



Fragile Borders: Research Outcomes and Way Forward

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- ④ **politics.** Less and less difference between "terrorism" and "insurgency" in some regions

Research Framework

Research Questions

Addressing "fragility" and "conflict" from the perspective of the border

Impact on and adaptation of cross-border trade?

Role of State taxation (particularly Customs)?

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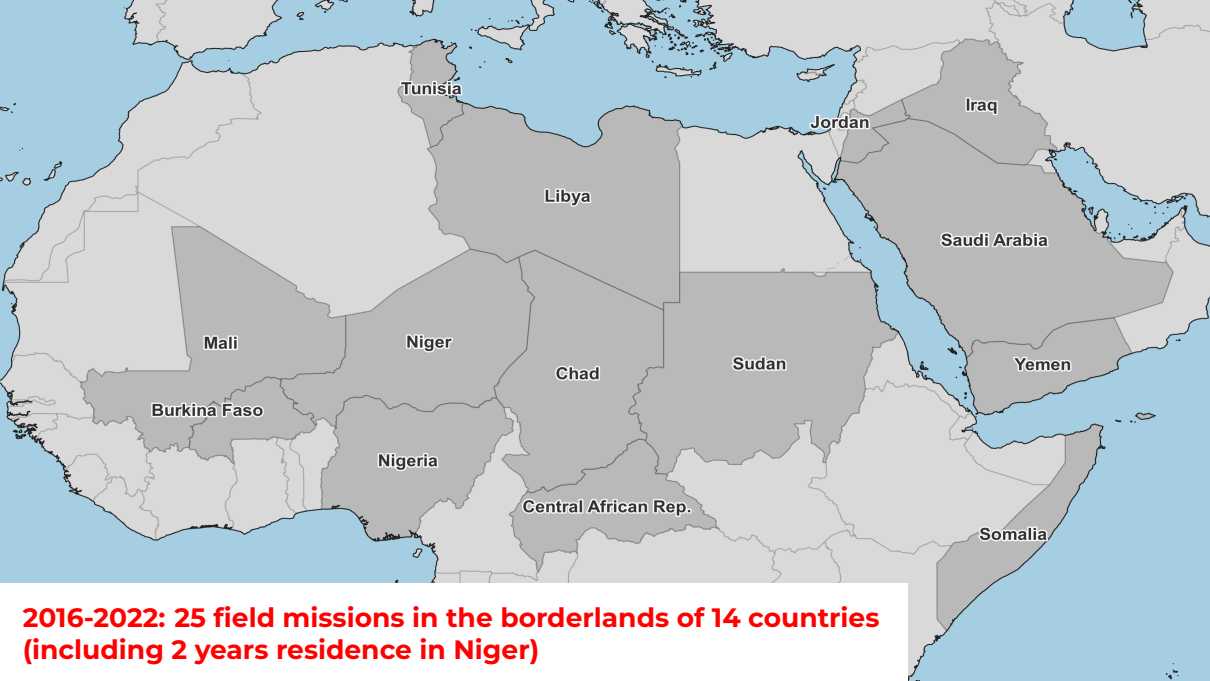
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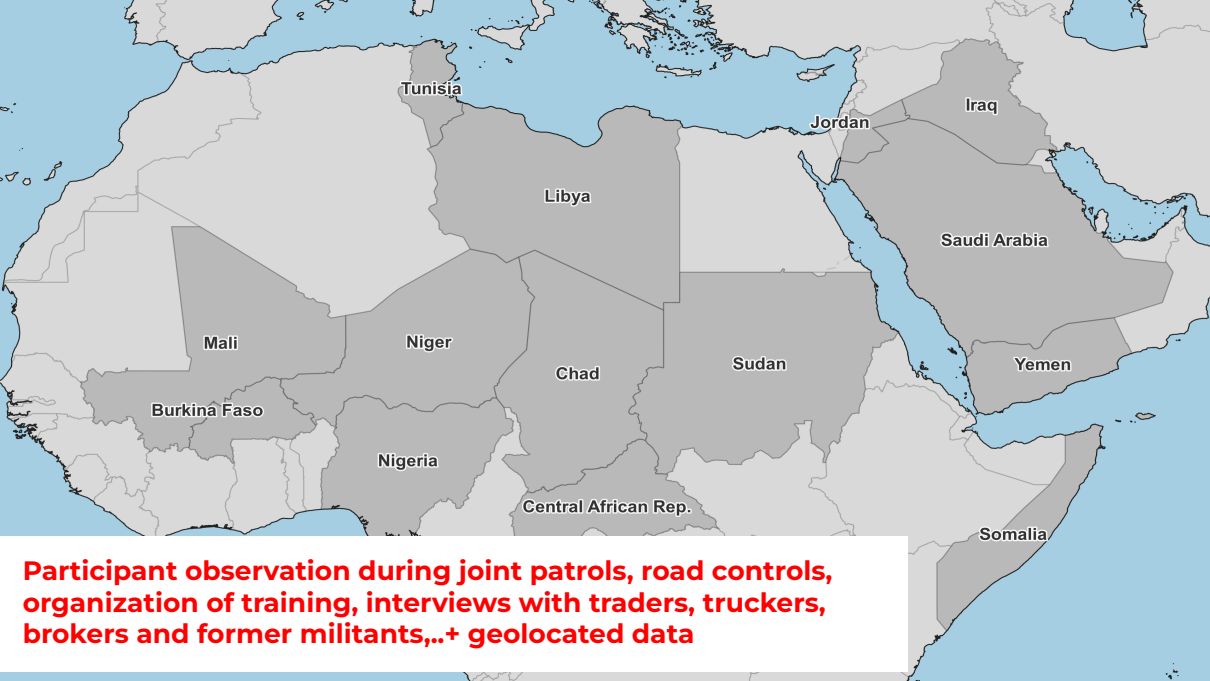
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Importance of the *border economy*

set of commodities flows, practices of and relationships between traders, brokers, smugglers, customs,... (to balance the common focus on *border security*)



**2016-2022: 25 field missions in the borderlands of 14 countries
(including 2 years residence in Niger)**



Participant observation during joint patrols, road controls, organization of training, interviews with traders, truckers, brokers and former militants,..+ geolocated data

Some Research Outcomes and Conclusions

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- Academia: 6 papers published, conferences, introduction into UCA Master course and Borders in Globalization Project (University of Victoria, Canada)
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- Regional school of borders for Customs and Internal Security Forces (Sahel, June 2021)
- First "handbook" based on experience in MENA and West and Central Africa (June 2022)
- "Fragile Borders" officially adopted on WCO agenda (June 2022)

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Example of Niger border posts in insecure areas

2018-2020: trade flows rose by 25% in volumes at the border with Burkina Faso and 45% in Diffa (Lake Chad), while incidents with jihadists increased by a factor of five in each borderlands, within a 50 km strip either side of the shared border

New competition framework in borderlands

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- "Frozen conflict" - post-conflict situation: cross-border trade/smuggling can be used as an "economic weapon" to damage the formal economy of the other side
- States and armed groups are in competition to govern cross-border trade and levy taxes

State vs. Armed groups

State security responses are rarely fitted to the border economy: internal security forces constrain/reduce/stop the movements of goods and people, increase the cost of moving goods, which may weaken the State's legitimacy.

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Armed groups may support cross-border trade (association with border communities, financial support to trade), increase/facilitate movements, and ensure police functions across borders easily.

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- ...and more violence (tax is rarely negotiable)

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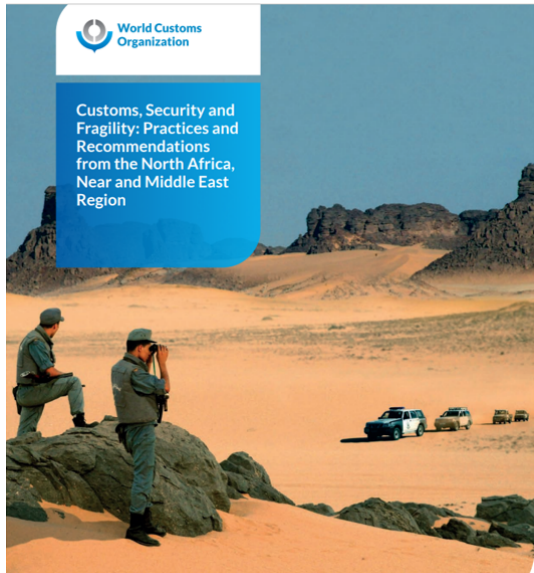
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- 5 Too much importance granted to the "fiscal contract": gap of temporalities between State's services improvement and real security needs of people - tax is a tribute for the big traders

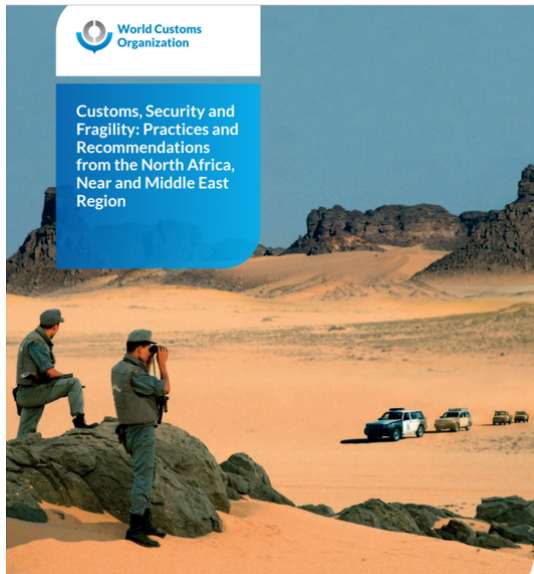
What to do? Technical lessons learnt



Keep the border open and secure
Customs in borderlands

June 2022 - 5 chapters

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Keep the border open and secure
Customs in borderlands

June 2022 - 5 chapters

- ① Policy - Advocacy: integration of Customs in national security
- ② Organization: Customs posts as critical State infrastructure
- ③ Equipment: staff protection and cooperation with other forces
- ④ Data and GEOINT: analysis, intelligence and tactical capacities
- ⑤ Training: protection without militarization

Way Forward

Way Forward for Research and Action

- ① Extension of *fragile borders* concept
- ② tax fairness and armed violence
- ③ technology; transfer (drones, data, GEOINT) + experiments (ESA) + appropriation

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Global Conference on Fragile Borders in Abuja, Nigeria (31.Jan-2 Feb. 2023) and action plan

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