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Cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad

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Summary

This study presents evidence on the dynamics of cattle rustling in border regions of Cameroon and Chad. It identifies the drivers and enablers of the phenomenon and the networks of actors engaged in the criminal economy. The ungoverned spaces of border regions pose security challenges and accentuate the illicit economy of cattle rustling. Addressing cattle rustling in southern Chad and northern Cameroon requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach due to the complex interplay of economic, social and security dynamics in the regions.

Key findings

- The primary enablers of cattle rustling include transhumance and child labour, multiple conflicts, failure of governance, environmental factors, porous borders, cultural perception and social acceptance, corruption and ineffective justice system.
- The link between cattle rustling and other forms of organised crime manifests through terrorism financing, cross-border smuggling, arms trafficking, abduction and money laundering.
- In addition to the traditional cattle rustlers, the dominant actors perpetrating cattle rustling are ISWAP (71.4%), Boko Haram (9.5%), separatist groups (8.1%) and unidentified armed groups (5.4%).

Introduction

In recent years, cattle rustling in Africa has escalated in both magnitude and violence, becoming increasingly associated with organised criminal and terrorist organisations as a means of generating illicit revenue.¹ This practice involves a coordinated effort by a group of individuals to seize livestock from another person or from grazing areas or kraals for the purpose of illegal commercial profit.² Journalists, scholars and practitioners are progressively identifying it as a variant of organised crime.³ Additionally, with the involvement of groups such as Boko Haram and the transnational movement of cattle, cattle rustling is being acknowledged as a form of transnational organised crime. Recognising this may facilitate more effective responses.⁴

In many instances, cattle rustlers clash with state security forces and conduct raids on local communities to steal livestock

Very few comparative studies investigate the cross-border aspects of cattle rustling in Central Africa. Despite this, cattle rustlers continue to show the capability and resources for engaging in organised violence within border regions. These areas are characterised by a weak state presence, which hampers the establishment and enforcement of laws and diminishes the state's monopoly on the use of force.

In many instances, cattle rustlers clash with state security forces and conduct raids on local communities to steal livestock. The recent intensification of their violent actions poses serious threats to local and regional stability in Central Africa, as well as to international security, the rule of law, human rights and socioeconomic development.⁵

Therefore, this study endeavours to answer pertinent research questions. What are the dynamics of cattle rustling in the border regions of southern Chad and northern Cameroon? What role does the proximity of international borders play in facilitating cattle rustling activities? How do cross-border ethnic or tribal ties affect the dynamics of cattle rustling? Through empirical research, this study seeks to understand the internationalisation of cattle rustling and how it is shaped by multiple factors in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad.

Research objectives

The research objectives of this study are to identify and examine the scope and dimensions of cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad; examine the drivers and enablers of cattle rustling; identify and actors and modus operandi of cattle rustling in these countries; identify and analyse the cross-border linkages of cattle rustling; examine the multidimensional harms associated with cattle rustling on the local population; and recommend ways of strengthening responses.

The paper has six primary sections:

- 1. Introduction and background:** A comprehensive overview of cattle rustling, delineating the research objectives and providing essential context for the study.
- 2. Methodology and key definitions:** An outline of the mixed-methods approach that forms the foundation of the research and clarifies important terminology.
- 3. Cattle and pastoral governance:**
 - *Economic significance:* The critical role of cattle in both local and regional economies.
 - *Governance in border regions:* The challenges of pastoral governance in the border areas between Cameroon and Chad.

4. Drivers, enablers and actors:

- *Drivers and enablers:* Factors that contribute to cattle rustling in border regions.
- *Actors involved:* The individuals and groups engaged in cattle rustling.

5. Operations and impacts:

- *Modus operandi and cross-border linkages:* The strategies and transnational aspects of cattle rustling.
- *Incidents and impacts:* The repercussions of cattle rustling for local communities and regional stability.

6. Responses and recommendations:

- *Community, state and regional responses:* Initiatives for combating cattle rustling.
- *Comprehensive approach:* The need for a multifaceted strategy that takes into account the economic, social and security challenges in southern Chad and northern Cameroon.

Methods

The methodology of the research combines primary and secondary data. It includes a literature review and data on cattle rustling sourced from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project. Fieldwork was conducted in Yaoundé, northern Cameroon and southern Chad in communities affected by cattle rustling.

The interviews were conducted from 3–31 July in 2024. Issues discussed with the respondents include the primary socioeconomic, cultural and environmental factors driving cattle rustling in this region, the actors involved in cattle rustling, and how transnational criminal networks facilitate the movement and laundering of stolen livestock and related proceeds, among others. Respondents were purposefully selected to aggregate and analyse diverse viewpoints, towards ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the phenomenon.

Authors ensured that participants were aged 18 years and above, had directly or indirectly experienced cattle rustling and represented diverse ethnic backgrounds, vocations and security sectors to capture a broad range of perspectives. Lastly, the willingness to participate in an interview was also considered. Snowball sampling strategy was utilised to reach participants who were less accessible through conventional recruitment methods.

Participants were recruited through local community leaders, NGOs, academia, journalists and social networks. Initial contacts were made via community meetings, local organisations and direct outreach explaining the study's purpose, confidentiality measures and the voluntary nature of participation. Collaboration with local stakeholders ensured culturally sensitive and respectful recruitment practices. Participants selected in towns and villages cut across professional and social strata, and include farmers, pastoralists, police, soldiers, prefects, politicians and journalists. A total of 48 interview sessions were conducted in 12 locations in Cameroon and Chad (see Chart 1). To maintain ethical standards, the research participants have agreed to be quoted and referenced anonymously, recognising the sensitivity of the research.

Chart 1: Selected communities and interviewed respondents

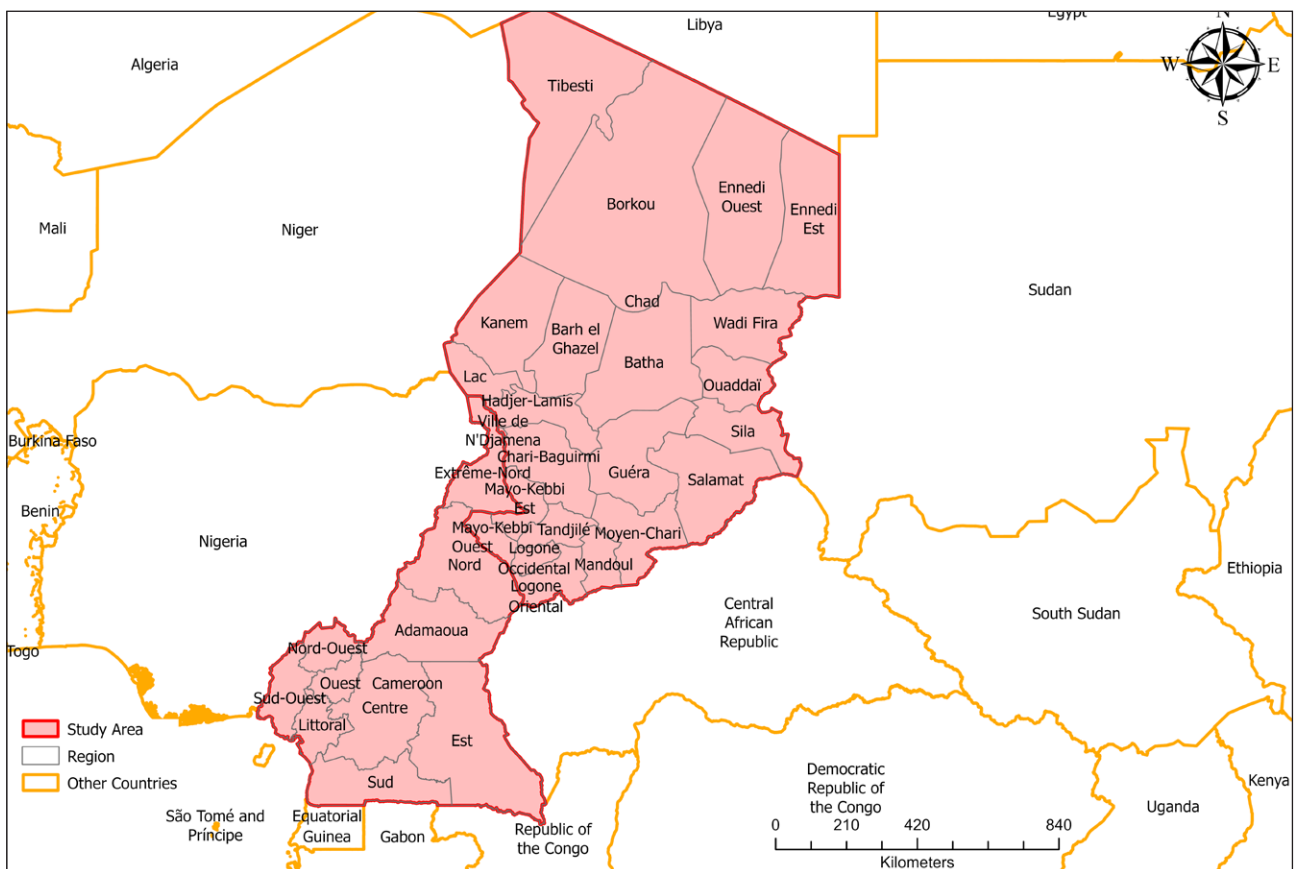
No.	Date	Location	Position
1	03/07/2024	Yaoundé	Chief superintendent
2	01/07/2024	Yaoundé	Former military commander
3	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Magistrate
4	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Local Butchers' Association

No.	Date	Location	Position
5	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Magistrate
6	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Veterinarian, Dourbali Livestock Sector
7	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Official of the Nomadic National Guard of Chad
8	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Livestock traders
9	13/07/2024	Dourbali	Subdivisional officer Dourbali
10	14/07/2024	N'Djamena	Former minister and former provincial governor
11	15/07/2024	Bongor	Sub-Regional Coordinator Mayo-Kebbi Est
12	15/07/2024	Bongor	Butchers
13	16/07/2024	Pala	Journalist
14	16/07/2024	Pala	Breeder
15	16/07/2024	Pala	Veterinarian
16	16/07/2024	Bongor	Member of the Butchers' Association
17	16/07/2024	Bongor	Divisional Officer, Mayo-Boneye Division
18	16/07/2024	Bongor	Magistrate
19	16/07/2024	Bongor	Magistrate
20	17/07/2024	Bongor	Police officer
21	16/07/2024	Bongor	Scholar
22	19/07/2024	Waza	Subdivisional delegate for livestock
23	19/07/2024	Waza	Military commander
24	19/07/2024	Waza	Traditional leader of Waza
25	19/07/2024	Waza	A chief in Waza Bakir, and official of breeders' association
26	20/07/2024	Mora	Military commander
27	26/07/2024	Mora	Commander of the gendarmerie
28	26/07/2024	Mora	Military commander
29	21/07/2024	Mora	Leader of vigilante group
30	21/07/2024	Kolofata	Members of the Kolofata vigilante group
31	21/07/2024	Kolofata	Breeder
32	21/07/2024	Kolofata	Breeder
33	21/07/2024	Kolofata	Officer, Gendarmerie Brigade commander
34	24/07/2024	Maroua	Scholar on security studies, University of Maroua
35	24/07/2024	Maroua	Former parliamentarian
36	24/07/2024	Maroua	Regional delegate

No.	Date	Location	Position
37	25/07/2024	Garoua	Colonel, commander of the 4th Rapid Intervention Battalion
38	25/07/2024	Garoua	Regional Association of Herders
39	27/07/2024	N'Gaoundéré	Former commander of Touboro Light Intervention Unit
40	27/07/2024	N'Gaoundéré	Sub-divisional officer, Garoua Boulai
41	27/07/2024	N'Gaoundéré	Herder, victim of cattle rustling
42	27/07/2024	N'Gaoundéré	Former chief of intelligence
43	28/07/2024	Touboro	Police officer, commander special police
44	28/07/2024	Touboro	Mayor
45	28/07/2024	Touboro	Herder, victim of cattle rustling
46	29/07/2024	Touboro	Focus group herders
47	30/07/2024	Maroua	Police officer and commander, special police
48	31/07/2024	Maroua	Scholar on security studies, University of Maroua

Source: Authors' compilation from fieldwork

Chart 2: Map of countries in Africa showing the study area



Source: Authors' design through Google Earth software

The data on cattle rustling and violent incidents collected and published by ACLED were used to assess the trends and impact of cattle rustling, and identify patterns of criminality and the spatial concentration of the phenomenon. A systematic method was used to analyse the qualitative interviews conducted. The interviews were carried out in French, Arab and English. The French and Arab manuscripts were translated verbatim into English notes for ease of reference.

Definitions of key terms: Pastoralism and cattle rustling

Pastoralism is a subsistence way of life in which nomadic groups graze herbivorous animals on rangelands.⁶ The management systems associated with pastoralism can be divided into the following categories:

- Nomadic: Pastoralists who migrate in an irregular pattern to find new grazing areas.
- Transhumant: Pastoralists who follow a regular migration pattern, such as moving from highlands to lowlands semi-annually, depending on the season.
- Agropastoral: A practice that combines livestock raising with crop cultivation.
- Enclosed pastoralism.⁷

This study examines the four types of pastoralism. Pastoralists primarily inhabit arid and semi-arid rangelands, which are often found in tropical or subtropical areas. The significance of pastoralism remains evident on a global scale.⁸ For example, it is estimated that approximately 240 million individuals in sub-Saharan Africa are part of pastoralist communities.⁹

Cattle rustling, often referred to as cattle raiding, involves the unlawful taking of livestock, predominantly cattle

The population of pastoralists is declining due to advancements in agriculture¹⁰ such as irrigation, urban development and societal biases against nomadic lifestyles.¹¹ Nevertheless, there is a growing acknowledgement of the substantial contributions that pastoralism makes to the economies of various African nations, particularly through the provision of livestock for both domestic and international markets, as well as for the nutritional needs of the population.

Cattle rustling, often referred to as cattle raiding, involves the unlawful taking of livestock, predominantly cattle.¹² This longstanding criminal activity has troubled ranchers for centuries, leading to considerable economic difficulties and disrupting food supply chains. During the 19th century in the American

West, especially in areas such as Texas and Oregon, characterised by expansive open ranges and minimal law enforcement, cattle rustling was widespread.¹³ Rustlers could easily stampede or drive away entire herds under the cover of night.¹⁴ Although the archetype of the dusty outlaw may seem antiquated, this enduring crime continues to affect ranchers worldwide. Cattle rustling is a major problem in several African countries, especially in West, East and Central Africa.

Cattle rustling is an international problem that manifests differently across regions, driven by a complex interplay of historical, cultural, economic and geographical factors.

- Cattle rustling has deep historical roots in East Africa, especially in nations such as Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan. This crime is exacerbated by cultural traditions, competition for limited resources such as grazing land and water, and the widespread availability of firearms.¹⁵
- In West Africa, there is an increasing trend of cattle theft, primarily driven by the pursuit of illicit profit. The stolen livestock are often sold in urban marketplaces, contributing to a thriving illicit market for cattle.¹⁶

- The border regions of Latin America are particularly susceptible to cattle theft, as stolen livestock can be easily trafficked into neighbouring countries where market prices are significantly higher.¹⁷

Contemporary cattle rustlers have modified their approaches, frequently using trucks to enhance transportation speed and, in certain instances, implementing advanced methods such as anaesthetisation to conduct their activities more discreetly.¹⁸ Historically, cattle rustling has been motivated by the criminal desire to acquire cattle for consumption or commercial purposes. In earlier times, rustlers would attack pastoral communities armed with arrows and spears; however, this practice has since transformed into a form of organised crime characterised by significant criminal sophistication.

Presently, rustlers have established extensive networks that span multiple national borders.¹⁹ Cattle theft is regarded as a typical method of primitive accumulation of livestock within the frameworks of both subsistence and commercial pastoralism. The prevalence of stolen cattle is intensified by the significant value placed on cattle in certain rural communities, and this issue has worsened due to the inadequacies of traditional identification methods that are meant to assist in the tracking and recovery of stolen animals.²⁰

Cattle raiding remains a persistent challenge for local economies in most parts of the Sahel. It is particularly concerning in rural regions, where cattle rearing constitutes a significant livelihood, and it has been exacerbated by the increasing frequency of conflicts between farmers and herders.²¹

The significance of cattle to local and regional economies

In Chad and Cameroon, the traditional pastoralists' cattle rearing and the activities of crop farmers are vital components of both local and regional economies. These practices greatly enhance livelihoods, ensure food security, facilitate trade and reinforce cultural identity. In both Chad and Cameroon, particularly in the Sahelian and savannah regions, cattle rearing is a major livelihood activity. It provides income for millions of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist families through the sale of livestock, milk, hides and other animal products. Cattle rearing creates jobs not only for pastoralists but also for people involved in related industries such as animal healthcare, transport, butchering and market trading.²²

Livestock accounts for approximately 6 to 7% of Chad's gross domestic product and represents more than 35% of the overall wealth in rural regions. According to the General Livestock Census, the number of livestock animals increased at an annual rate of 6% over the past decade, with livestock production estimated at more than 120 million animals in 2019.²³ Goats account for the largest part of the production, at 32%. Sheep and cattle account, respectively, for 29 and 26% of the total.²⁴

Livestock production is a significant component of Cameroon's economy, contributing about 125 billion XAF²⁵ to the gross domestic product. The country is home to 9 857 361 cattle, which account for 54% of the locally produced and consumed meat products.²⁶ Annually, cattle breeding results in the production of 110 000 tons of meat and 174 000 tons of milk, with all of this output being utilised within the country.²⁷

Cattle provide a stable source of food, including meat and milk, which are vital for the nutritional needs of pastoralist communities and urban consumers. Cattle from Chad and northern Cameroon are key commodities in regional trade networks. Chad is one of the leading exporters of cattle to Nigeria, Sudan, Libya and other neighbouring countries. The trade generates substantial revenue for local economies, facilitates cross-border exchange and strengthens regional economic ties.²⁸

Cattle are integrated into national and regional markets, helping to support the economies of urban centres. The cities of N'Djamena (Chad) and Yaoundé and Douala (Cameroon) are key beef consumption hubs, driving demand for livestock from rural areas. Cattle exports contribute to foreign exchange earnings in both Chad and Cameroon. Livestock sales often play a key role in reducing national trade deficits, especially in Chad, which is heavily reliant on livestock exports. Governments collect taxes and fees on cattle markets, transportation and exports, contributing to national revenue streams.

Generally speaking, in Chad, livestock farming comes just after agriculture.²⁹ Apart from oil, which was recently discovered, agriculture and livestock farming serve as the principal foundations of the Chadian economy.³⁰

Livestock farming contributes to the survival of the population of Dourbali in Chad. Even farmers who plough and want to get a good yield usually buy a milking cow. Later, they buy a head of cattle that they raise and, over time, they build up a small herd.³¹ When the herd gets bigger, they become agro-livestock farmers.³² Livestock farming is the backbone of the Chadian economy. In addition to the income from the sale of livestock, the state levies taxes on livestock brought to the markets, the Livestock Sales Tax, of 2 000 XAF per head. These sums are collected by the managers appointed in the markets. Animals also contribute to agriculture through traction and the production of proteins (milk and meat).³³

Pastoral governance in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad

Pastoral governance in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad has a long history. It refers to the systems, institutions, policies and practices that regulate and manage pastoral communities and their livelihoods, particularly in relation to the use of natural resources such as grazing lands and water. It encompasses how pastoralists, who rely on livestock herding and often engage in nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles, interact with local, national and sometimes international governance structures for economic purposes and security governance.

With the rising toll of cattle rustling incidents in the region, pastoral governance has also evolved, evident in formal and traditional mechanisms.³⁴ Key aspects of pastoral governance include resource management, customary and traditional institutions, environment and climatic considerations, mobility and migrations, and state policies and laws, among others.³⁵

Pastoral governance involves managing access to and use of critical resources such as grazing lands, water points and migratory routes. This often includes policies about land tenure, grazing rights and the regulation of natural resource use. In many communities in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad, traditional leaders and customary practices play a key role in resolving disputes over resources, organising migration patterns, and ensuring the safety of pastoralists and protection of their herds.³⁶ These institutions exist alongside formal state governance.³⁷

Furthermore, a core component of pastoralism is mobility. Governance systems sometimes seek to support or regulate cross-border movement and internal migration to ensure that pastoralists can access the resources they need throughout different seasons and are adequately protected. As pastoralists are highly dependent on environmental conditions, pastoral governance in the region also addresses, marginally, issues related to climate change, droughts, desertification and other environmental changes that affect pastoralists' livelihoods.

Lastly, governments have also developed formal policies related to pastoralism, including supportive security frameworks that protect pastoralist rights and are meant to guarantee their safety. Generally, security remains a shared task of the gendarmes, army, customs and Garde Nationale et Nomade du Tchad (GNNT), none of which is resourced sufficiently to address organised crime.³⁸ In an interview with the head of the Dourbali livestock sector, the respondent reiterated how the security architecture of the state is unable to stem the tide of cattle rustling in vulnerable communities:

The state [Chad] has placed forces everywhere. This is particularly the National and Nomadic Guard. They are the ones who keep watch, as their name indicates. But there are not many of them, to cover the entire extent of the country.³⁹

On the other hand, the traditional mechanisms of pastoral governance are hampered by the complicity and embeddedness of diverse actors involved in the cattle rustling criminal enterprise. Thus, the crime continues to fester in the border regions of Chad and Cameroon due to a combination of drivers and enablers analysed in the next section.

The enablers and drivers of cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad

The key factors that enable and drive cattle rustling in the border regions are a blend of interconnected elements that reinforce one another. The classification of enablers and drivers of cattle rustling is based on their distinct roles in either facilitating or motivating this illicit activity.

Drivers are the core factors or motivations that lead individuals or groups to commit cattle rustling, often stemming from structural issues or personal incentives such as poverty, unemployment and cultural traditions that normalise the practice. In contrast, enablers are the conditions or mechanisms that facilitate the act of cattle rustling, making it easier to execute or sustain. They include easy access to weapons that empower the rustlers, inadequate enforcement that permits cross-border smuggling, familial connections or criminal organisations that provide logistical support, and the complicity or inaction of law enforcement and government officials.

In Chad, enablers include transhumance and child labour, multiple conflicts, failure of governance and endemic poverty, environmental factors (drought and climate change), border porosity, the protocols guaranteeing free movement of persons (identity cards), ungoverned spaces, cultural perceptions and social acceptance, the nature of cross-border intergovernmental cooperation, terrain and cross-border ethnic configurations of communities, corruption and an ineffective justice system.

Drivers are the core factors or motivations that lead individuals or groups to commit cattle rustling

Transhumance and child labour

'Transhumance movements' is a modern expression of a time-honoured tradition in which traditional herders search for scarce pastures.⁴⁰ Cattle rustling in northern Cameroon and southern Chad has deep historical roots. For instance, between the 18th and 19th centuries, Fulani settled in the valleys of northern Cameroon and the Adamawa plateau. They were joined in this activity by sedentary populations, such as the Choas Arabs, and nomads, such as the Mbororo.⁴¹

Transhumance remains a vital aspect of herding in southern Chad today. Herders continue to follow traditional pathways, moving cyclically within the nation and across borders to find adequate fodder for their livestock. This ongoing movement has resulted in tensions and confrontations among agro-pastoral communities, particularly in the region of Moyen Chari, and is a vulnerability factor that makes herders susceptible to attacks by cattle rustlers.⁴²

Transhumance is a mode of existence involving the continuous and unpredictable relocation of all members within a family or group. Specific Peul groups, notably the Wodaabe and Fulbe Sedentaires, have nomadic lifestyles. Their movements began at the Cameroon border in the 1920s and extended from western Chad in the 1990s. This has led to their migrations into eastern Central African Republic and northeastern Congo.⁴³ The seasonality of the phenomenon should also be noted. Indeed, there are periods conducive to cattle rustling, particularly during transhumance periods. Herders and their livestock transit areas where their protection by state presence is not guaranteed.

In the past, law enforcement accompanied the nomads and camped with them. The increasing pressure on the state security forces to respond to and manage evolving security threats implies that authorities are unable to provide special security to herdsmen who move constantly across the transhumance corridors in ungoverned spaces. Thus, cattle rustling is a localised activity, taking place mainly in grazing areas and the routes to livestock markets. The predictable experience is well situated in the classical theory of crime and opportunity. That is, crime is precipitated by the opportunities offered by the environment.

Transhumance is compounded by child labour. In most cases, the herders assigned to the livestock for grazing are mostly children who are grossly incapable of environmental awareness and threat, and are unable to resist or ward off attacks by cattle rustlers. From a modern perspective drawn from labour laws, this can be seen as child labour. However, interview participants noted that 'for the parents of under-age herders, it is not a question of child labour, but rather of apprenticeship, of informal training of education through transmission.'⁴⁴

Very often, thefts [of livestock] are linked to non-compliance with security measures prescribed by the security forces. Children grazing livestock tend to follow the animals, which, in their search for fresh grass, cross the boundaries of the security zone. This situation is encouraged by the scarcity of pastures due to the massive arrival of herders fleeing Boko Haram. Children who cross the boundaries of the security zone defined by the defence and security forces are thus attacked by cattle rustlers. They flee and the livestock is taken away. Sometimes, the rustlers kill the children.⁴⁵

Environmental factors (drought and climate change)

The rainy season in southern Chad occurs from May to October, with monthly rainfall ranging from 150 to 300 mm. During this season, average annual temperatures reach their peak, fluctuating between 27 and 29 °C.⁴⁶ Cameroon is one of the countries most susceptible to climate change globally, due to its high exposure and sensitivity, and inadequate adaptive capacity.

Between 1974 and 2020, the country experienced a temperature increase of 0.86 °C, with the northern regions facing more severe warming from 1991 to 2020. The climate in Cameroon is projected to undergo further changes. In the most adverse climate scenario, temperatures are expected to rise by an average of 3.9 °C over the next 20 years, with considerable differences across regions.⁴⁷

Environmental factors of drought and climate change are critical enablers of cattle rustling. For instance, most rural communities across the borders in Cameroon and Chad have emerged as the hotbed of intensifying farmer-herder conflict, which can be traced to an expansion of primarily pastoralist militia groups.⁴⁸ This also presents a crime-conflict nexus in which cattle rustling has become a major threat to herders and their livestock. Although scientific evidence for the nexus of climate change with this evolving threat remains tenuous, this cycle of criminality accelerates as pastureland becomes scarcer due

Children sighted by the authors herding livestock on the road to Bongor in Chad



Source: Authors' photo taken during fieldwork

Image depicting the transhumance showing in the study area



Source: Authors' photo taken during fieldwork on the road to Dourbali

to environmental degradation across the regions. As herders search further afield for grazing land, cattle rustlers strategically place themselves along transhumance routes and near water sources to ambush and steal their livestock.⁴⁹

For instance, in Chad, the entire rural economy is linked to livestock and there is a boom in trade during the transhumance periods when nearly 10 000 head of livestock arrive in the Logone area. However, as noted earlier, the dynamics of movement are closely linked to the environmental factors of drought and possibly climate change.⁵⁰ According to the district delegate for livestock in the area, between February and March, due to the scarcity of pastures on the Logone plain, breeders move to neighbouring areas to find unexploited pastures and water.

Cattle rustling is also a recurrent crime in the Waza area of the Far North region of Cameroon, on the border with Chad. In 2019, two herds were stolen. These thefts generally take place on the Malinga plain. In 2020, three herds, with 200 animals in each, were stolen in the area. In 2021, two herds were stolen.⁵¹ All these incidents happened as herders searched desperately for greener pastures and water. Closely linked to environmental factors is the challenge of border porosity.

Porous borders

The porous borders between Cameroon and Chad contribute significantly to the trafficking of various illegal products and the proliferation of criminal activities, especially in relation to small arms and ammunition. This situation has notably worsened the unrestricted distribution of weapons to the factions of bandits and terrorists operating in the region. A military official in Waza, Cameroon, has recognised that the issue of cattle rustling is further complicated by ungoverned areas and a lack of adequate human and security resources to oversee the cross-border movements of criminal actors effectively.⁵²

In the Waza area, cattle rustling usually occur 5 km beyond the border with Nigeria, in an empty space where villages have been destroyed by Boko Haram or displaced. Livestock thefts are usually the result of violations of security protocols. Bodies of herdsmen with their throats cut have been found regularly 6 km beyond the border [with Nigeria]. Typically, the thieves attack livestock that have gone beyond the security zone. They then go around the herd and attack from behind. The problem is also linked to the attitude of the nomads. When they know they are in breach, they try to resolve the theft of their livestock themselves. It is when they fail that they call on the military. In the meantime, the thieves (cattle rustlers) have taken the lead. In addition, the military have difficulty intervening because of the vegetation and the muddy and sandy nature of the soil. However, the thieves operate on motorcycles or on horseback.

The border's exposure to infiltration by criminal factions is further aggravated by the forest reserves in the region, as noted by security officials

This submission underscores the inadequate management of the countries' international borders, the limited presence of policing entities and the potential emergence of ungoverned territories. For instance, the border shared by Chad and Cameroon spans 1 116 km and is poorly secured by law enforcement.⁵³ The porous nature of these frontiers heightens the risk of armed groups entering these countries from Niger, Nigeria, Libya, Sudan and the Central African Republic.

The border's exposure to infiltration by criminal factions is further aggravated by the forest reserves in the region, as noted by security officials. The vast and uneven landscape, coupled with a sparse population and thick vegetation, poses significant challenges for surveillance, making these forests prime locations for cattle rustlers to hide and establish operational bases. Such territories illustrate limited statehood, where governmental presence is either entirely absent or, at best, inconsistent. Security officials also underscored the significance of the challenge presented by the terrain in enabling cattle rustling and related crime in the region:

The national road is extremely degraded. This situation has major operational constraints for the various units ... It takes more than an hour and a half to travel the 30 km that separate Waza from Dabanga [Cameroon]. The security situation is deteriorating due to the absence of any Nigerian military or police presence in the contiguous border strip. The military conducts day and night patrols ... But the military tool is insufficient.⁵⁴

Cultural perceptions and social acceptance

Evidence distilled from field interviews shows that culture in most pastoral communities valorises cattle rustling. Earlier research carried out by ENACT on cattle rustling emphasises the cultural and ethnic motivations behind this practice, noting its involvement in initiation ceremonies, the provision of dowries and its role as a form of retaliatory violence between various ethnic groups.⁵⁵ Findings from the border region of Cameroon and Chad confirm that this tradition transcends national boundaries.

According to the customs and traditions of some pastoral communities in the Mayo-Kebbi area of Chad, cattle rustling exists especially for marriage. Even for the Arabs, it is a tradition. In the Massa community in Chad, the suitor is compelled by tradition to give cattle for marriage. According to livestock breeders in Bongor, Chad, who spoke to the authors through focus group discussions, 'if he [the potential husband] does not have cattle, he will only steal.'⁵⁶ Drawing a link to extant studies, a foremost anthropologist on the

subject remarks, 'when cattle payments are made, the marriage of girls tends to be early for the same reason that that of men is late – that a girl's marriage increases her father's herd while that of a young man diminishes it.'⁵⁷

Furthermore, in pastoral societies in which livestock is the identity referent (women and livestock are interchangeable among the Massa, for example), the value of a woman depends on the number of oxen given for her dowry.⁵⁸ Thus, over the years, adult men intending to marry girls from pastoral communities have engaged in cattle rustling to meet the conjugal expectation of dowry payment from the girl's family.

Cattle rustling also has a class dimension. Livestock ownership in pastoral communities is symbolic. Possession of herds projects prestige and commands significant respect in society.⁵⁹ Cattle are not only a source of livelihood but also a symbol of wealth and social status in many pastoral cultures. The number of cattle a family owns can influence their ability to arrange marriages and negotiate dowry, enhancing their social standing.⁶⁰

Control over cattle can translate into political power within the community. Leaders or influential individuals may use their cattle wealth to maintain or enhance their authority. Cattle often hold cultural and spiritual significance in pastoral communities. Their ownership may be tied to traditional rituals, ceremonies, or ancestral beliefs, further elevating their value beyond economic considerations, as noted by a respondent in Chad:

I come from a community of breeders. For us, breeding is something cultural. Today, for example, in our country [Chad], no matter how much wealth you have, the houses you have, the equipment, if you don't have a herd, for ordinary people you are poor. But when people know that you have 40 or 50 oxen, for them, that's wealth. So, we have that and we can't even sell it. For us, it's a question of prestige.⁶¹

Criminal groups involved in rustling often develop strong identities, and the prestige of successful thefts enhances group cohesion and status. Individuals may feel pressure to engage in rustling to prove themselves within these groups. Success in cattle raids also increases the standing of the group within the broader society, reinforcing the cycle of rustling for prestige. Lastly, in certain pastoral societies, rustling is not entirely condemned but is viewed as a valorised means to an end if it is conducted successfully. This cultural acceptance, combined with the prestige linked to owning large cattle herds, drives some individuals to engage in livestock theft generally, particularly where state and societal mechanisms against it are weak or non-existent.⁶²

Defective legal framework

The weak legal system that is an offshoot of the traditional justice system has also emerged as a critical enabler of cattle rustling, particularly in the border regions of Chad. For instance, there are no specific provisions in the Penal Code for the trial procedure for livestock theft. The adjudication of theft is governed by Articles 401,⁶³ 402⁶⁴ and 403⁶⁵ of the country's Penal Code.⁶⁶ Cases of receiving stolen goods are punished by the provisions of Article 417.⁶⁷ More importantly, according to the provisions of Article 402, a child cannot be prosecuted for the theft of his parents' livestock. Therefore, cattle rustling is committed and sustained in a familial setting because of the absence of deterrence mechanisms.

Furthermore, because of the paucity of courts and low competence of judicial officers in livestock crime, the court is unable to respond to and manage the rising number of cases effectively. Chad has certainly created many local courts and appointed justices, but overall, according to senior judicial official who spoke to authors in Dourbali, 'litigants [associated with livestock theft] remain far from the courts,

Criminal groups involved in rustling often develop strong identities, and the prestige of successful thefts enhances group cohesion and status

Rustlers sometimes pay off corrupt officials for protection, ensuring that their operations go unhindered or that rival rustlers are targeted, creating a form of organised crime

with distances sometimes reaching 100 km. In all of Chari Baguirmi, for example, the only courts are those of Mandelia and Dourbali.⁶⁸

The respondent also highlighted the failure of the investigation chain, with arrangements very often made upstream by bureaucrats in the country's capital who are apparently disconnected from evolving threats of criminality and responding promptly through policy and operational supports. According to the senior judicial official, 'the justice system does not have means of transport. Judges are not always aware of the realities of the pastoral societies and cannot deliver justice effectively [in cases of cattle rustling].'⁶⁹

Corruption

Cattle rustling and corruption in southern Chad and northern Cameroon are deeply intertwined, creating a cycle that perpetuates insecurity. Corruption is evident in the criminal value chain through weak enforcement, collusion and protection rackets. In many instances, corruption within the police and military makes it easier for cattle rustlers to operate with impunity.

Rustlers often bribe officials to avoid arrest or prosecution, allowing them to continue their activities. In some cases, local security forces may be directly involved with, or complicit in, cattle rustling, either by turning a blind eye or facilitating the trade of stolen cattle in exchange for financial gain. Rustlers sometimes pay off corrupt officials for protection, ensuring that their operations go unhindered or that rival rustlers are targeted, creating a form of organised crime.⁷⁰ Respondents noted that those who steal livestock in most cases cannot do so without corrupting the authorities. Indeed, when rustlers steal hundreds of head of cattle, gendarmes, police officers, or security agents sometimes facilitate their in-country or cross-border movements.⁷¹

The role of corrupt officials in cattle rustling has grave effects on local communities. In southwestern Chad, the lack of state authority has allowed criminals, identified as 'zaraguina', to take advantage of the situation in regions bordering Cameroon and the Central African Republic. Media evidence indicates connections between these criminals and security forces, resulting in a significant loss of trust among the local community.⁷²

Cattle rustling is also linked to the collaboration of corrupt members of the vigilance committees. Members of these groups, made up of local populations but also former jihadists and defectors from banditry, have sometimes been involved in cattle theft or the handling of stolen goods.⁷³ This shows that all the actors are integrated into livestock crime. For instance, to secure access to pasture, herders in many cases bribe local

authorities to transit to the transhumance zone and even to enter the forest parks. These corrupt actions are also facilitated through intermediaries within the communities, such as community leaders.⁷⁴ The corruption that enables cattle rustling has political dimensions linked to campaign financing. One respondent noted that the real actors in cattle theft are traditional chiefs, deputies, mayors and many others who need to finance their election campaigns:⁷⁵

The thieves do not put a rope around the neck of the stolen cattle. Generally, they are people who know how to drive a herd, especially since the stolen cattle come from their usual environment. Stolen herds are generally sold at wholesale prices, with each head of stolen cattle resold below open market price. The leaders of the butcher associations, locally called *Sarkin Pawa* in northern Cameroon, are accused of being receivers. The latter are said to play an important role in laundering stolen livestock. The modus operandi consists of introducing stolen livestock into his herd destined for slaughterhouses. The latter maintains corrupt relations with local officials.⁷⁶

Poverty

Cattle rustling in southern Chad and northern Cameroon is closely linked to poverty, as it exacerbates economic vulnerability while also being fuelled by it. Rural areas are significantly affected by poverty, with considerable regional differences. In 2022, it was found that half the rural population was living in poverty. Additionally, 84.6% of the country's poor resided in these rural regions, a decline from 88.8% recorded in 2018. The southern regions bordering the Central African Republic have particularly high poverty rates, exceeding 50%.⁷⁷

The disparity in poverty rates is stark: 56.8% in rural areas, but 9.0% in urban areas. There are also significant geographic variations, with poverty rates as low as 4.2% and 5.4% in Douala and Yaoundé, respectively, compared to a high of 74.3% in the Far North Region.⁷⁸

The relationship between cattle rustling and poverty in these regions can be understood through several dynamics, which include livelihood and wealth, loss of savings, limited access to justice, desperation and survival, and retaliatory attacks.

In southern Chad and northern Cameroon, cattle are not only a primary source of income but also a measure of wealth and social status, as mentioned earlier. Livestock provides food, income from milk and meat sales, and assets for trade. When cattle are stolen, families and entire communities are left without their main source of economic sustenance, pushing them further into poverty. For many pastoralists, cattle are a form of savings. Rustling depletes this wealth, leaving families without financial security or the ability to reinvest in other economic activities, deepening poverty in already marginalised areas. Many victims of cattle rustling cannot afford to seek legal redress or protection from authorities. The costs associated with travelling to report crimes or pay for legal assistance make it difficult for impoverished pastoralists to pursue justice.

In areas with a higher incidence of poverty, some individuals may turn to cattle rustling to survive. Given the limited opportunities for formal employment or livelihood options, especially in remote regions, the lucrative nature of cattle theft offers a way out of economic despair. This fuels a vicious circle in which poverty drives rustling, and rustling further impoverishes communities. In some cases, communities affected by rustling may resort to retaliatory cattle raids, fuelling ongoing violence and further

When cattle are stolen, families and entire communities are left without their main source of economic sustenance, pushing them further into poverty

destabilising livelihoods. The lack of economic alternatives pushes people into conflict, perpetuating a cycle of poverty, violence and organised crime:

Theft [of livestock] occurs in all communities, but in some areas thieves are more easily reported. In underpopulated areas, reporting is uncommon because informants could be easily identified. In addition to the poverty of the herders, cattle rustling creates the conditions for the perpetuation of this criminal activity because the victims also turn to cattle rustling.⁷⁹

The increase in the value of livestock attracts thieves these days. The higher the price, the more motivated thieves are. There is also the lack of employment that pushes young people to steal livestock and provide for their needs. The thieves that we arrest here are generally people who have no activity, they have no job. So, poverty and lack of employment are causes of theft in Mayo-Kebbi Est.⁸⁰

The nexus of cattle rustling with other forms of organised crime and local conflict

Cattle rustling in southern Chad and northern Cameroon is part of a complex web of organised crime and local conflict, contributing to insecurity, violence and instability in the region. The link between cattle rustling, other forms of organised crime and local conflict operates through several dynamics, including terrorism financing, cross-border smuggling, tribal or communal disputes, arms trafficking, abduction and money laundering.

Terrorism financing and illicit sourcing of arms

Armed groups operating in northern Cameroon and southern Chad, including Boko Haram and other militant factions, often engage in cattle rustling to finance their operations. Trafficking stolen cattle funds the purchase of arms and supplies, and the recruitment of fighters. This fosters a symbiotic connection between cattle rustling and insurgency.

Local militias and bandit groups, sometimes aligned with larger insurgent organisations, also engage in cattle theft. These groups operate in the same areas, using the proceeds from rustling to expand their influence, pay fighters and fuel ongoing conflicts. The presence of armed groups and their role in organised cattle theft increases the intensity of violence and destabilises local communities.⁸¹

Cattle rustling is an important way of financing and bolstering the resilience of terrorist groups in the region. The large sums of money it collects are laundered into house construction and transport, and used to purchase weapons. In the region, livestock is a store of value. It also allows the laundering of money from other criminal activities.⁸²

There are Jama'tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), Bakura and many more-or-less autonomous groups. There are also people who have broken away from the jihadist groups, but have not yet surrendered to the Cameroonian or Nigerian authorities. But inevitably, depending on the geographical location of the attack and the modus operandi, cases of cattle theft are attributed to these groups and the traditional Boko Haram sect.⁸³

Sometimes Boko Haram finances activities with cattle theft. Boko Haram has established a tax [system]. They say that each herder must pay such an amount [of money], if the herders refuse to give them, they kill them and take the cattle. They give to another person to go and sell.⁸⁴

A scholar and expert who spoke to authors in University of Maroua in northern Cameroon explained that 'cattle rustling is a major source of funding for armed groups. If we say, for example, that a cow is worth 200 000 francs, over a short period of time, a group that stole 25 000 head would have amassed 5 billion CFA francs.'⁸⁵

Hostage taking/kidnapping

In the regions of Chad and Cameroon affected by cattle rustling, criminal groups often diversify their activities to banditry, robbery and kidnapping for ransom. Bandit groups that engage in cattle theft may also target travellers, local traders, or even members of rival communities for kidnapping, creating a broader environment of insecurity. In some cases, the profits from cattle rustling help fund other criminal activities, such as kidnapping for ransom. Criminal groups in northern Cameroon and southern Chad use the proceeds from rustling to finance armed operations, which include the abduction of wealthy individuals or local leaders. The ransom money obtained in these cases is then used to further entrench their criminal enterprises in the region.

The breeders' group who spoke to authors through focus group discussion confirmed that herders are experiencing a new form of theft that is being described as livestock hostage-taking – a stark departure from the traditional crime of abducting humans. With this development, the owner of the stolen livestock contacts intermediaries who guarantee the return of the stolen animal against payment of a sum. An ox worth 600 000 francs is thus bought back for 150 000 francs by its rightful owner.⁶⁶

In fact, the thieves ask for the sum they would have made from the sale of the stolen ox in the black market. After paying the requested sum, two or three days later, the intermediary indicates to the owner a place where he can recover his animal. Paying the ransom to recover one's livestock thus becomes one of the resilience strategies of the breeders in a context where clearly, the populations have become aware of the inability of the State to guarantee the security of lives and properties.⁶⁷

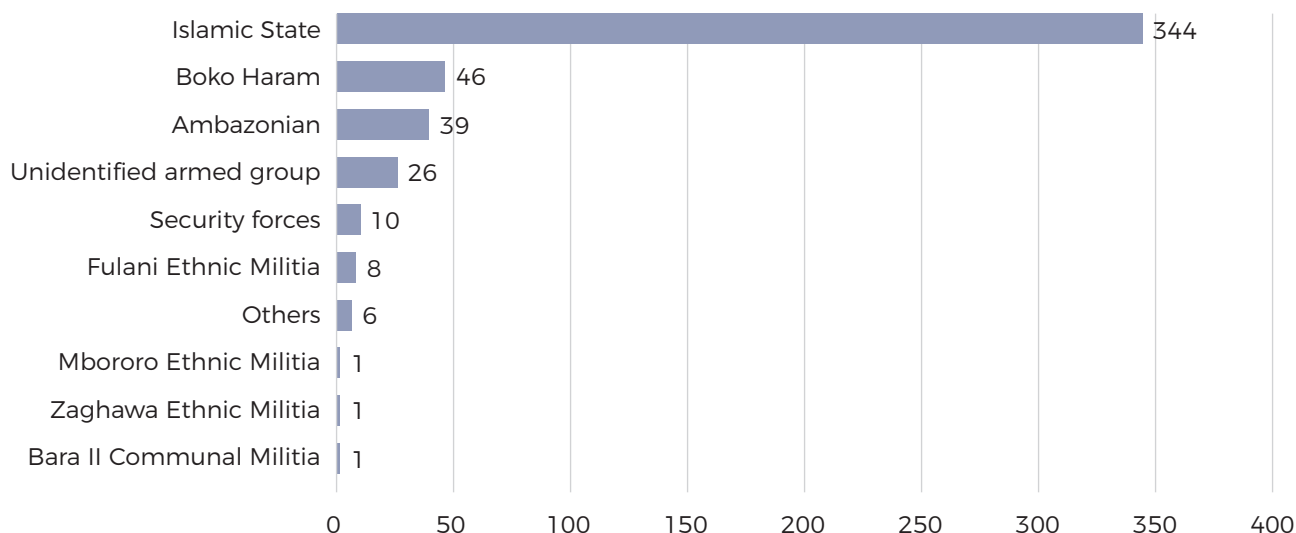
Actors involved in cattle rustling

In northern Cameroon and southern Chad, cattle rustling is a complex issue involving multiple stakeholders, ranging from criminal factions and armed insurgents to local communities and corrupt officials. These participants operate at different levels, serving either as direct offenders or enablers of the crime. The parties consist of terrorists, rogue criminals, fellow herdsmen, colluding community leaders and security personnel who have been compromised.

Criminal networks specialising in cattle rustling operate both locally and transnationally. These organisations are typically well-structured, using informants to locate herds, coordinating raids and using intermediaries to transport stolen cattle to various markets. They benefit from logistical resources, including access to trucks and established smuggling routes across borders.

The ransom money obtained in these cases is then used to further entrench their criminal enterprises in the region

Chart 3: Incidents of cattle rustling and associated criminal groups (2015 to August 2024)



Source: Data generated from ACLED repository by the authors

Smaller, less-organised groups also partake in cattle rustling, often engaging in a wider range of criminal activities such as armed robbery and kidnapping. These less-structured groups frequently operate in remote regions that have minimal government oversight, exploiting the absence of law enforcement and security measures. As illustrated in Chart 3, the primary perpetrators include ISWAP (71.4%), Boko Haram (9.5%), Ambazonian separatists (8.1%) and an unidentified armed group (5.4%). Although estimating the total number of stolen livestock is challenging, a report released in 2023 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs indicated that approximately 30 000 cattle were reported stolen in the Lake Chad region from 2014 to 2021.⁸⁸

Bandits

In a broader categorisation of armed actors perpetrating cattle rustling, some criminals are described as bandits. Bandits are a loosely organised group of criminal factions that partake in kidnapping for ransom, armed theft, cattle raiding, looting and assaults on traders, farmers and travellers in regions where governance is weak. The driving force behind their banditry is the quest for illegal profits, rather than any ideological motivations. These criminals are indiscriminate in their assaults, plundering a variety of communities across multiple areas.⁸⁹ In most instances, scholars and media experts describe this category of criminals as unknown gunmen or unidentified armed groups due to the fluidity of their identity.⁹⁰

Separatist groups

The Ambazonian separatist groups are primarily militant factions seeking independence for the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, which they call 'Ambazonia'. These regions, Northwest and Southwest Cameroon, have historically felt marginalised by the central government. Conflict between the separatist groups and the Cameroonian government has escalated since 2016, leading to an armed struggle. Cameroon's military has reportedly confirmed that the rebels are stealing more cattle because of food insecurity and to sell across the border in Nigeria to fund their revolt.⁹¹

Criminal herdsmen

Fellow herdsmen are also major actors in the criminal value chain of cattle rustling. They often collude with butchers who conceal the proceeds of cattle rustling and mix stolen cattle with the legitimate animals in their slaughterhouses. Herdsmen sometimes cross the border to neighbouring countries and trade the cattle of their principals.⁹²

Senior officials of the judiciary confirmed to the authors that the herdsmen involved in stealing their bosses' cattle are usually minors who emigrate to Chad from neighbouring countries in search of employment. Very often, they receive a half-yearly salary of a calf worth 30 000 CFA francs. A respondent noted that, having obtained the complete trust of the herders, they request permission from their principals to go beyond the usual grazing areas. This is an opportunity for them to cross the border, taking the livestock entrusted to them and disappearing.⁹³

I had 40 head of oxen that I entrusted to a shepherd. One day, the shepherd called me to tell me that eight head of oxen had been stolen, I went to conduct my investigations as far as Yagoua, at the canton chief's house and I even filed a complaint at the Central Police Station. Then I came back and after a week the shepherd called me again to tell me that my 24 sheep had been stolen, I went to investigate until they told me that the thief of my flocks was indeed my shepherd. That's how I took him to the village chief and in front of the community so that he could swear on the Koran that he was not involved in this theft. He refused and we called his father who in return asked us for three more days, to talk with his son. After the three days they came back to see us acknowledging the shepherd's involvement in this theft story. Now I have been paid five heads and there are three head left with the sheep.⁹⁴

The breeders in Bongor confirmed that in certain instances, the criminal shepherds resort to killing the principal to steal his cattle. Although the agreement between shepherds and breeders is different from one locality to another, sometimes breeders employ shepherds without due diligence. They do not know the person or his family, yet they entrust their livestock to him. The breeders affirmed that once the shepherd secures the confidence of the principal, he colludes with a team of bandit friends to kill the owner or rob him outright of all his livestock.⁹⁵ Such cattle are mostly sold across the border in neighbouring countries such as the Central African Republic, Sudan, Niger and Nigeria.⁹⁶

Terrorists (Boko Haram and ISWAP)

In Chad and Cameroon, Boko Haram is actively involved in cattle rustling, a key element of its overall strategy to fund its insurgency and bolster its operational capabilities. It targets rural communities, particularly in northern Cameroon and the wider Lake Chad Basin, stealing substantial numbers of livestock. These stolen cattle are subsequently sold in both local and regional markets, generating significant financial resources for the acquisition of weapons, supplies and other essential materials for the continuation of their insurgency.

Boko Haram frequently uses established smuggling networks to facilitate the sale of the stolen cattle. These networks, which operate across borders, enable the group to integrate rustled cattle into legitimate markets, complicating efforts by authorities to trace the origins of the livestock. In territories where Boko Haram has established authority or substantial influence, the group resorts to cattle rustling as a tactic to impose its dominance on local populations through two interconnected methods. One of these methods includes direct raids on communities, resulting in violence. The second is taking cattle and herders hostage, with ransom demands for the return of the livestock. These approaches undermine the economic stability of the affected communities, forcing them to comply with Boko Haram's demands or pay protection fees to prevent additional assaults, as noted in the interview below:

Boko Haram, in recent times, no longer has its traditional sources of funding. But there is the ease of obtaining resources with cattle rustling because the area occupied by Boko Haram is a preferred area for livestock farming. The [herders] go to the area controlled by Boko Haram where they are subject to two constraints. They are obliged to pay taxes to Boko Haram to be in the area. The second difficulty is that despite paying taxes, they are also subjected to theft [cattle rustling].

Stolen cattle are subsequently sold in both local and regional markets

The same people to whom you pay taxes, at a certain point, they will come, they will take your livestock. And there, when they take some, it is easier to sell this livestock in Nigeria.⁹⁷

For example, in the area near Lake Chad, sometimes terrorist groups come to raid villages or they come and take 200 or 300 or 400 head of cattle and sometimes they take the cattle from the hands of the breeders who leave for Nigeria and these cattle are used to finance the men of Boko Haram.⁹⁸

Collaborators with cattle rustlers

The last group of actors comprises community collaborators who act as informants, corrupt security officials who allow rustlers to pass freely, and middlemen who facilitate connections between rustlers and buyers. The essential drivers of these actors are corruption and a culture of impunity. Thus, the illicit revenues generated from cattle rustling flow through the entire administrative structure, impacting local authorities, security officials and elected community representatives. A retired parliamentarian who spoke to the authors in Maroua asserted that 'it is a mafia system in which the various stakeholders share the proceeds of the theft. The chain of this activity is made up of thieves, their accomplices and receivers.'⁹⁹

Every stolen cow in the rural areas ends up in the slaughterhouses of the butchers in towns and cities. Therefore, the butchers are significant players in the criminal economy. The leaders of the butchers' associations in northern Cameroon are allegedly accused of being receivers for such stolen cattle. They are said to play an important role in laundering stolen livestock. Their modus operandi consists of introducing stolen livestock into their herds destined for slaughterhouses. They also maintain corrupt relations with local officials as noted below:

... one day the chief of a village that is 7 kilometres from Bongor called me to inform me that he had arrested a cow in the hands of thieves who wanted to cross the border to sell the cattle. After a week, I went to buy this cow from the village chief, then a policeman came to arrest me, accusing me of buying the cattle stolen in the village and he took me to the police station. Then, I told them what happened with the village chief. And since I have been buying cattle here, I always inquire about the real owner and the village chief always knows. The gendarmerie therefore summoned the village chief who came to pay and I was released. We can say that the village chief is an accomplice to the theft for having schemed with the thief.¹⁰⁰

Modus operandi of cattle rustling and cross-border linkages

Cattle rustling in northern Cameroon and southern Chad is a serious issue that has become a source of violence, insecurity and economic disruption. The modus operandi of these operations tends to follow patterns, often influenced by local socio-political dynamics and environmental challenges. These include collaboration with armed groups, cross-border operations, night raids, special targeting of remote areas, armed assaults, killing or abduction of herders, use of networks and corrupt officials, exploitation of local conflicts, corruption and collusion, herd rebranding and round-tripping.

Criminal syndicates frequently engage in cattle rustling, collaborating with local militias, insurgent groups, or even corrupt elements within security forces. The proceeds from these activities are sometimes redirected to support other criminal ventures or terror activities. The porous borders between Cameroon and Chad allow rustlers to transport stolen cattle with relative ease, avoiding security and law enforcement action. This also enables them to sell the stolen livestock in different regions, which further hinders law enforcement's ability to address the issue.¹⁰¹

Cattle rustlers are known to exploit remote or rural areas where state security is either weak or absent. The challenges associated with patrolling and monitoring these regions allow rustlers to act without

consequence. They often conduct their illicit activities at night, when herders and local communities are least prepared to defend their livestock. The use of violence or intimidation against herders is prevalent, forcing them to leave their cattle behind according to livestock breeders in Bongor, Chad:

In the South, the thief enters the locality. In Mayo-Kebbi Est, there is kidnapping, sometimes, the thief comes to tie up the children to take the livestock. Sometimes, it is at night that they arrive to take the livestock without touching the individuals. In all areas, there are kidnappings with ransoms, sometimes assassinations of shepherds. There is also other livestock theft in the south. They steal the livestock that ploughs. They come with horses and weapons during the day to steal the livestock. This happened in Doba in Logone Oriental.¹⁰²

Often armed with sophisticated weapons, cattle rustlers create substantial difficulties for local communities striving to safeguard their herds. They often engage in direct confrontations with community guards or vigilante groups. In some situations, these rustlers not only steal cattle but also kill herders or kidnap them for ransom, exacerbating the climate of fear and anxiety in the affected areas as illustrated below:

Sometimes, young, heavily armed herders agree to kill a herder and take his livestock. Their murder here is intended to prevent the victim from sounding the alarm. The groups identified are multi-ethnic, with the Hausa and Fulani as the main ethnic groups. They do not hesitate to take lives to take livestock.¹⁰³

The persistent conflict between pastoralists and farmers in the region sometimes intensifies cattle rustling. Criminal organisations take advantage of these disputes, using them as a façade for their illicit activities or provoking additional hostilities to foster disorder. Once cattle are taken, rustlers depend on a network of intermediaries, which may include corrupt officials or market traders, to facilitate their sale. These networks enable the rapid sale of the stolen cattle in distant markets, often across international borders, to evade detection.

Rustlers may also 'rebrand' the cattle by modifying identifying features, such as ear notches or brands, complicating the process for owners to identify their stolen animals. In certain cases, law enforcement personnel may collaborate with rustlers, overlooking their activities in return for bribes or a share of the profits.¹⁰⁴

Collusion, rebranding and round-tripping

Some members of the butchers' associations in northern Cameroon allegedly receive stolen cattle, laundering it by mixing the stolen livestock with herds in their slaughterhouses. They also collude and interact with corrupt local officials to maintain the criminal economy. The criminal butchers in the value chain of cattle rustling are opportunists. In most cases, there is no certification of the origin of the cattle that are slaughtered by the butchers. The criminal groups steal to supply the butchers, who resell the meat at a low price.¹⁰⁵

A new dimension of the modus operandi is what can be described as cattle round-tripping – cattle rustlers taking advantage of shortcomings in legal and market systems, enabling them to profit from stolen cattle through cunning and deceptive manoeuvres. Rustlers usually focus on specific communities, launching raids in locations with insufficient security and where pastoralism is the primary economic activity. To escape law enforcement scrutiny, they transport the stolen cattle to far-off regions, frequently crossing state or national borders, which significantly impedes the ability of authorities to track them, as noted by a military official in Cameroon:

At one moment, Boko Haram needed the resources to finance its operations. Initially, Boko Haram from Cameroon was financed from [ransom received through] hostage taking. But later on, they needed to come and steal cattle from some cattle owners. And sometimes they take those cattle and go into Nigeria, and exchange them for other cattle so that they should not be known and then, they bring them back to the cattle market in Cameroon.¹⁰⁶

Stolen cattle are moved to Nigeria, the most significant cattle market in the region.¹⁰⁷ The rustlers then sell the stolen animals in local markets or to unsuspecting buyers. These cattle, now blended with legally sourced livestock, are offered at market prices, frequently through informal trading networks. The rustlers or their accomplices may subsequently buy back the same cattle through intermediaries or collaborators at a lower cost after they have been processed within the market framework. This approach allows them to create a 'legal' ownership record for the cattle, effectively eliminating any evidence of the initial theft.

In other scenarios, they transport the stolen cattle across borders, rebrand them with distinctive marks or tags, and then reintroduce them to the original country or region for sale. The newly acquired 'legal' cattle can be moved back to the original area or to a different market for resale, often at an elevated price due to demand or scarcity in those locations. This method enables rustlers to generate multiple layers of profit by obscuring the cattle's origins and cycling them through various markets where ownership verification is inadequate.

A significant area in these regions lacks robust livestock identification systems, including branding or microchipping, which allows rustlers to easily assert stolen cattle as their own after moving them to different locations. The lack of clear ownership documentation makes it increasingly difficult to identify cattle round-tripping. In areas where legal systems are weak or officials are corrupt, rustlers may forge documents or procure false ones to justify the movement of stolen cattle. These rustlers often collaborate with corrupt local officials or traders who help hide the cattle's origins. In exchange for a share of the profits, these accomplices may help with the necessary paperwork, licences, or access to markets. This enables rustlers to present the cattle as legally acquired, increasing the likelihood of their reselling them successfully without detection.

Incidents and impacts of cattle rustling: death and multidimensional poverty

The lack of effective governance has created a security gap that various criminal entities have exploited, leading to territorial control, kidnappings for ransom and cattle theft. Accurately estimating the total number of cattle rustled by these groups in the study area is challenging due to the unavailability of comprehensive public data across the regions. Furthermore, numerous incidents of cattle rustling remain unreported. In cases where they are reported, law enforcement agencies do not have a centralised system for criminal records to collate this data. Nonetheless, information sourced from ACLED highlights the scale and reach of this criminal activity in the border regions, as shown in Chart 4.

Since 2019, the frequency of cattle rustling incidents has shown a steady increase in the border regions. In 2024, the reported cases rose from 117 in 2023 to 158 (see Chart 5). There have been 230 deaths attributed to cattle rustling-related attacks during the period under review, with 2023 witnessing the highest number

of fatalities at 60 individuals. The information gathered by ACLED is derived from local groups and media sources, suggesting that many incidents may remain unreported. Importantly, the data compiled by the ACLED project indicates that 86% of the cattle rustling incidents in the study area occurred in the Extreme North region of Cameroon from 2015 to August 2024.

The lack of effective governance has created a security gap that various criminal entities have exploited

The fact that 86% of cattle rustling incidents in Chad and Cameroon occur in the Extreme North region of Cameroon deserves deeper explanation. This can be significantly attributed to the presence of Lake Chad, the Logone River and the Chari River, which form key grazing valleys that play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of cattle rustling in the region due to water and pasture availability, the seasonal movement of herders, bases for criminal and insurgent activities, concentration of pastoralist

communities and high density of livestock, transhumance corridors and migratory routes, seasonal scarcity and pressure on resources, desertification and migration.

Another significant impact of cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad is the destruction of livelihood

Lake Chad and the Logone and Chari rivers create fertile grazing valleys with abundant water and pasture. These areas are natural hubs for pastoralist communities, particularly during dry periods when other regions encounter resource scarcity. The clustering of herders and their cattle around these essential water sources makes them prime targets for rustlers. Pastoralists often migrate their herds to these rich valleys during transhumance (seasonal migration) to exploit the abundant grazing resources. This established movement pattern provides cattle rustlers with increased opportunities to organise and execute raids, as they can anticipate where significant herds will be located.

The Lake Chad Basin, which includes parts of Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger, is identified as a notable stronghold for several armed groups, particularly Boko Haram. The basin's wetland terrain and areas that are difficult to patrol facilitate the operations of these factions. Cattle rustling has become a significant means of generating revenue. The fertile grazing lands along Lake Chad are easy targets for these groups to steal cattle, which can then be moved across borders or sold locally. The lands attract a high density of pastoralist communities, particularly Fulani herders, who maintain large herds of cattle. This high concentration of livestock provides ample opportunities for cattle rustlers to raid herds. The presence of many herds in close proximity also makes it easier for rustlers to target multiple herds in a single raid.¹⁰⁸

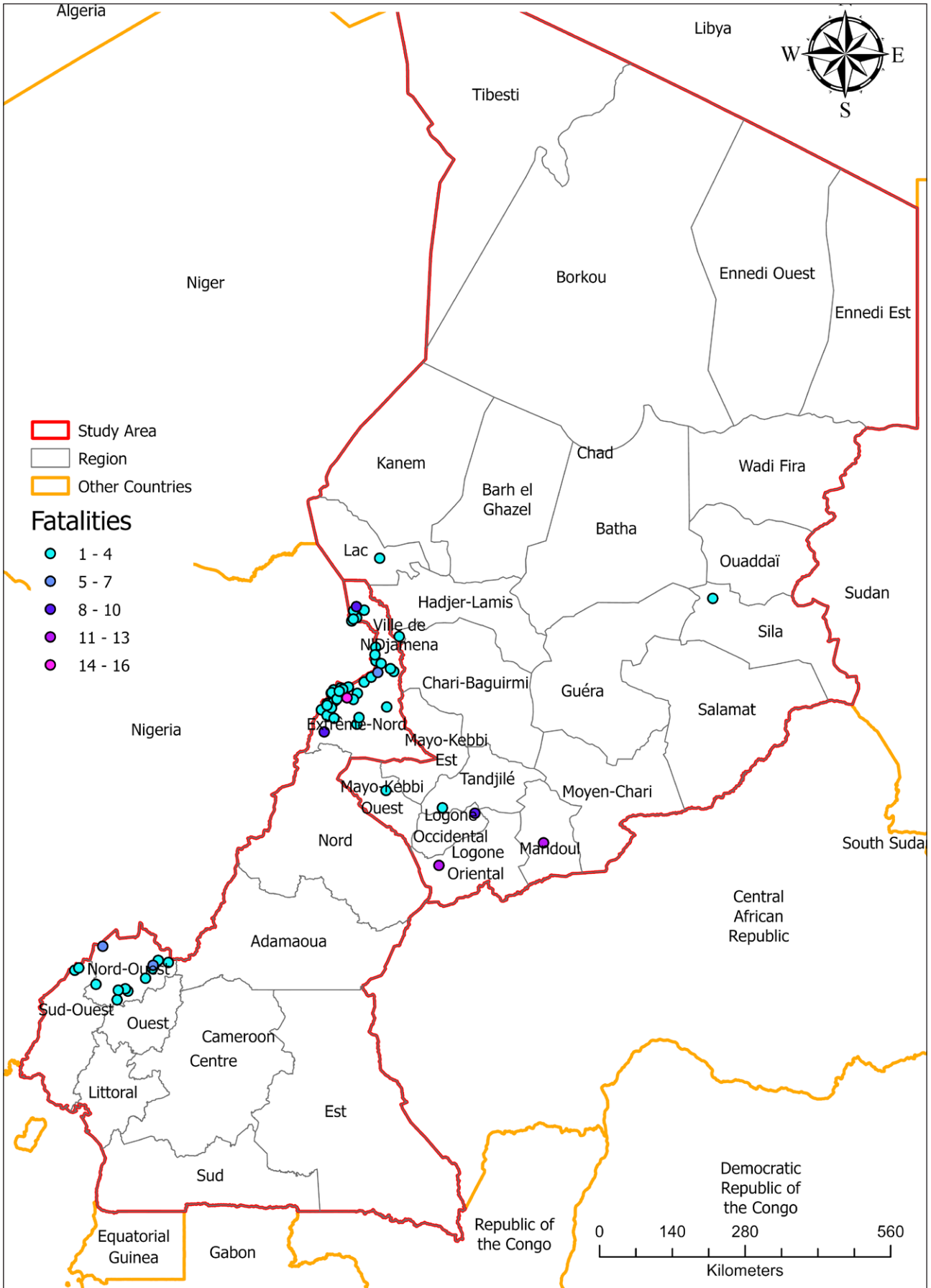
The region's rivers and fertile valleys are key transhumance corridors. Movement along these routes is predictable, and rustlers often plan raids around these movements, knowing where large herds will congregate. The movement of cattle across the borders of Chad and Cameroon along these river systems also facilitates the sale and transfer of stolen livestock. Rustlers can exploit these migratory routes to move stolen cattle out of Cameroon and into Chad or Nigeria, further complicating recovery efforts.¹⁰⁹

Environmental changes, such as desertification in northern Cameroon and southern Chad, have reduced available grazing land in other areas, pushing more pastoralists towards the fertile valleys and making it easier for rustlers to target large numbers of animals in a single raid.¹¹⁰

Another significant impact of cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad is the destruction of livelihood, which creates extreme social disequilibrium in herders' communities. Three stories narrated by cattle breeders in Waza and Kolofata illustrate how this phenomenon precipitates multidimensional poverty.

A breeder who shared his experiences with the authors has endured two separate incidents of cattle theft, resulting in the loss of 24 oxen. The most recent theft occurred on 19 July 2024,

Chart 6: Spatial spread of fatalities associated with cattle rustling in the study area



Source: Authors' compilation from ACLED

when his final three oxen were stolen. At 80 years of age, this individual has nothing left and has developed high blood pressure as a consequence. His last three animals were essential for ploughing his fields and providing sustenance for his family, which includes his wives, 22 children and 4 grandchildren. Despite his age, he intends to work as a farmer for the landowners. He has concerns that his wives may abandon him.¹¹¹

Senior citizens who have been victims of cattle rustling have reported persistent health problems and psychological issues, including depression. The second narrative from Kolofata tells of a man who has

endured two incidents of targeted cattle rustling, culminating in the loss of 80 cattle. This displaced person, residing in Bame, supports 4 wives and 21 children. He moved to Kolofata due to the Boko Haram insurgency. Recently, armed men attacked his two children, aged 13 and 14, who were tasked with guarding the cattle, and made off with 13 cattle. The children fled in fear, abandoning the livestock. Following the first incident, all four of his wives left him, though three returned after he began to show signs of recovery.

Senior citizens who have been victims of cattle rustling have reported persistent health problems and psychological issues, including depression

The repeated incidents of cattle rustling have significantly affected the quality of his diet and his access to fundamental services. He noted, 'before, I did not eat bad food. Today I am unable to provide for my family's needs.' One of his children was traumatised after the first incident of cattle rustling. He has four daughters, who cannot go to school due to lack of means.¹¹²

The last story was narrated by a breeder who noted that the major consequence of cattle rustling is the impoverishment of livestock households and the loss of human life. He noted, 'before we had milk and other things but today we have nothing. Many people have become poor and have become [subsistence] farmers.'¹¹³

Drawing from the discourse on the monumental impact of cattle rustling in the border regions, the next section appraises community, state and regional responses to cattle rustling in the study area.

Appraising community, state and regional responses to cattle rustling

Analysing the limitations of state and community efforts to combat cattle rustling in northern Cameroon and southern Chad uncovers systemic obstacles that perpetuate this issue. In these regions, where livestock is crucial for economic and social stability, there has been a persistent struggle to confront the increasing threat posed by cattle rustling. The shortcomings in responses can be attributed to a mix of governance, security and socioeconomic factors.

Weak state security presence

The porous border between northern Cameroon and southern Chad enables the fluid movement of cattle rustlers between the two countries. The insufficient policing of these borders hinders effective monitoring and apprehension of the cattle rustlers. Security forces in these regions are often constrained by limited funding and resources. Numerous governments in areas susceptible to conflict allocate only a small fraction of their national budgets to security and defence, as they face competing demands from sectors such as health, education and infrastructure.

Economic difficulties, including high levels of debt or insufficient tax revenues, further diminish the financial resources allocated to security. Thus, limited support prevents the security forces from effectively patrolling the expansive and remote areas where rustling is common. In some situations, local security personnel are outmatched by rustlers who are better armed and more organised. When interventions do occur, they are

generally reactive, taking place only after incidents have transpired; there is a notable deficiency in proactive intelligence efforts and sustainable counter-rustling initiatives.

The ENACT Organised Crime Index for Africa reveals that most countries in Central Africa (including Chad and Cameroon) face significant structural challenges and persistent constraints, which include lack of resources and limited independence of the security apparatus. Moreover, the region's 'territorial integrity' average (3.59) weakened slightly, by 0.09 points between 2019 and 2021 and 0.05 points between 2021 and 2023. The porous border is a significant concern. Moreover, national authorities often find it difficult to maintain full control over their territories, with certain areas frequently experiencing violence from armed rebel groups and organised crime networks.¹¹⁴

Ineffective community-based responses

While some local communities have formed vigilante groups or self-defence units, these initiatives are frequently characterised by fragmentation and inadequate coordination. The lack of solidarity both within and among communities, along with occasional rivalries, undermines the effectiveness of these grassroots efforts. Furthermore, mistrust often exists between local communities and state security forces, especially when communities feel overlooked or unfairly treated by government authorities.

This restricts the potential for cooperative action against cattle rustling. In these areas, cattle rustling frequently intersects with deep-rooted ethnic and communal disputes. The reactions of communities are often influenced by these underlying tensions, leading some groups to use rustling as a means of revenge or to assert control over competing communities. This complicates efforts to promote cohesive community initiatives aimed at combating the practice.¹¹⁵

Limited livestock identification systems

The absence of effective systems for tracking and identifying cattle significantly complicates the recovery of stolen livestock and the enforcement of accountability. Due to lack of modern branding, microchipping, or tagging systems, cattle rustlers can easily sell stolen livestock in distant markets without detection. They also exploit the insufficient regulation of these markets to sell stolen cattle quickly and efficiently. Moreover, the regional livestock markets in northern Cameroon and southern Chad are frequently inadequately supervised, making it challenging to trace the origins of the cattle sold there.

Inquiry about the application of modern livestock traceability mechanisms revealed how the herders and breeders are stuck with the primitive system. A research participant noted, 'everyone has their own sign. As soon as your cow gives birth, you have to put a distinctive sign.' However, most herders and livestock breeders have not considered implementing electronic tracing of their livestock because of the common belief that it unnecessary and expensive.¹¹⁶ This can be closely linked to widespread poverty, limited exposure and entrenched sociocultural factors that underpin livestock trade in the region and have lasted for centuries.

Due to lack of modern branding, microchipping, or tagging systems, cattle rustlers can easily sell stolen livestock in distant markets without detection

Insufficient regional cooperation

Cattle rustling is commonly associated with well-structured cross-border criminal syndicates that function between Cameroon, Chad and surrounding countries. The ineffective coordination of security initiatives and the insufficient sharing of intelligence among the governments of Cameroon, Chad and their neighbours significantly obstruct efforts to combat these criminal networks. Despite regional efforts such as the

It is imperative to develop new ways of thinking about what effective responses to cattle rustling should look like in the region

Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), designed to tackle transnational terrorism, implementation is frequently weak or absent.¹¹⁷

As a result, states have not created comprehensive frameworks for joint operations and broader intelligence sharing, allowing rustlers to exploit vulnerabilities in legal and security systems by moving stolen cattle across international boundaries. For instance, the MJTF only addresses the issues of terrorism around the limited border areas of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence about the dynamics of cattle rustling in the border regions of Cameroon and Chad. It identifies the drivers and enablers of the phenomenon, and the networks of actors engaged in it. The border regions of Cameroon and Chad are largely ungoverned, posing security challenges and exacerbating the illicit economy of cattle rustling. In these outlying regions and their hinterlands, the sustained presence of various criminal actors, illicit flow of small and light weapons, ongoing pastoral conflict and collusion by local elites enable cattle rustling. These issues are partly compounded by the inefficiency of state security forces at the border control points and their collusion in some instances.

Addressing cattle rustling in southern Chad and northern Cameroon requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach due to the region's complex interplay of economic, social and security dynamics. By combining security measures, legal frameworks, community involvement and economic development initiatives, these stakeholders can create a comprehensive strategy to reduce cattle rustling and promote stability and economic security in the region.

It is imperative to develop new ways of thinking about what effective responses to cattle rustling should look like in the region. Here are some options that could be implemented collaboratively by the state, security forces, the MJTF, pastoralist communities, civil society organisations (CSOs) and international development partners:

State and government-led interventions

- **Strengthening legal frameworks:** The governments of Chad and Cameroon should enhance existing legal frameworks or create new legislation that clearly defines cattle rustling as a serious crime. This should include commensurate penalties for offenders, while also ensuring that law enforcement is equipped to handle such cases effectively.
- It would be appropriate if countries could develop national policies for addressing transnational organised crime that will

provide the overarching policy to guide legislation and regulations and strengthen or build institutions such as community policing, a mobile courts system, and coordination mechanisms at national, local and community levels.

- **Community policing initiatives:** Governments can adopt community policing initiatives that are specifically suited to rural locales facing challenges related to cattle rustling. This would allow local law enforcement officers to work in partnership with pastoralist communities, promoting trust and enabling a quick reaction to incidents.

Security forces and the MJTF

- **Joint patrols and cross-border cooperation:** Given the cross-border nature of cattle rustling, the MJTF, in collaboration with national security forces, could implement joint patrols along the Chad–Cameroon border. Enhanced intelligence sharing between the forces in both countries will be key in disrupting cattle rustling networks.
- **Early warning systems:** The collaboration between security forces and the MJTF could facilitate the development of early warning systems in partnership with local communities. These systems could use a combination of traditional knowledge and modern technologies, including mobile alerts and community radio, to communicate incidents of cattle rustling or unusual movements swiftly.
- **Dedicated anti-rustling units:** Specialised units could be established within police and military forces to address the issue of cattle rustling. These units would be equipped with advanced tracking technologies, drones and satellite surveillance systems to monitor cattle movements across borders and apprehend offenders in isolated regions.

Specialised units could be established within police and military forces to address the issue of cattle rustling

Pastoralist communities

- **Strengthening local vigilante groups:** Pastoralist communities could form vigilante groups that are community-based and officially acknowledged by the state. It is crucial for these groups to receive adequate training and oversight to ensure that they operate legally, using non-lethal approaches to recover stolen livestock and mitigate the risk of theft.
- **Implementing cattle registration and tracking:** To enhance the tracking of cattle ownership and movement, communities could consider programmes for cattle marking, branding, or tagging. Furthermore, state entities, security forces and development partners could contribute technological support for digital systems that register livestock, which would help decrease the resale of stolen cattle.
- **Promoting dialogue between communities:** In many cases, cattle rustling is fuelled by inter-community tensions. States and CSOs could facilitate regular peace dialogues between pastoralist and farming communities to resolve conflicts peacefully, promoting coexistence and reducing the likelihood of retaliatory violence.

Civil society organisations (CSOs)

- **Mediation and conflict resolution training:** CSOs could play a role in building the capacity of local communities for conflict mediation and peaceful negotiation. Training in dispute resolution could help de-escalate tensions that often lead to cattle rustling and retaliation.

- **Public awareness campaigns:** CSOs could lead campaigns to raise awareness of the economic and social damage caused by cattle rustling, highlighting how it undermines livelihoods and community cohesion. This could build public support for anti-rustling initiatives and foster collaboration with security forces.
- **Community-based monitoring and reporting:** CSOs could help pastoralist communities create systems for anonymous reporting of cattle rustling incidents. This encourages more transparency and helps provide data for law enforcement to respond effectively.

International development partners

- **Providing technological assistance:** Development partners from around the world could offer cutting-edge technologies, such as GPS-enabled tracking collars for cattle, aerial drone surveillance and electronic registration systems, to support security forces and communities in effectively tracking cattle movements and reducing theft.
- **Funding livelihood alternatives:** Development partners could invest in programmes that provide alternative livelihoods for young men who may otherwise turn to cattle rustling due to economic desperation. This could include vocational training, microfinance for small businesses and agricultural support programmes.
- **Capacity building for law enforcement:** International partners could provide training and capacity-building programmes for local law enforcement and security forces on combating cattle rustling. These could include lessons about community engagement, intelligence gathering and non-violent conflict-resolution strategies.
- **Supporting cross-border peacebuilding initiatives:** Development organisations could support regional peacebuilding programmes, encouraging cooperation between Chad and Cameroon at both governmental and grassroots levels to address the root causes of cattle rustling, such as resource competition and insecurity.

Economic and development interventions

- **Establishing livestock markets:** Governments, in collaboration with development partners, should set up formal livestock markets that provide secure avenues for trading cattle, reducing the reliance on informal, unregulated markets where stolen cattle are often sold.
- **Improving pastoral infrastructure:** Allocating resources towards veterinary services, establishing water points and enhancing grazing routes could alleviate conflict over resources and bolster the resilience of pastoralist communities, decreasing their susceptibility to cattle rustling and reducing their likelihood of engaging in theft.

Notes

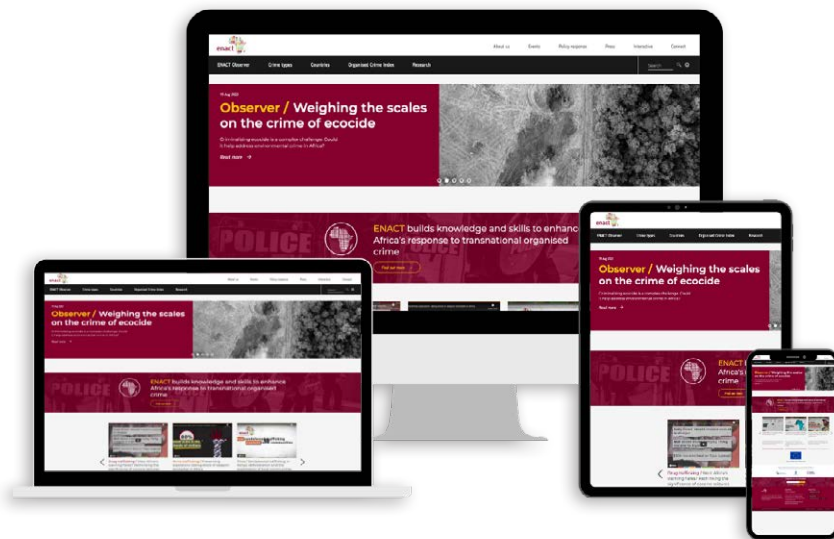
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Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

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Issue 46 | July 2024

Harnessing artificial intelligence to address organised environmental crime in Africa

Romi Sigsforth

Summary

Artificial intelligence (AI) offers innovative solutions for addressing a range of illegal activities that impact Africa's environment. This report explores how AI is being used in Africa to provide intelligence on organised environmental crime, craft tools to assess its impact, and develop methods to detect and prevent environmental criminal activities. It discusses the challenges and opportunities AI poses for policing environmental crime in Africa, and proposes recommendations that would allow AI-powered policing to make a real difference on the continent.

Recommendations

- African governments and organisations should invest in gathering large, local data sets to allow AI models to produce appropriate and relevant solutions.
- Investments in digital and communication infrastructure need to be made across Africa to improve and expand access to and affordability of AI solutions.
- Police forces across Africa should include technology and AI skills capacity building into their basic and professional development training curricula.
- Guardrails should be established through legislation to protect data, ensure privacy where necessary, and regulate the use of AI.
- Public-private partnerships must be strengthened for law enforcement agencies across Africa to receive the technology and training they need to effectively embed AI tools into their methodologies to combat environmental (and other) organised crime.

Research Paper



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Issue 48 | December 2024

Insurgency, organised crime and resource exploitation in Cabo Delgado

Annell Botha


Summary

Transnational organised crime is at the heart of the illicit extraction and smuggling of natural resources in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province. Is there evidence that insurgents are capitalising on the extraction of natural resources to radicalise and recruit new members, legitimise and justify their existence and attacks, or finance their activities? In the absence of interviews with militants, this study reflects on the views of community members living in areas where natural resources are extracted, and insurgents operate.

Key points

- Mozambique's government needs to consider a more effective information campaign to get ahead of incorrect perceptions insurgents could capitalise on.
- Words should be followed by action addressing the disparity between expected financial growth following the discovery of natural resources and the reality on the ground.
- Despite efforts from extraction companies to build community relations, more is needed to address negative perceptions and strengthen community resilience through efforts to make locals more employable. Piecemeal efforts are not going to be enough in the long term.

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Issue 47 | November 2024

Armed groups and illicit economies in Nigeria

Insights from Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara mining communities

Summary

Armed groups' involvement in illegal mining in Nigeria has exacerbated arms smuggling, consequently increasing insecurity and violent conflict in the country and across the Sahel. It's also seen a rise in the kidnapping of women and girls for forced labour in the mines. Governments must deal with the socio-economic and political factors that sustain banditry in Nigeria's North West Region, the involvement of armed groups in illegal mining and the transnational dimensions of the crime.

Key points

- Armed groups engage in illegal mining due to corruption by state actors and community members, as well as poverty and a lack of opportunities.
- Inconsistencies in Nigeria's mining sector regulations, specifically between the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act, 2007, and the Land Use Act, 2004, exacerbate the problem.
- Armed groups' control of mining areas undermines government legitimacy and stability.
- Militarisation has been unproductive and security forces are compromised by corruption.
- Illegal mining fuels security problems and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- The transnational criminal market for illegally mined gold extends to Chad, Libya, Lebanon, Niger and the United Arab Emirates.
- The use of girls in mining violates international labour laws.

Research Paper



enact
Enhancing Africa's response to transnational organised crime

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Youth gangs in Liberia: motives, structure and illicit economies

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Summary

Gangsterism in Liberia lies at the intersection of a society ravaged by civil war, a declining economy, social exclusion of a bulging underclass, collusion between state officials and illicit markets, and inefficient law enforcement. For youths, gang involvement offers a sense of belonging, a surrogate family structure, and a means of protection and economic benefits. Gangs are also available for hire by politicians, criminal networks and business people seeking to intimidate their opponents or protect properties.

Key recommendations

- A policy against gangsterism and criminal groupings is urgently needed in Liberia. A comprehensive policy would offer opportunities for a holistic response that involves the improved provision of public services, including enhanced law enforcement, in communities.
- Youth-focused development is a critical priority for addressing the causes of gang violence and drug abuse in Liberia. Without discounting the importance of quick impact youth-empowerment initiatives, development programmes need to be long-term.
- Schools should have drug prevention programmes.
- International support could help Liberia establish treatment and rehabilitation centres to address substance abuse and criminality.
- The Economic Community of West African States and African Union should establish a joint task force with Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to disrupt kush production points and supply chains.

Research Paper



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About ENACT

ENACT builds knowledge and skills to enhance Africa's response to transnational organised crime. ENACT analyses how organised crime affects stability, governance, the rule of law and development in Africa, and works to mitigate its impact. ENACT is implemented by the ISS and INTERPOL, in affiliation with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

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