CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
Policy Brief

Deployment of Non-State Armed Actors in National Territorial Defence and Security Operations: Evaluating Political and Security Issues and Risks (Niger)

Issuance date: 11 November 2024

Application Deadline and Instructions: Applications must be received by 1 December 2024.
All applications must be submitted electronically to recapsecretariat@wanep.org with, in the subject line "PB – Non State Armed Actors".

1. Introduction

The REcAP project, funded by the European Union, is implemented by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 18 countries of West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin[1]. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the role of civil society, including regional, national, and community practitioners and researchers in effective peacebuilding, crisis management, and prevention of conflict and violent extremism in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin to enable more informed decision making by policymakers. The present call is administrated jointly by WANEP, SIPRI, and DRC.

2. Rationale

WANEP, DRC and SIPRI are soliciting applications from Members of the REcAP Network to produce a policy brief on **Deployment of Non-State Armed Actors in National Territorial Defence and Security Operations: Evaluating Political and Security Issues and Risks (Niger).**

The policy briefs aim to improve practices and policies to prevent conflict, violent extremism, and peacebuilding in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin. Selected researcher(s) are expected to produce high-quality policy briefs based on desk research to identify and address, among others, the policy gaps and challenges on the chosen theme/topic with actionable recommendations to international, regional, and national policymakers.

2.1 Background

In this context, the study will thoroughly analyse how non-state armed actors act as local security providers along national armed forces in a volatile environment marked by the activity of the al-Qaeda affiliate Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).
It will present the types of actors involved and explore the modalities of their interactions with State security elements (the Army, the National Guard, the Gendarmerie, the police).
It will assess the consequences of these community strategies on the protection of civilians and on the securitisation of the regions involved while questioning the State's vision regarding current and future political and security strategy.

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[1] ECOWAS countries and Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania.

2.2 Objective of the consultancy

More specifically, the policy brief three main objectives and connected guiding questions are as follows:

- **An identification of the actors concerned and a description of their types of involvement in parallel with or with the National Armed Forces.**

Origin, constitution and operationalisation of "vigilance committees" and "self-defence groups" such as the Banibangou self-defence group in the Banibangou and Ouallam department, the Tahoua *Garde nomade* or the Tillabéri *Zankai*.[2]

- **An assessment of the evolution of their role before and after the 2023 Coup**

- Changes in the State's vision and strategies regarding non-state armed groups:

From initial resistance and caution in engaging with self-defence groups from Nigerien authorities…
(due to a history of "rebellions" in the country, comparisons with the rise and impacts of self-defence groups in Mali, preferences for reintegration and cooptation strategies and use of local networks and customary authorities.[3])
…To a shift from 2021 and the rise of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) casualties and attacks against National Security forces and civilians
(when some self-defence groups became "tolerated" but not officially recognised and seen as potentially serving State security interests on the ground as protection mechanisms).

- **A description oof the current relations with State armed actors and insertion in the State security and political strategy**

- Description of coordination, cooperation, and integration/rejection attempts between these groups and the national armed forces.

- Self-defense groups as products of the limitations of the State?
(Due to a lack of state capacities -in terms of manpower, combat, communication, and strategy- to protect civilians efficiently? Or to differences in the levels of threats between the regions?)

- Security and political perspectives:
Risks encountered by these actors while facing jihadi groups and impacts on the region's security, consequences for the civilians (casualties, exposure to jihadi threats and retaliations that led to forced displacements in North Tillabery in May 2021, for example, but also risks induced by the presence of local self-defence groups like abuses on individuals, armed robberies or thefts of livestock).

Negative impacts of their activity on an already fragile society cohesion (risks of community discriminations, inter-communal tensions and fueling of local conflicts; risks of aggravation of abuses from the military and the self-defence groups on civilians as witnessed in Mali and Burkina-Faso).[4]

New framing of relations between the self-defence groups and the military authorities? Professionalisation? Insertion in their counter-terrorism strategy?

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[2] GOXHO Delina. *Self-Defense Militia Groups in Niger: Risking a Time Bomb*. Policy brief, Megatrends Afrika, 17 oct 2023.
[3] De BRUIJNE Kars. *Self-Defence groups, politics and the Sahelian State*. Clingendael Institute, 14 December 2022.
[4] ICG. *South-western Niger: Preventing a New Insurrection*. Africa report n°301, 29 April 2021.

The policy brief's findings and recommendations should contribute to understanding of the shortcomings and provide concrete and evidence-based recommendations to stakeholders to address the highlighted challenges.

This policy brief will be presented by its author during a online REcAP Meet'Up with members of the network and interested researchers and institute after its publication.

3. Scope of work and methodology

The researcher(s) will be responsible for the implementation of all stages of the study, from the design of the methodology to the drafting of the final report, including document review and data collection in the field. The researcher(s) will apply the highest standards of rigour, quality and professionalism.

The researcher(s) will carry out the following tasks:

- Carry out a **literature review** based on existing documentation (scientific and academic literature, NGO reports) to provide a summary of current knowledge on the subject.
- Conduct **key informant interviews with main stakeholders**, especially local, regional and national authorities, including representatives of local organisations in contact with impacted populations.
- Drawing up **a preliminary preparatory report** highlighting: the definition of the subject of the study; the research and data collection methodology to be used; the methodological approach to data processing and analysis adopted; the findings and conclusions of the literature review.
- **Write the first draft of the Policy brief** based on the analysis of the desk review.
- **Write the final draft of the Policy brief** including comments received from the REcAP Scientific Committee and EU FPI.
- Produce a high-quality policy brief as a resource or tool for advocacy and policy discourse.

If travel is required, the researcher(s) or institution will be responsible to arrange transportation, accommodation, insurance, securing proper visas and research authorizations for their research activities and to make adequate provision in the Financial Proposal. The researcher(s) or institution is also responsible for any staff or sub-consultant they may engage as part of this mission. The final research product is subject to REcAP's internal review and editing process, and the researcher(s) or institution will resolve all necessary revisions within the scope of the contract.

Based on a request from the REcAP Project Secretariat, and conditional on the final product not revealing information that can put anyone or an organization in danger, the researcher(s) or institution might present a briefing of the findings for the public with a focus on targeting practitioners in the field, policymakers, and financial and technical partners.

4. Expected deliverables & timeline

The researcher(s) will be expected to deliver to the Project Secretariat:

- A policy brief on the selected topic in English or French.

- The policy brief should be approximately **three thousand words (3,000),** excluding the cover page, the executive summary, the table of content, and references (single spacing using Calibri 12).

- The researcher(s) will provide the deliverables by e-mail to the Publication Team (marie.riquier@sipri.org).

- The researcher(s) might be invited to a virtual meeting with REcAP's Scientific Committee to discuss the contents, including policy claims and positions, intellectual arguments, and any other issues.

Expected deliverables	Indicative description	Maximum expected

		timeframe
Draft Policy Brief	Desk research, work meetings and analysis. The draft Policy Brief embedded with in-depth situation analysis, key findings and action-oriented recommendations is presented to the REcAP Scientific Committee. The researcher might be invited to a virtual meeting with REcAP's Scientific Committee and the EU FPI to discuss the findings.	15 working days
Comments	*Comments & feedback from the Scientific Committee and/or the EU FPI*	*7 working days*
Final Policy Brief	Final version taking into consideration comments & feedbacks from the Scientific Committee and/or the EU FPI	7 working days

5. Duration of Assignment and payment schedule

- The assignment is expected to last one month (20 working days) from the contract signature date.
- The payment will be made in one instalment upon approval by the Scientific Committee of the final version of the deliverable.
- The maximum budget available per policy brief is two thousand euros (2,000 EUR).

6. Qualifications

Interested researcher(s) are expected to have the following qualifications:

- Be a member or an aspirant member of the REcAP Network. Members of the REcAP's Scientific Committee cannot apply. However, other researchers from their respective organisations can apply.
- Have a Master's degree or PhD in a relevant field.
- Have research experience in the selected themes/topics.
- Excellent command of French (spoken, read, and written) or English (spoken, read, and written). Working knowledge of the other one. Knowledge of Portuguese is considered an advantage.

7. Application

Interested researcher(s) should submit the following documents to the REcAP Project Secretariat (recapsecretariat@wanep.org) **before 23.59 GMT on 1 December 2024.**

- One page statement of Interest presenting an interesting and innovative angle to approach the theme.
- A CV with an updated list of publications.
- Two examples of policy briefs or similar documents published.

Only those shortlisted will be contacted.

8. Evaluation criteria for research proposals

The following criteria will be used by the Scientific committee to evaluate research proposals:

No.	Criteria	Max. Score
1	**Education**: Master's degree or PhD in a relevant field;	**10**

2	**Languages:** Excellent command of French (spoken, read, and written) or English (spoken, read, and written). Working knowledge of the other one. Knowledge of Portuguese is considered as an advantage.	**10**
3	**Research Experience:** At least 3 years of research. Familiarity and knowledge of the selected topic/theme as well as evidence of previous research experience in the selected theme/topic	**20**
4	**Relevance technical narrative proposal:** Does the research proposal address the objective of the research? Are the research objectives and research questions well-constructed and easily understood? Do they align with the research problem?	**25**
5	**Methodology:** Technical soundness and quality of the proposed methodology including understanding of the assignment and innovativeness of the approach to undertake it.	**25**
6	**Overall quality of proposal:** the degree to which the proposal complies with the application guidelines and is of high quality (table of contents, organization, pagination, margin and font size, ideas effectively presented, referencing, well prepared vitae etc.)	**10**