white paper that stipulates clear deadlines for financing, expanding, training, and equipping the police. The NPF should also consider improving and expanding its Mobile Police Force Unit to help address the problems of widespread violence. The unit should be well trained in human rights and humanitarian law, and should gradually replace the army in conflict areas. Recruitment into the NPF should be based on merit, good character, and minimum educational requirements. Police training institutions should be improved, well funded, and properly equipped. The NPF should be professionalized through capacity building, improved compensation, and procurement of necessary equipment, especially for proper management of civil disorder. This management should include periodic reviews of personnel salaries and benefits needed to enhance their welfare.

The NPF also needs to address the issue of police practices through regular training for police officers on intelligence gathering and proper techniques of interrogation. The police code of conduct merits a review to improve standards, ethics, and compliance with human rights and humanitarian law. Police-citizen relations should be enhanced with regular interactive forums in local communities, similar to village and town meetings, providing venues for

both sides to discuss key issues and build mutual confidence. Periodic bulletins or newsletters should be provided to inform the public about crime, missing-person security alerts, ongoing investigations, and other information to maintain open communication channels.

International partners should provide technical support and funding to comprehensive postconflict peacebuilding programs for the Lake Chad region undertaken by the government of Nigeria and the LCBC states, especially in the areas of security-sector and civil-service reform, with a focus on developing a citizen-centric security governance culture in the relevant institutions. They should also provide technical and financial support to the DDR process for northeastern Nigeria, with special focus on reintegrating and improving the prospects of members of the CJTF and other young members of vigilante groups. Just as important is supporting government and civil society organizations in advocacy for community-based socioeconomic and psychosocial programs, factoring in traditional institutions and gender issues to promote sustainable peace and reconciliation.

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ISBN: 978-1-60127-750-3

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