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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> Conditions perpetuate across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions that favor the endurance of violent extremism; however, through advances in governance and behavior, we could mitigate current extremism, the Islamic State in Western Africa Province (ISWAP), for several decades. Context and evidence to reaffirm this claim are contained herein, which points to greater implications on addressing radicalization broadly, and ends with prescriptions for both governments and tactical commanders. First, one must grasp a history of the Lake Chad Basin to understand that the conditions for Boko Haram's rise into violent extremism did not occur spontaneously. We also find that Boko Haram also adjusted alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and al 'Sham (ISIS) to declare a western region of control, ISWAP. The situation in northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin provided fertile ground over centuries of conflict. With history covered, the paper considers varying schools of thought to counter violent extremist insurgencies with a particular focus on the conditions leading to violence. Next, the paper analyzes Nigerian government responses and those of coalition partners over the past half-century. Lastly, drawing lessons derived from Lobban, Byman, and Cronin, I provide courses of action to counter ISWAP today, largely by addressing the underlying causes. Moreover, the prescriptions conclude with suggestions for commanders posted across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, operational leaders within the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), and lastly for African governments and coalition state departments to consider toward removing dissent and grievance fostering operations.					
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**Boko Haram's Succession into the Islamic State of the West African Province:  
General Conditions for Emergence and Continuation of Violent Extremism**

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## Introduction

Conditions perpetuate across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions that favor the endurance of violent extremism; however, through advances in governance and behavior, we could mitigate current extremism, the Islamic State in Western Africa Province (ISWAP), for several decades. Context and evidence to reaffirm this claim are contained herein, which points to greater implications on addressing radicalization broadly, and ends with prescriptions for both governments and tactical commanders. First, one must grasp a history of the Lake Chad Basin to understand that the conditions for Boko Haram's rise into violent extremism did not occur spontaneously. We also find that Boko Haram also adjusted alongside the Islamic State in Iraq and al 'Sham (ISIS) to declare a western region of control, ISWAP. The situation in northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin provided fertile ground over centuries of conflict. With history covered, the paper considers varying schools of thought to counter violent extremist insurgencies with a particular focus on the conditions leading to violence. Next, the paper analyzes Nigerian government responses and those of coalition partners over the past half-century. Lastly, drawing lessons derived from Lobban, Byman, and Cronin, I provide courses of action to counter ISWAP today, largely by addressing the underlying causes. Moreover, the prescriptions conclude with suggestions for commanders posted across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, operational leaders within the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), and lastly for African governments and coalition state departments to consider toward removing dissent and grievance fostering operations.

### Conditions for Boko Haram's Rise and ISWAP's Continuation

Over a thousand years, the environment from which Boko Haram emerged was marked by local and regional conflict centered around small, borderless nations of people, dominated by

evolving understandings of Islam. From a historical perspective, Boko Haram's connections to Islam dates to 1085c.e. with the expansion of caliphates in the 11th century.<sup>i</sup> An understanding of Islam and the region's history proves necessary to understand the context of Boko Haram's story, which I capture into three eras: approximately 1000 A.D. to 1970, 1970 to 1999, and finally from 1999 to 2015 when Boko Haram morphed into ISWAP.

Northern Nigeria and the greater Sahel have remained central to trade, civilization, and conflict for several thousand years. Dating back to 1000 A.D., the people of Saharan Africa began a southward migration that followed the receding waters of the Lake Chad Basin region, settling dominant cultures near present-day Niger and Nigerian borders.<sup>ii</sup> As populations grew, people divided into nations, which formed the beginnings of religion and roots of lineage for future emirs giving rise to the Kanuri culture, the birth of the Kanem nation, and a self-proclaimed state.<sup>iii</sup> Islamic expansionists took notice and began expansion of Islam within Kanem as early as the eleventh century and for the following two centuries. Islam blossomed with trade routes across the Sahel as well as freedom of movement for Kanuri into the Arabian Peninsula and Southern Europe.<sup>iv</sup> Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, civil wars erupted and factions divided over primarily religious loyalties, land disputes, and trade controls, which divided people across today's southern Sahel centered on border regions of Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, and Chad.<sup>v</sup> The Kanuri of Bornu (Borno) and the Hausa rose to power with continual infighting for another two centuries. One grievance from this era, kings and emirs opened the door to the West, which created the conditions for European colonialism, succinctly captured by Former Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta, "When the missionaries arrived, the African had the land and the missionaries had the Bible, and they taught us to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened our eyes, they had the land and we had the Bible."<sup>vi</sup> Here one finds first

root of the moniker Boko, meaning West or Western style of thought, and Haram, Arabic for Sharia Law forbids under Sunna practice.<sup>vii</sup>

Primarily dating back to the mid-eighteenth century, two prominent dynasties continue to influence northern Nigerian states from Sokoto across to Borno.<sup>viii</sup> The Sultan of Sokoto, originally Uthman dan Fodio during the late-eighteenth century, remains prominent authority as his descendants still hold religious authority.<sup>ix</sup> In the Northeast, the Bornu Empire led for centuries and was supplanted by Islamic al-Amin al-Kanemi, who became Shehu of Bornu during the same era as dan Fodio, where Kanemi's descendants still hold religious authority.<sup>x</sup> Connections between religious authority, religious legitimacy, and religious politics would inform northern British colonialism to dominate Sokoto by 1903. Classic British division entrenched the people of Bornu and Sokoto as northerners pitted against southerners who were comingling with coastal British trade.<sup>xi</sup> Following oscillations of world wars and as Europe began losing colonial holdings, Nigeria experienced independence in 1960, which was followed immediately by civil war, mass killings, and governance frustrations that inspired several movements, most notably Boko Haram.<sup>xii</sup>

Grievances and marginalization ran rampant throughout the late twentieth century. Boko Haram's following emerged from the ostracized Maiduguri outskirts, as the northern city never planned to support a booming population. As poverty, drought, and economic hardship impacted rural northern Nigeria, immigration into cities burgeoned, but local governments were ill-equipped to support such a societal shift. After decades of ineffective political reforms, regional re-organization, systemic corruption, southern biases, and interreligious conflict, the massing population of northern Nigeria was eager for justice, accountability, and control. As a result, northerners desired Sharia law. Salafi thought emerged during the same period via grassroots

movements, such as the Maitasine, as well as from visiting lecturers and prominent voices within universities and northern elites. Scholars who returned from Medina, Saudi Arabia, taught and translated the Qur'an into the Kanuri language making the Salafi way accessible to the illiterate.<sup>xiii</sup> Most, though disgusted with government accountability, still did not align with extremist views.

Joseph Yusef stands as Boko Haram's founder in 2000, as he emerged at a boiling point of political reform in Maiduguri, Borno.<sup>xiv</sup> Between 1970 and 2000, Yusef and his following matured as young adults in the situation described above. 1999 proved critical as the Maiduguri regional government implemented Sharia law, with National government consent as an experiment in appeasement, and Yusef held position in the Borno State's Sharia Implementation Committee. Nigerian national government later retracted the decision after Salafi-style punishments of Sharia law were administered. Yusef's assassination birthed the final grievance required for open violence.

Abu Bakr Shekau succeeded Yusef in July 2009 after a botched political uprising that yielded Yusef's execution, which led to Boko Haram's violence against Nigerian officials.<sup>xv</sup> Shekau marketed the moment as Boko Haram's *dawa*, the call, and fashioned Yusef's teachings alongside a Salafi brand of violent extremist jihad. Recruiting from a ripe Maiduguri and local marginalized regions, Shekau turned a corner from preaching to open war; however, Boko Haram initially lacked significant funding, arms, and training to effectively counter Nigerian military responses. With the fall of Libyan dictator Gaddafi, military arms proliferated, which permitted Boko Haram to achieve military means. Years followed with violent Boko Haram killings and equally violent Nigerian government responses, which ended abruptly in 2015 when allied air power synced with regional government to halt Boko Haram's campaign of violence. In

May 2021, the Islamic State found Abu Bakr Shekau problematic and sanctioned his elimination, which resulted in Shekau detonating his own suicide vest.<sup>xvi</sup>

During Boko Haram's ascension, Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) sprouted across the Sahel laying groundwork for Wahabi extremism. By 2015 AQIM allied with Islamic State and made headway across Iraq, Syria, and Libya and had now reached AQIM's territory. During the 2014-2015 Nigerian government counter-offensive, Boko Haram sought refuge in neighboring countries, which created regional dilemmas and attracted allied governments and the Islamic State. After Boko Haram's decline, Abu Bakr Shekau's death rendered the group leaderless. Then, air strikes and multi-government counteroffensives left them crippled. In response, Abu Mu'sab al-Barnawi removed any prior objections to their new allegiance to ISIS.<sup>xvii</sup> Boko Haram and the IS both shared founding connections between Joseph Yusef and Abu Mu'sab al-Zarqawi in Iraq by way of their forebearer of radical jihad thought, Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi.<sup>xviii</sup> Some assert that al-Barnawi hailed from Yusef's lineage, his son Habib.<sup>xix</sup> A rift between the al-Barnawi and Shekau camps caused infighting and Barnawi deftly stepped down for a period to allow a legitimate leader to emerge with the Islamic State's support. When the Islamic State authorized Shekau's removal, Barnawi stepped back into the role, but did not declare himself ISWAP's caliph, but instead declared himself leader until the rightfully guided one and commander of the faithful appeared.<sup>xx</sup>

ISWAP has since shifted from civilian targets to government targets, though any civilian sympathetic to coalition forces is subject to death. In the summer of 2022, ISWAP jihadists in the Lake Chad Basin killed at least 29, adding to the nearly 40,000 killed since Abu Bakr Shekau's ascension and Barnawi's shift to the Islamic State in 2015.<sup>xxi</sup> One of the Islamic States' requirements to declare a caliphate remains the occupation of territory and reign over its

inhabitants, thereby delegitimizing present regimes. In July 2022, ISWAP organized a sophisticated attack against Nigeria's largest and most important prison within the capital city, Abuja.<sup>xxii</sup> Moreover, Nigeria has yet to implement any effective policies to address poverty and depravity in the north, yet ISWAP has made this a central strategy. As of 2022, ISWAP hosted social services and security for their region: micro-loans are given to farmers and youth entrepreneurs, fighters now disarm when frequenting safe locations, kidnap for ransom activities were purged from Yobe and Borno, basic health care is provided for fighters and civilians, and more.<sup>xxiii</sup> Al-Burnawi (Habib Yusef) was injured within the last year and at the time of this writing, his condition remains unknown, but ISWAP began formalizing organizational structures with subordinate units led by military leaders Bako Gorgore and Ali Abdullahi, as well as a cleric, Shuwaram, assuring future successions.<sup>xxiv</sup>

A Multi-National Joint Task Force and vigilante civilian Joint Task Force were employed in such a ruthless fashion that their actions were called into question by the National Human Rights Commission.<sup>xxv</sup> In this case, violence beget more violence. Boko Haram was not halted, they were encouraged. The entire region was at total war with little to zero accountability. Timing and chance synergized, Gaddafi's fall in Libya, the responses to the Arab Spring with conservative Islamic Dawas, and open war in northern Nigeria presented as if concerted to push Boko Haram to protract into a longer guerilla fight as western allies joined the fray.<sup>xxvi</sup>

#### Countering ISWAP and Prior Government Responses

I argue that the sentiment and actions of ISWAP, previously Boko Haram, are the result of a lack of purposeful, preemptive leadership and governance by Nigeria and the governments of the bordering countries in the Lake Chad Basin. To halt ISWAP, the United Nations, African Union,

and US must engage in a campaign to first directly influence governance to support northern population needs, while continuing surgical repression of ISWAP leadership and financing.

I offer a few frameworks to consider as one attempts to deter recruitment, disrupt operations, or defeat ISWAP extremists. Lobban asserts that efforts applied before the recruitment stage serve as the far greater return on investment, yet kinetic effects have their place.<sup>xxvii</sup> Byman has long tracked Al-Qaeda and ISIS and periphery movements occurring beyond Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Through his work, one can draw a sequential order of questions to answer before using kinetic action, though still, violence seems inevitable. Lastly, Cronin's work lists six of focus efforts toward ending terrorism, though largely focused to the right of Lobban's cycle of radicalization timeline. When I synthesize their work, a dim outlook remains for Sahelian countries to combat ISWAP unless governance improves.

Lobban's primary thesis maintains that efforts to remove the source of grievances far left of radicalization prove the most humane, least expensive, and most enduring form of counterterrorism. In his discussion, a three-phase cycle characterizes a violent extremist movement; recruitment, expansion, decline, thereafter, repeating until defeated, exhausted, or successful. His cycle moves thorough a logical order of normalcy, then disruption of personal identity, marketed grievance, active recruitment, exposure to global extreme jihadists, technical training, component acquisition and financing, operational opportunity, and lastly the terrorist attack.<sup>xxviii</sup> Lobban and Dalton's work points out that, "Grievances are usually known in advance of being explosive issues. People prefer conversation and peace, but when one reaches a point more drastic actions get justified or out of control."<sup>xxix</sup> As demonstrated previously, grievances teemed in Maiduguri, and if Boko Haram had not emerged, another movement would likely have manifested. For the Lake Chad Basin, I argue that people may have grown satisfied with a

separatist or secessionist movement that improved conditions. Instead, an irredentist and revitalistic movement emerged to answer calls for reform. For the counter-terrorism game, one must be present to win, and one must be present to prevent. For northern Nigeria, the government was mostly absent, but also repressive, thereby cultivated grievances. Lobban and Dalton note that US forces pay attention, as the Counterinsurgency Field Manual clearly describes governance improvement to ultimately defeat terrorism at recruitment.<sup>xxx</sup> In terms of employing levers of power, Lobban and Dalton recommend the following: transparency in diplomacy, empowering information, military protection and defense, and economic rewards and grants.<sup>xxxii</sup> Negative levers to those previous listed respectively include secrecy, marginalization, offensive operations, and sanctions or fines.<sup>xxxii</sup> Negative levers seem more the norm for governance in northern Nigeria. If not for oil-rich resources in the Lake Chad Basin, regional self-governance could have been appropriate decades ago, but treasures keep governments interested in maintaining control, yet still less interested with their constituent's security. For northern Nigeria, youth face recruitment dilemmas; limited personal purpose or jihad and heaven, discrimination or privileges, follow western policy or live in economic solidarity, work in marginal employment or follow a promise of purposefulness, and finally, live in social isolation or chase adventure and excitement.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Lobban rightly focuses on addressing recruitment sources, but in the case of the Lake Chad Basin, it seems emotional levers thrive and governments must address the situation across 10-20 years.

Byman asserts that counter-terrorism campaigns must first understand their adversary and define victory before the campaign proceeds. By defining victory in terms of acceptable levels of death, one may arrive at a more realistic approach to counterterrorism in Africa.<sup>xxxiv</sup> While death at the hands of terror remains tragic and perhaps evil, pursuing a campaign of zero deaths at the hands of revivalist or irredentist movements proves impractical and will likely only fuel their cause.

Byman provides seven strategies to confront a terror network, with five distinguishable fronts or lines of effort. Fronts include tracking down individuals and holding them accountable, killing those in lodgments, preventing further attacks in peaceful regions, pushing reforms that prevent recruitment, and making the terrorist ideology unpalatable even for mainstream Salafis.<sup>xxxv</sup> As for strategies, the US could attempt to halt ISWAP alone and proceed on an offensive campaign, but would likely end in a quagmire as witnessed in past campaigns.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Second, the US could strengthen allies to defeat ISWAP indirectly, but providing arms and capabilities to governments that have faced human rights violations and will likely face them again, delegitimizes the campaign.<sup>xxxvii</sup> In the offensive campaigns by the Nigerian government, military units committed violent acts against population centers and performed executions of suspected Boko Haram followers without trials or investigations.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Presently, ISWAP stands on the terrorist organization list, as was Boko Haram in 2013, which permits coalition forces to engage with kinetic strikes.<sup>xxxix</sup> Third, a strategy of containment may provide a low-cost alternative with low demand of ground forces, perhaps effective proximally, but containment permits some success for the adversary and may spawn copycats or allow them to strengthen support.<sup>xl</sup> Fourth, active defenses throughout the countries to mitigate effects of ISWAP attacks and to detect amateurs as they attempt to cross borders or penetrate buildings, may dull the effects and thereby nullify their cause.<sup>xli</sup> Defensive measures should become part of a regional investment, not only in Nigeria's capital. Threatened regions need it most. Fifth, countries could attempt to divert ISWAP into their neighbors' territory, which largely happened during Goodluck Jonathan's pre-electoral campaign to end Boko Haram, which resulted in migration east and north into Chad and Niger.<sup>xlii</sup> Such a strategy does not tend to end anything, but it can shift the problem elsewhere temporarily as an intermediate objective. Shifting from kinetic,

Byman's sixth approach argues to delegitimize ISWAP's cause with a public counternarrative addressing proactive government approaches and the terrorist brutalities.<sup>xliii</sup> The seventh and final approach offered by Byman, pushes to transform the country where the terrorists operate or recruit.<sup>xliiv</sup> I agree here with Byman in that the US, African Union, and United Nations, should focus directly on Nigerian governance to better serve their populations in the northern regions of Bornu, Yobe, Sokoto, and the surrounding states of Niger, Chad, Cameroon borders. ISWAP stands as this decade's movement, but without real reform in the governance and organizational culture, then another movement will supplant ISWAP should they begin to decline.

Cronin delivers six strategies as to how ISWAP or any network could come to an end. First, by severing the leadership with the capturing or killing of the leader.<sup>xliv</sup> As Thurston points out, "... the US could pursue the style of military expansionism that has come to characterize the post-Iraq War world (quiet Special Forces deployments, and an ostensible focus on development and community-building rather than war)."<sup>xlvi</sup> If Boko Haram had not aligned with ISIS, coalitions could have chased a strategy of leadership elimination, but now that the movement has morphed with ISWAP, future succession endures. Second, Nigeria could negotiate with ISWAP for concessions, but neither should count on any measurable success.<sup>xlvii</sup> Through negotiations, the Nigerian government could remove some grievances from the lesser devout and perhaps allow some followers to defect, one should not count on this tactic to deliver success unless the government is willing to take the next step. Success describes Cronin's third method. Hypothetically relinquishing space to ISWAP within newly defined borders or permitted self-governance, may halt violence outside of that space.<sup>xlviii</sup> Fourth, ISWAP may experience failure from within by dividing into factions, burning out favor with the population they intend to reign, or resigning the effort as their cause becomes irrelevant or replaced by another rising ideology.<sup>xlix</sup>

My preferred strategy, my hope is for Sufism to rise and replace the extremist ISWAP position. Fifth, a repeatedly failing strategy by the Nigerian government, to crush the rebellion with repression, but as evident in Nigeria's recent history and as Cronin spells out succinctly, "Overwhelming—and unscrupulous—use of force may even obliterate groups using terror tactics. But it may be a pyrrhic victory. If the ideas that are the source of popular mobilization persist, repression will be temporary, even counterproductive."<sup>l</sup> Thurston warns of conflict replicating elsewhere, "In Cameroon, the Boko Haram crisis occasioned a crackdown that echoed the one in the neighboring Nigeria... by the Cameroon Battalion d'Intervention Rapide (Rapid Intervention Battalion)."<sup>li</sup> Lastly, Cronin's sixth approach, war, where terrorist activity provokes states into campaigns to counter terrorists, which causes regional terrorist organizations to mobilize.<sup>lii</sup> In this case, ISWAP's actions, if a large enough allied coalition becomes provoked, could mobilize the greater ISIS constituency and create the apocalyptic battleground for a global caliphate. The US military plays a delicate balance; one that tries not to provoke the greater war while still supporting government repressions.

### Religion, Sufism, and Mainstream Salafis

Thurston points out that "Sufiism remains a key form of Muslim affiliation in the region, and Sufism is expanding in some communities."<sup>liii</sup> Sufism, as defined by Knysh, "the ascetic-mystical stream in Islam that emerged at the very early stage of [Islam's] development and that subsequently took a wide variety of devotional, doctrinal, artistic, and institutional forms." In the pursuit of finding a strategy to solve the dilemma of ISWAP, one cannot ignore the importance of religion. While western, specifically American, opinions would have the separation of church and state, in Muslim society, the two are forever woven together. Religious demographics of ISWAP's sphere are as follows: Nigeria-50% Muslim with 37% of Muslims Sufi, Niger-90% Muslim with

34% of Muslims Sufi, Cameroon-20% Muslim with 31% of Muslims Sufi, and Chad-50% Muslim, 35% of Muslims Sufi.”<sup>liv</sup> The Sufi and Salafi divide is perhaps one of the largest divides to cross in this endeavor to counter ISWAP. Sufis seem to follow an internal understanding and personal interpretation of the Qur’an, which is compatible with global norms, but irreconcilable with Salafi ideology. Sufism may play a key role in the long-term strategy, but it would take significant government and institutional pressure to support a specific religious ideology, which unfortunately is not the catalogue of American policy or US popular support.

Boko Haram followed extremist views of Salafi, with the predominant puritanical group known as Izala. A source that cannot remain overlooked lay with how Saudi Arabia promulgated Salafi teachings throughout the latter half of the twentieth century as they pressed Wahabism into new mosques and communities.<sup>lv</sup> Saudi Arabia, more than any other Muslim nation, has a responsibility to the globe in policing radical Salafi and Wahhabi actions. Perhaps by restructuring a method to address extremism, with funded action to promote a peaceful Islam, Saudi Arabia could begin a level of reform to counter violent-extremist Salafi followers. Verbal denouncement of violence stands as a first step. Saudi Arabia could play or more central role to promote peace and prosperity through direct projects to improve living conditions and governance for vulnerable Muslim regions.

#### Regional Stability to Achieve Counterterrorism Aims

Regional stability with an emphasis on city planning and entrepreneurial opportunity may help lift the region from depravity. To do so will require significant political reform and long-term strategies to remove systemic corruption and weak institutions. Citizens need to see greater representation than in the past. For example, in Nigeria, Good Luck Jonathan took office in 2010 after the death of Yar’Adua and then lead a disappointing campaign against the north. He remained

in office until 2015, during which nine billion dollars went missing and corruption and criminality became normalized.<sup>lvi</sup> Buhari won the election in 2015, but his history reflected an authoritarian general fighting Boko Haram in the 1980s, with big man credentials, but not necessarily qualified to implement meaningful reforms for citizens. Throughout the history of Maiduguri, as an example of northern city development, the city never planned for infrastructure to support a population beyond the market centers. When rural populations moved from the dispersed lands into cities, urban sprawl spawned shanty towns lacking power, water, sewer, and other basic utility services necessary for a safe and stable living environment.<sup>lvii</sup> Citizens had one thing to rely on, corruption and poverty would endure, and infrastructure would remain neglected. Regional leadership followed suit with little to no change for decades. In Cameroon, Paul Biya has remained in office since 1982.<sup>lviii</sup> For Chad, Idriss Deby has led from 1990 to the present.<sup>lix</sup> Finally, Niger's presidential seat was held by Mahamadou Issoufou for a decade between 2011 to 2021, recently replaced by Mohamed Bazoum in a highly contested election.<sup>lx</sup> "If Nigeria and its neighboring Lake Chad states want to sever the bond between ISWAP and these communities – and they should – then they cannot stop with countering ISWAP in battle. They will need to complement military action by filling the service and governance gaps that ISWAP has exploited."<sup>lxi</sup> While kinetic effects may slow ISWAP, a broader conceptual strategy to address future grievances remains necessary for the African continent to counter ISWAP recruitment. The multi-national joint task force still misses key grievance fostering realities. For example, military units inflict pain on markets and farms forced to operate and pay taxes to ISWAP, which only fosters further support for ISWAP's cause.<sup>lxii</sup>

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Nigeria and the African Union, along with western allies, must look for solutions in the political, religious, and socioeconomic domains with representation and accountability. Sufism is a potential entry point to counter the extremist ideology, but the gap between conservative Salafi Muslims and Sufis pursuing modernity proves too vast. Directing energy and policy toward removing likely grievances and regional depravity remains the long-term strategy missing. Kinetic effects remain necessary to slow individual terrorists, but only if applied with surgical accuracy to prevent unnecessary violence against innocents and to prevent periphery recruitment.

Advice for commanders deployed to the region are as follows. Responsibility for the defense of coalition sites does not stop at the perimeter fence line and it is not deferred to the host nation or local authorities. Commanders near ISWAP battlegrounds must understand that their local security is positively supported and negatively impacted by the local influences that have garnered recruit grievances and civilian fury. Lessons were documented throughout the twenty-first century, most notably in the Afghanistan and Iraq theaters, but Sahelian Africa and the Lake Chad Basin are unique unto themselves.

Commanders must maintain proactive and positive interactions with locals and influencers within terrorist areas of operations. As stated, for counterterrorism, you must be present to win. When coalition forces withdraw from a community in which it shares space, they cede both physical and intellectual space to the adversary and become a magnet for harassment and indirect fire attacks.<sup>lxiii</sup> Not to say that base commanders should attempt to fill state department or local government policy voids, but they must comprehend the local grievances and provide their influences on appropriate levers to address the grievances. In doing so, commanders can maintain the initiative in the war of ideas and plant seeds of hope in the minds of the potentially radicalized.

US military forces operating in ISWAP's sphere of influence must maintain standards, discipline, and accountability. US military law enforcement, when applied to themselves, should serve as a tenet of their posture, because through the moral and legal framework of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, US Service Members maintain minimum levels of acceptable behavior and conduct. As Caudill relates, "the stresses of combat create an environment rich in problems like sexual assault, vehicle accidents, and dereliction of duty, all of which can poison unit cohesion, dampen mission focus, and sap military strength."<sup>lxiv</sup> Moreover, I argue that the same points listed by Caudill could serve as a role model for regional forces to stave off corruption and keep personnel hyper-aware of inappropriate behavior across coalitions. US service members are in a key position to role model proper behavior when partnered with Nigerian or Nigerien (Niger) forces on a joint patrol. Partnering with forces previously investigated for human rights violations would certainly give cause for concern to any commander. Therefore, keeping military law in the upper tiers of priorities should stand paramount for deployed commanders to keep from exacerbating grievances or falling victim to corruptive behaviors.

Lastly, military commanders charged with a defensive mission, such as defending air bases or protecting key forward operating bases, must understand the local situation and specifically the perspectives and grievances of both the common citizen as well as the extremist. To apply what we think we know, or what we believe works in all counter-terrorism operations, falls firmly into the category of potential blunders. In the case of operating in ISWAP's sphere of operation, one can easily fall into cure-allism and try to apply tactics or understanding from prior theaters of engagement with certainty.<sup>lxv</sup> ISWAP is not ISIS, though they share leadership and ideology. ISWAP has already demonstrated a keen draw to the local region and not a sprawling caliphate. ISWAP's constituency descends from the Lake Chad Basin and their positive aims are still focused

on demonstrating control and supplanting the governments. I summarize into the following advice, seek to understand others, be present in the conversation, demonstrate trustworthy behavior, and do not fall into cognition traps that may exacerbate grievances.

### Final Thoughts

My journey through this matter uncovered worrisome consistencies. It seems that a rise in terrorism proves predictable. Grievances do not pop-up, they fester, implying that leaders have ignored or provoked underlying causes. Governments seem disinclined to give the region the appropriate attention and ISWAP answers the government's neglect. It would prove hard to trust that any ideology or government in this region has long-term security at heart. Thus, the outlook seems grim, no matter who triumphs, and the population likely comprehends the cycle will reiterate. Improved governance, halting corruption, and a posse comitatus policy may stand as quality steps, but those steps are immense for a region living for short-term gains.

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<sup>i</sup> African Insurgencies, 121.  
<sup>ii</sup> Kanuri of Bornu, 12.  
<sup>iii</sup> Kanuri of Bornu, 13.  
<sup>iv</sup> Kanuri of Bornu, 13.  
<sup>v</sup> Kanuri of Bornu, 14.  
<sup>vi</sup> Christianity in Africa, 10.  
<sup>vii</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 14-16.  
<sup>viii</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 21-22.  
<sup>ix</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 21-22.  
<sup>x</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 21-22.  
<sup>xi</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 52.  
<sup>xii</sup> African Insurgencies, 9.  
<sup>xiii</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 61.  
<sup>xiv</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 81-84.  
<sup>xv</sup> African Insurgencies, 123.  
<sup>xvi</sup> After Shekau, 2.  
<sup>xvii</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 272, 276.  
<sup>xviii</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 271.  
<sup>xix</sup> Boko Haram: The History, 276.  
<sup>xx</sup> After Shekau, 5.  
<sup>xxi</sup> Jihadists Kill 23 in Northeast Nigeria.

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- xxii ISWAP Engineers Prison Break.
  - xxiii Facing the Challenge, 18.
  - xxiv After Shekau, 8.
  - xxv Boko Haram: The History, 200.
  - xxvi African Insurgencies, 122.
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  - xxix African Insurgencies, 37.
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  - lvi Boko Haram: The History, 29.
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  - lix Boko Haram: The History, 256.
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  - lxi Facing the Challenge, 4.
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  - lxiii Defending Air Bases, 346-347.
  - lxiv Defending Air Bases, 357-358.
  - lxv Blunder, 107.