

# Processes and Trends of Global Jihad on the African Continent

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# About the ICT

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## Executive Summary

On May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the anti IS international coalition addressed the jihadi organizations' expanding footprint in Africa as the growing threat to world security. As a rule, the jihadi presence and threat to Africa has been on the rise since the early 2000s. It grew thanks to basic African characteristics such as lack of governability, problematic political culture, corruption, and weak socio-economic position. The strategy employed by global jihadi organizations in Africa includes Dawah activity alongside enforcement of Sharia law on the local population in regions that lack state security forces presence and therefore are at the mercy of the terrorist organizations. With this state of affairs, the territorial and ideologic spread of the terrorist organizations without a massive counter effort is almost unavoidable.

Global jihadi organizations managed to leverage the violent conflicts in Africa and direct them to serve their immediate and long-term goals. Africa has experienced 25 state based armed conflicts in 2019 – the highest in the continent since 1946<sup>1</sup>. Of the above, more than a third had IS and al-Qaeda identified groups involvement that were responsible for 56% of the violence against civilians in that year<sup>2</sup>.

There are a few major marks that make up a central layer in understanding the development of global jihadism in Africa: the formation of AQIM in 2006, the Boko Haram pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda without having been formally accepted to the latter, the eruption of the Arab Spring in 2011, the collapse of Libya in 2011, al-Shabbab joining al-Qaeda in 2012, al-Qaeda and allies taking over northern Mali in 2012 and the French military involvement in 2013, the Egyptian coup in 2013 when the military deposed Morsi. Having said that it seems that the most significant change began in 2014 when IS entered Africa, which caused a major expansion of terrorism in the continent as well terrorist activities emanating from the violent IS-al-Qaeda rivalry and competition for territories, resources and influence.

Among global jihadi organizations one can observe two trends that typify their African activity: (i) the search for territories: al-Qaeda and IS whose vision is the formation of an Islamic Caliphate have found themselves, after their losses in the middle east (Iraq and Syria) and Asia, in a complex operational reality that requires them to focus on terrorism and guerilla warfare and constantly search for territories to establish themselves in. It is clear that when an opportunity to physically take over a territory presents itself, they will not hesitate to take it (especially IS) and Africa provides ample such opportunities. These days, al-Qaeda and IS control territories in Somalia, Nigeria (north east Nigeria and Lake Chad regions), Mali and Mozambique (Cabo Delgado district) and subjected the local population; (ii) the treatment of the local population: whereas al-Qaeda takes a pragmatic stand and tends to collaborate with the locals based on common interests IS takes an extreme and brutal approach and demands full compliance with Sharia law from the local population – a refusal is met with harsh punishment and violence.

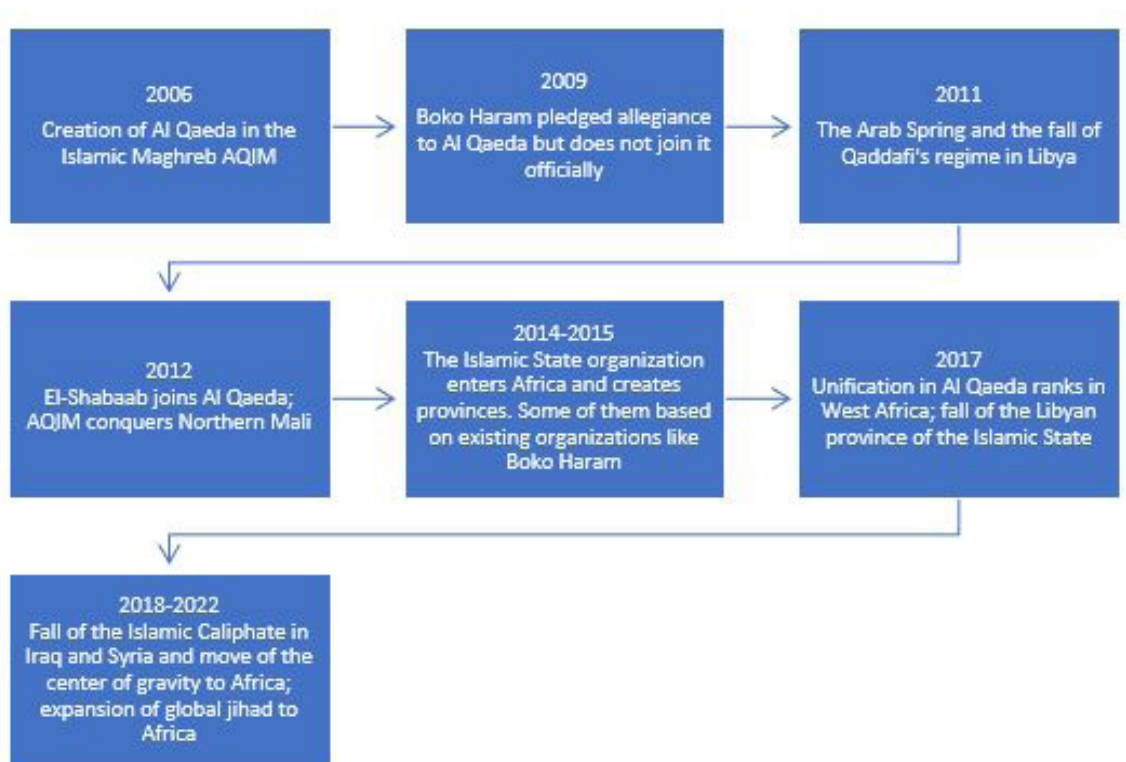
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1 Thérèse Pettersson & Magnus O'berg, "Organized violence, 1989–2019," *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 57(4), 2020, pp. 597–613. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022343320934986>

2 Ibid

The counter-terrorism activity led by the west (mostly France which is currently being phased out by Germany) together with the state militaries of the continent who are being affected by the phenomenon, has a significant influence on the terrorist organizations modus operandi in the continent. For example, al-Qaeda who used to perpetrate complex attacks on western targets changed its modus operandi to low intensity attacks on security forces (be it local. Regional or international).

The war on global jihad in Africa is becoming more complex these days for multiple reasons such as the Domino Effect causing internal conflicts to spill over to neighboring countries, lack of cooperation among member states in the joint task forces due to narrow state interests and more. Alongside that changes in the western powers that are active in Africa's strategy are taking place and emanate inter alia from the reduction of French military presence, increased Russian presence and caliber due to Wagner Force's involvement, multiple organizations and their online activity, the willingness to start a dialogue with the latter and more. It should be noted, the involvement of the international community fluctuates, sometimes significantly, which leaves many countries alone and ill equipped in the fight on terrorism and leads in many cases to negotiations with the terrorists and an acceptance of Sharia law in the territories under their control (e.g., in Mali).



Timeline: Global Jihadism Development in Africa

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## Preamble

In recent years Africa has become the main fighting theater for global jihad organizations mainly al-Qaeda and IS. Both organizations are violently fighting each other for territories as they have found Africa a fertile ground to disseminate their extreme ideology.

The expansion of global jihad in Africa is related to four trends that have been prevalent in the continent for over two decades: (i) violent conflicts; (ii) the rising number of militant groups (either jihadi or local militias); (iii) the expanding territories of the above groups (from local to regional to state level); (iv) the global jihad-communal/tribal violence connection – the jihadists capitalize the situation and social weakness.

The African states' weaknesses (either political, social or economic) coupled with corruption and lack of governability over vast territories in a number of states had a significant contribution to the expansion of global jihad in the Africa as the above enabled the latter to enter into the vacuum left by the legitimate governments and enlist the local weakened and alienated local populations while installing Sharia law.

Since the local population in the periphery is weak and has limited access to critical infrastructure (healthcare, education, electricity, water, public transportation) and employment the jihadi organizations offer alternatives such as schools, access to water and food, Islamic education etc. Thus, they win the local population's support and either recruit or conscript fighter.

The jihadist groups in multifaceted and comprised of multiple groups, each with its own goals and interests. The array of alliances and conflicts in Africa also relies on tribal affiliation and to that one can add the presence of and activity of rebel groups or even criminal gangs who are contracted to act on behalf of the terrorist organizations. Defenseless state borders enable the above freedom of movement and operations as well as uninterrupted cooperation with criminal elements dealing with gun running, drugs and human trafficking that provide necessary funding to the terrorist operations.

The major centers of operations for global jihad are currently spread over most of Africa including north Africa (Sinai Peninsula, Libya, Algeria), west Africa (Mali, Burkina Faso, Lake Chad basin, Nigeria and neighboring countries), Horn of Africa (Somalia and its neighbors), central Africa (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and neighboring countries)<sup>1</sup>. Al-Qaeda and IS are active in the above territories and fight with one another to gain the upper hand in the field.

The weakness of the militaries fighting global jihad brings to the surface the Domino Effect threat. The local militaries inability to beat the terrorists and their self-confinement in protected rear bases provides the jihadists with freedom of movement and operations, cross borders, massacre civilians and turn many into refugees in already economically and socially weak states. Thus, Islamic terrorism spillover to neighboring countries is part

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1 See <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/forecast-the-african-salafi-jihadi-movement-after-covid-19>

of a significant trend in recent years and poses a direct threat to their political stability.

This article will analyze the development of global jihad in Africa with a focus on al-Qaeda and IS. It will analyze processes and central trends and the complexity of the latter with the local population and review the counter-terrorism activity on a regional and international levels.

The first part of the article will examine the development of global jihad in Africa and highlight major development key point. The second part will analyze major trends of global jihad in Africa. The third part will analyze the counter-terrorism efforts against the global jihad in Africa and the challenges facing the affected countries and security forces in light of growing involvement of foreign forces in Africa.

## The Development of Global Jihad in Africa

The radical climate that was formed in Africa in the 1970s, coupled with a strengthening Muslim Brotherhood, increase of Saudi funding and Saudi sponsored Dawah activity and impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran<sup>2</sup> provided the ideologic bedrock for the growth of global jihad in Africa.

Al-Qaeda, led by Osama Bin Laden (until his death in 2011) was formed in the 1980s on the backdrop of the Afghani-Soviet war. Al-Qaeda gained support in the 1990s and its senior members, first and foremost Bin Laden arrived at new conflict theaters in the middle east, Asia and Africa. There, they focused on forming local jihadi organizations. For example, Bin Laden himself established an operation base where he stayed during the early 1990s until he was expelled from the country. In Somalia al-Qaeda operatives connected with local Islamic organizations to establish bases of operations in Somalia and other states in the region<sup>3</sup>.

In the late 1990s al-Qaeda understood the potential of perpetrating terror attacks on western targets in Africa. For example, in 1998 the perpetrated a suicide attack on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. In 2002, they struck again, this time they attacked the Paradise hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, launched surface to air missiles against an Israeli Arkia flight as it took off from the Nairobi airport<sup>4</sup>, and attacked a synagogue in Tunisia<sup>5</sup>. Despite the above, al-Qaeda formed its official African extension only in 2006. In the beginning they established themselves in north Africa and later expanded to other regions.

2 Michael Barak, *Sufism in Wahhabi and Salafi Polemic Discourse in Egypt and the Mashriq (Arab East) 1967-2001*. PhD dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, 2014 (in Hebrew).; Stig Jarle Hansen and Atle Mesø, *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa*, Dec 2009. <http://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk/ruiah/i-m-e.pdf>

3 Rabasa, A. (2009). *Radical Islam in East Africa*. Rand Corporation

4 Eitan Azani, Lorena Atiyas Lvovsky and Danielle Haberfeld (2016) *Trends in Aviation Terrorism*. ICT. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1757/trends-in-aviation-terrorism#gsc.tab=0>

5 Angel Rabasa, *Radical Islam in East Africa* RAND (2009). <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG782.html>

The following chapter will review the main key points that influenced the development of global jihad in Africa, including that of al-Qaeda, the split in the global jihadi movement and the establishment of IS in the continent.

### Algeria First, the Formation of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

In 2006 al-Qaeda's leadership decided to expand its operation theaters to northern Africa. As a result of said decision al-Qaeda declared the formation of a formal extension (AQIM) which was its second one after the formation of the Iraqi extension in 2004. The need to form extensions and establishing operational infrastructure in new operational theaters was born out of al-Qaeda's distress following the US invasion to Afghanistan and extensive activity against the organization around the country<sup>6</sup>. Further, the organizational policy post 9/11 attacks shifted from a centralized hierarchical organization to a globally spread decentralized organization with presence in central jihadi arenas. This strategy, first and foremost, was to increase the organization chances of survivability in the face of the US' declaration of war<sup>7</sup>.

AQIM was founded in Algeria on the bedrock of groups that fought the Algerian government in the 1990s, among them the Salafi Group for Dawah and Fighting (GSPC) led by Abdel Malik Droukdel who became AQIM's leader until his death in 2020<sup>8</sup>.

The importance of Africa to al-Qaeda was manifested in articles and statements on the eve of AQIM's formation. For example, in a 2006 article by Abu Azam al-Ansari titled *Al-Qaeda is Moving to Africa*<sup>9</sup> it was highlighted that al-Qaeda assigned great importance to Africa's strategic location and to recruiting new operative from the local population. Per the al-Ansari, tribal conflicts and civil wars on the continent may assist in jihadi oriented recruitment and that low socio-economic status provides the mujahidin with an opportunity to provide resources to the local population in return for their support in al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda's leaders and prominent figures within the organization assisted with guiding AQIM. For example, a fatwah from 2008 issued by Abu Musab al-Maghribi posted in the digital magazine *Sada al-Jihad* called for jihad against the Algerian regime. Al-Maghribi said that jihad is an obligatory duty, and it must be carried out against the Algerian regime leadership because they represented heresy and socialism<sup>10</sup>.

In its infancy AQIM contended with counter-terrorism activity from the Algerian

6 David Doukhan & Eitan Azani (2021) Global Jihad in Africa: Danger and Challenges. ICT. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2719/GlobalJihadinAfrica#gsc.tab=0>

7 Global Jihad in Africa: Danger and Challenges Author(s): David Doukhan and Eitan Azani International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) (2021) Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep37744>

8 Shaul Shay (2020) France killed al-Qaeda's leader in the Maghreb. ICT. <http://www.ict.org.il/images/France%20killed%20al-Qaeda's%20leader%20in%20the%20Maghreb.pdf>

9 See <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/theater-of-jihad-africa>

10 Fatwa in an Al-Qaeda magazine calling for Jihad Against the Algerian Rulers. ICT. <file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/JWMG%20-%202002-10-2008.pdf>

government which caused its fighters to withdraw to mountainous regions and limited al-Qaeda's activity in Algeria including the establishment of an operational infrastructure in Mali.

AQIM's formation was global jihad's first significant foothold in Africa and inspired local jihadi organization to rise against their governments and western elements in Africa<sup>11</sup>.

### Boko Haram in Nigeria Pledge Allegiance to al-Qaeda However Rejected by its Leader

AQIM's formation was a catalyst for other large terrorist organizations in Africa to join al-Qaeda's ranks. Among those was Boko Haram that was founded in Nigeria in 2002 to establish a Sharia law run state via a non-violent struggle against the Nigerian regime<sup>12</sup>. Between 2007-2009 when it was led by Muhammad Yusuf the organization assassinated an Islamic cleric and perpetrated an attack against the Nigerian security forces but other the above its strategy was nonviolent<sup>13</sup>. After Yusuf's death in 2010 (captured and killed after a police interrogation) Boko Haram, under the leadership of Abu Bakr Shekau who vowed to avenge the death of Yusuf<sup>14</sup>, embarked on a violent path that included coordinated terrorism and guerilla attacks. That year Boko Haram took a pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden, but al-Qaeda's leadership rejected the pledge albeit said they would support Boko Haram by providing them with weapons and training (as evidenced by joint training in the Islamic Maghreb)<sup>15</sup> and by promoting their influence in Africa. In a relatively short time Boko Haram grew from a small group of fighters with a local agenda to large jihadi organization with a radical agenda<sup>16</sup>.

The bulk of Boko Haram's activity in those years concentrated in northeastern Nigeria where they took control over territories and had some 25 million people under their rule. During this time the world learned about their cruelty and abuse against the population under their control, they destroyed the education system and killed all the teachers that were employed there, ethnically cleaned Christians from the territories they conquered and killed Muslims whom they thought were not pious enough.

11 Caleb Weiss, Understanding al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb's: Expansion into West Africa (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point: United States Military Academy, April 2022).

<https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/AQIMs-Imperial-Playbook.pdf>

12 John Campbell (2014) Boko Haram: origins, challenges and responses. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/184795/5cf0ebc94fb36d66309681cda24664f9.pdf>

13 See <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/SR308.pdf>

14 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09546553.2015.1005742>

15 <https://www.ict.org.il/images/%D7%94%D7%92%D7%99%D7%94%D7%90%D7%93%20%D7%94%D7%92%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%91%D7%9C%D7%99%20%D7%91%D7%90%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%94%20%D7%94%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA%20%D7%95%D7%94%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%92%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D.pdf>

16 <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/a-biography-of-boko-haram-and-the-baya-to-al-baghdadi> ; <https://ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-harams-dangerous-expansion-into-northwest-niger>

## The Arab Spring and the Collapse of the Qaddafi Regime in Libya

The Arab Spring that erupted in 2011 led to major changes in regimes around the middle east and Africa, especially Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Syria and Yemen sunk into a prolonged civil war and other countries saw major anti-government protests. The Arab Spring surprised global jihad as well. Al-Qaeda tried to leverage the events to topple corrupt regimes and installment of sharia in their stead however their success was mainly using the chaos to establish and solidify terrorism infrastructures<sup>17</sup>. For example, jihadi terrorist organizations have established strongholds in the Sinai Peninsula after the latter has been neglected for decades by the Egyptians and turned it into a terrorism center against Egypt and Israel.

In Libya, like many other middle eastern and north African countries, a civil protest started in 2011 that led to armed clashes between the protesters and Qaddafi's troops. That year the Qaddafi regime collapsed after NATO intervened in the above hostilities. The regime's collapse opened "the gates of hell" for the entire African continent because Qaddafi's military's vast arsenal was looted, and the looters formed gun running networks that supplied weapons to the highest bidder and turned Libya into the weapons supplier of choice for terrorists in Egypt (especially Sinai Peninsula) and the Sahel region all the way to Nigeria.

The collapse of the Qaddafi regime had an immense influence on northern and western Africa and paved the way to separatist tribes to bear arms and challenge the central government. For example, in 2012 Mali, the Tuareg who have fought for Qaddafi in the past and had a military training returned from Libya riding 4X4 heavy technical vehicles equipped with heavy machine guns and rocket launchers and an agenda to operate in their country.

## The Rise and Fall of al-Qaeda in Northern Mali

The March 2012 military coup in Mali rallied the al-Qaeda affiliated militias to emerge from their desert hideouts into the cities<sup>18</sup>. This coup turned Mali, which until then was considered a stable country, at least compared to its neighbors, into a failed state, i.e., a state where there is no clear regime with enforcement capability, a state that cannot provide its citizens with anything and has no accountability to them. The coup further weakened the country and sparked a series of armed clashes with armed militias reinforced by al-Qaeda. The governmental vacuum allowed some al-Qaeda affiliated militias to swoop in and take over large territories while leveraging the local ethnic tensions such as the one between the Tuareg and the Fulani tribes over water sources in the Sahara<sup>19</sup>.

17 Al-Qaeda and the Arab Spring. file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/Al-Qaeda%20and%20the%20Arab%20Spring.pdf

18 <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220329-il-y-a-dix-ans-le-nord-du-mali-tombait-aux-mains-des-jihadistes>

19 The conspirators against Tora's regime explained that they decided to topple him because his regime wasn't able to end to the Tuareg rebellion. For expansion on Mali see Irit Beck, "The Mali Crisis: Tribalism, the West and Radical Islam", the Middle East Junction (vol. 3, issue 6, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013); file:///C:/Users/%D7%93%D7%95%D7%93%D7%93%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%9F/Downloads/Tzomet\_Back\_Mali%20(3).pdf



Another milestone in global jihad development in Africa lies with appointing al-Shabbab al-Mujahidin in Somalia as an official al-Qaeda affiliate. Al-Shabbab was founded in 2006 in Somalia. Al-Shabbab al-Mujahidin was founded in 2006 in Somalia. It developed from the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) who ruled Mogadishu until 2006 when they were defeated by the joint forces of the Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) that operated in the country<sup>20</sup>.

By 2008 al-Shabbab managed to take over the rural areas and the ports in southern Somalia as well as cities and ports in the center of the country<sup>21</sup>. In 2009 al-Shabbab posted a clip titled "Osama, at Your Service" wherein they pledged their allegiance to al-Qaeda. Indeed, since its infancy al-Shabbab tightened its ties to al-Qaeda, adopted its ideology and methods to attract foreign fighters to the Somali arena<sup>22</sup>. However, their request to join al-Qaeda as its official Somali affiliate has not been accepted by Bin Laden. In 2012, after Bin Laden's killing, his successor, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, has accepted the request and announced them as al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Somalia and their leader, Ahmad Abadi Godane (AKA Mukhtar Abu Zubair) as the affiliate's emir (until the latter's death in 2014)<sup>23</sup>.

Since then, despite continuous activity against al-Shabbab by neighboring countries such as Kenya and Ethiopia as well as regional and international forces, the organization is active and keeps attacking in Somalia and its neighboring countries and control considerable territories.

## A Coup in Egypt and Growing Violence in the Sinai Peninsula

A military coup in 2013 following which the reigning president Muhammad Morsi has been deposed led to the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood regime, sparked a response within al-Qaeda's leadership and led to growing violence in the Sinai Peninsula. In July 2013 al-Qaeda posted a clip featuring al-Zawahiri's response to the coup. Al-Zawahiri argued that the collapse of public order in Egypt was a product of the Morsi removal from office "the battle has not ended, it just begun [...] the Islamic nation needs to offer sacrifices over sacrifices to achieve what it wants and take back the power from the corrupt regime that reigns Egypt<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, Sheikh Abu Abd al-Ilah al-Jiji al-Jazaari, a prominent AQIM leader condemned Morsi's removal and insisted that the Egyptian military is purposely attacking the Egyptian Muslims<sup>25</sup>.

Moreover, it seems that the coup has disrupted the deterrence balance in the Sinai that

20 See <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/143205.htm>

21 See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>

22 See Garenstein-Ross, Daveed, "The Strategic Challenges of Somali's al-Shabaab," Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2009, 25-36.

23 See <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/61>

24 Al-Zawahiri calls for "victims and sacrifices" Daily News Egypt (6 July 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2013/07/06/al-zawahiri-calls-for-victims-and-sacrifices/>

25 <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/201/The%20Military%20Coup%20in%20Egypt%20as%20a%20Catalyst%20for%20Increased%20Terrorist%20Activity%20in%20Egypt%20and%20the%20Sinai#gsc.tab=0>

was in place during Morsi's tenure between the Egyptian army and the jihadi groups in the peninsula and increased the volume of terrorist attacks against Israel and Egypt. For example, during 2013 rockets were launched at Israel on several occasions<sup>26</sup>.

This activity was endorsed by al-Qaeda's leadership. Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the leader's brother issued a fatwah that allows the jihad against the secular Egyptian opposition, the military one and the police force – in response to the illegal military coup. He insisted that it was a duty to defend Morsi and the agenda to turn Egypt into an Islamic theocracy<sup>27</sup>.

## IS Entry to Africa

In 2014 ISIS announced the establishment of the Islamic caliphate led by the caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The split from al-Qaeda affected jihadi movements all over the world and attracted many al-Qaeda supporters due to the organization's status decline following the Bin Laden killing.

In Africa, IS first landed in Libya. With Qaddafi's fall in 2011 Libya suffered a governmental vacuum that enabled the growth of several jihadi groups. The latter were mostly formed to support the jihad against Assad's regime in Syria and send fighters, many of whom from a Libyan descent, to partake in the civil war there<sup>28</sup>.

In 2014, many foreign fighters returned to Libya from Syria and gradually the former became a jihadi theater in its own right. The assumption is that the returning fighters joined The Islamic Youth Shura Council in Derna (eastern Libya) that pledged its allegiance to al-Baghdadi in October 2014<sup>29</sup>. This group managed to take a few strategic areas in and around Derna and install there the Sharia law (as per its interpretation by IS). Later in 2014, IS announced three Libyan provinces based on Libya's historic provinces: Barqa in the east (the historic Cyrenaica province), Tripoli in the west and Fezzan in the south-west<sup>30</sup>.

Since 2014, one could see operations budding in Tunisia, Senegal, Mali, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Moreover, organizations that were previously identified with al-Qaeda switched over and pledged their allegiance to al-Baghdadi thereby by causing rising tensions between al-Qaeda and IS. Among the above organizations, of note is Ansar Bait al-Maqdis that pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi in 2014 and was officially recognized as IS' Sinai province (IS-Sinai).

26 See <https://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/Pages/study/2013.aspx>

27 <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/201/The%20Military%20Coup%20in%20Egypt%20as%20a%20Catalyst%20for%20Increased%20Terrorist%20Activity%20in%20Egypt%20and%20the%20Sinai#gsc.tab=0>

28 See <https://www.assawsana.com/portal/pages.php?newsid=122118>

29 <http://24.ae/article.aspx?ArticleId=144349>

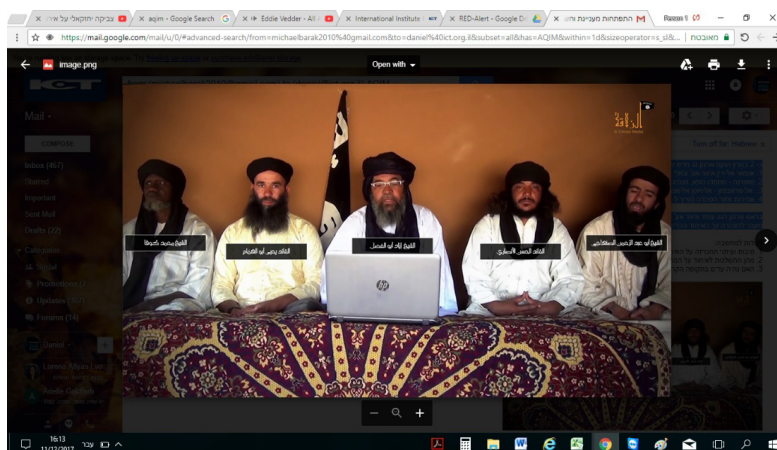
30 <http://t3beer.ahlamontada.com/t11335-topic>; <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/11/the-emergence-of-the-islamic-state-cyrenaica>

By the end of 2017, Libya province served as a springboard for the expansion of IS' activity in Africa. For example, Boko Haram pledged allegiance in 2015 and was recognized as a formal province (ISWAP). MUJAO in Mali who pledged allegiance in 2015 were recognized as the greater Sahara province (ISGS) in 2016. Other than the above one could see al-Qaeda defectors who worked to establish terrorism infrastructure identified with IS such as defectors from al-Shabbab (al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Somalia).

## Organizational Changes in AQIM

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Abd al-Malik Drukdal, AQIM's leader, that his organization will be merging with al-Murabitun, led by Sheikh Mokhtar Belmokhtar: "we announce to the Islamic nation that the lions of Islam and heroes of the struggle of the al-Murabitun Brigade will be joining al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Al-Murabitun's spokesman, Abu Dujana al-Qasama confirmed the announcement and explained that the merger was meant to maintain unity within the ranks and avoid splits among the mujahidin "joining our beloved brothers of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb was meant [to maintain] a united position against the conquering crusader enemy". The above merger ended a long-standing conflict between the organizations and was enabled mainly because both organizations faced a real threat from IS in northern Africa and wanted to join forces to fight this threat.

Another round of mergers in AQIM occurred in March 2017 within which a new jihadi umbrella organization was founded in Mali (Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam Wal Muslimin – JNIM). On this backdrop the organization released a clip showing the representatives of the member organizations sitting together – Iyad Ag Ghali (Ansar Dine), Amadou Kouffa (Macina), al-Hassan al-Ansari (deputy leader – al-Murabitun), Yahya Abu Yahya al-Hammam (the emir of the Sahara emirate – AQIM) and Abu Abderrahmane al-Sanhaji (the judge for the Sahara region).



JNIM leaders sitting together

In addition to the announcement, Ghali pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda's Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, AQIM's Drukdal and the emir of the Taliban. The formation of JNIM was meant to

present a united front of al-Qaeda loyalists but didn't override the organizations' independence. De facto this was a direct product of the physical distance between AQIM's leadership in the Islamic Maghreb and JNIM in Mali<sup>31</sup>. The above rounds of mergers under al-Qaeda's auspice strengthened the latter's stature in west Africa.

In these years Arica kept its central place in al-Qaeda's strategy. For example, in 2016, it was argued in Inspire magazine that the series of attacks in Africa meant to purify Islamic lands from the nests of international intelligence agencies and avenge our people in central Africa, Mali and other places in the Muslim countries from east to west.

Turning Africa in recent years to a hotbed of global jihad activity was reinforced by al-Qaeda's leadership. For example, in September 2017, al-Sahab media outlet, al-Qaeda's official media outlet posted a new recording of al-Zawahiri titled "Messages to the Frontlines". In his speech al-Zawahiri stressed the activity in Africa, praised the jihadists, especially AQIM's mujahidin, for their success in causing casualties and loss of equipment to the Algerian army. He further said that the media avoided reporting the above and prefers to minimize the mujahidin's victories. Per him the above victories will serve as a springboard for the conquest of Spain/Andalusia. Therefore, he said, the mujahidin in Mali and the region should increase their armed activity against the French forces because the latter have returned to the region to persecute Muslims. He emphasized boosting the mujahidin's morale and encouraged them to continue their activity against Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda and other countries in the region.

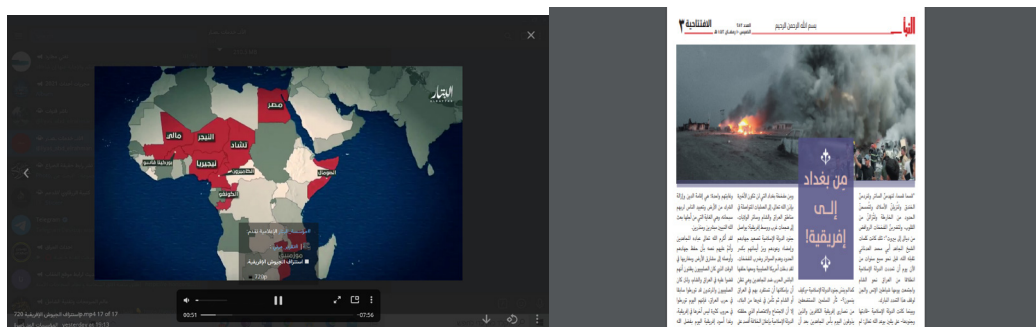
### The Collapse of the Islamic Caliphate and the Expanding the African Provinces

The collapse of the caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2018 started some changes in IS that now, devoid of territory, reverted to guerilla and terrorism typical of global jihadi organizations. However, as the vision of a caliphate was still alive and the need for territories immediate, the quest for territories continued, especially in Africa, where IS started to gain significant power in its current provinces and newly founded ones, such as the one in central Africa.

Africa became one of IS' centers of gravity and even its leadership acknowledge its importance. For example, an editorial in al-Nabaa (an official IS weekly in the Arabic language) under the headline "From Baghdad to Africa" it was argued that "IS expanded...and reached far beyond the near border of the Levant, as it reaches beyond the Arab region and even the continent, from Baghdad to Africa!". "IS presents central and western Africa provinces. The mujahidin are in: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Mali, Congo, Mozambique and others when they raid camps and towns and burn headquarters and sheds..."

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31 See <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/al-qaeda-in-the-islamic-maghreb-leaders-and-their-networks>



Left: a clip presenting IS activity in Africa (produced by al-Batar in 2021); the “from Baghdad to Africa” editorial

IS was the last to arrive at Africa due to its losses in Syria and Iraq yet it quickly managed to recruit many groups, who act with extreme violence against the local population, the local military and security forces and of course al-Qaeda.

## The Expansion of Global Jihad in Africa

### Al-Qaeda

In recent years al-Qaeda has been contending with two main challenges in Africa: (i) vs. IS – for human capital, resources and territories; (ii) elimination of senior leaders, especially AQIM's. In recent years AQIM has suffered major blows due to the elimination of senior leaders, including Abd al-Malik Drukdal, its leader, who was killed by French forces on Mali's northern border on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Prior to that, at the beginning of 2019 two senior Shura council members were killed: Yahya Abu al-Hammam and Abu Ayache al-Sanhaji (who was described as JNIM's second in command). The killings affected JNIM's activity as well as the dynamics among jihadi organizations in the Sahel and Sahara regions. That said, the organization regrouped and recovered and Yusef al-Anabi took Drukdal's place as AQIM's leader.



Right to left: Abd al-Malik Drukdal, Yahya Abu al-Hammam, Abu Iyad al-Tunisi, Abu Ayache al-Sanhaji



Banner for a clip posted in February 2020 featuring an obituary by Drukdel regarding two senior leaders of his organization: Abu Yahya al-Hammam and Abu Ayache al-Tunisi

Despite the above challenges al-Qaeda managed to expand its activity in its traditional operation theaters: western Africa and the Horn of Africa. AQIM, led by Abu Ubeida Yusef al-Anabi since 2020, has been operating with low intensity in Algeria, Tunisia and Libya but with high intensity in Mali and Burkina Faso. Since 2013, when AQIM was driven out of Mali by the French forces, its members have been focusing on rebuilding their strength. They managed to strengthen their ties with local tribes such as the Fulani in south Mali and the Tuareg in northern Mali and expand into other territories in Mali and its neighbors such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Benin, Mauritania and Ivory Coast.

Alongside al-Qaeda, JNIM, led by Iyad Ag Ghali, is active as well. Since its inception in 2017 it has cast a wide net throughout Mali, Sahel and Sahara and even penetrated Burkina Faso and Niger. For example, between 2017-2020 it perpetrated approx 640 attacks which comprised approx 64% of the total attacks in the Sahel and Sahara during that period. On that note, the Macina Liberation Front seems to show prominence compared to other members of JNIM.

Al-Qaeda affiliates make a point of presenting themselves as attentive to the needs of the local Muslim population in the territories under their control and dedicate their activity to them. For example, AQIM announced in 2020 that it would refrain from any activity against the Algerian security forces so as not to sabotage the popular protest against the regime and highlighted its desire to protect the Algerian people's interests. It alluded that it would remove its self-imposed restraints to face the oppressive policy the regime has exercised against the protesters. The above demonstrate the organization's efforts to expand its popular support base and portray himself as an organization supporting the popular protest rather than a terrorist organization.

A similar modus operandi was evident in JNIM's willingness to negotiate with the regime

in Mali. The above was made possible after the latter decided in February 2020 to deviate from its traditional policy and negotiate with the organization to arrive at a cease fire and liberation of hostages. For JNIM, the negotiation was meant to achieve two main goals: (i) removal of foreign forces from Mali and releasing its members from jail. In October 2020, after a six month negotiations period the parties arrived at an agreement: JNIM agreed to release four hostages (among them three foreigners) in return for the release of approx 200 jihadists. JNIM's leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, who personally negotiated with the government, strengthened its leadership with such a prisoner release.

It should be noted, the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan has an effect on JNIM, i.e., it is willing to negotiate with the enemy to achieve its goals while compromising as little as possible. On August 10th, 2021 Ag Ghali praised the Taliban for its determination to achieve a victory and said it was a model for success.

Al-Shabbab al-Mujahidin, led by Ahmad Omar Abu Ubeida since 2014, managed to take over territories in southern Somalia and impose its rule there. They established a network of institutions that provide services to the local communities. In these communities al-Shabbab focuses on cultivating and strengthening the command and control mechanisms it installed in the territories under its rule. More over, in recent years al-Shabbab expanded its sphere of influence into additional territories outside Somalia such as Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda where it established logistic assistance, financial aid and foreign fighters recruiting networks. A series of publication it published towards the end of 2021, titled "rally the believers" featured the personal stories of foreign fighters from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda who detail what brought them to join al-Shabbab. The series points to the organization's effort to recruit foreign fighters.

Another al-Shabbab related trend is connected to the latter's interest in Djibouti due to its strategic location along the Red Sea coast and for having foreign countries' (such as the US, France, China, Japan and more) military bases on its land. In March 2021 al-Shabbab threatened to hit Djibouti and the foreign forces on its soil.

Al-Shabbab's offensive activity is focused on Mogadishu regime identified targets, Somali army forces, foreign forces stationed in the country (including AMISOM – African Union Mission to Somalia) and civilian actors. Their activity is characterized by suicide attacks, ambushes, assassinations and IEDs. In October 2017 Mogadishu suffered the most severe terror attacks when two truck bombs exploded and caused the death of over 500 people and injured more than 300. The attack was attributed to al-Shabbab however they never claimed responsibility for it<sup>32</sup>.

The civilian population is also a target for al-Shabbab attacks due to the latter's wishes to sow fear and undermine their belief in the central government in Mogadishu. Between 2009-2010 al-Shabbab toned down its attacks on civilians because of successful counter-terrorism activity by the central government who was aided by the Americans. That said,

32 Jason Burke, "Mogadishu truck bomb: 500 casualties in Somalia's worst terrorist attack", The Guardian, 16 Oct 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/15/truck-bomb-mogadishu-kills-people-somalia>

in recent years there has been a significant increase in attacks on civilians. For example, between 2015-2016 there has been an 83% in civilian harm from explosive devices<sup>33</sup>. The withdrawal of some of the foreign forces from Ethiopia and the reduction in the number of US air attacks in Somalia contributed to al-Shabbab and enabled them to perpetrate more attacks.

AQIM's recent years expansion towards new territories was made possible through their forging ties with local jihadi organizations and local tribes. The above is evident in Nigeria. In this sense, of note is Jamaat Ansar al-Muslimin in the land of the Black (Ansaru) joining AQIM in 2021. Ansaru was formed in 2011 by a few operatives who left Boko Haram due to disagreements with Abu Bakr Shekau, then Boko Haram's leader. Ansaru is mainly active in central Nigeria and at the Benin-Niger border region. Al-Qaeda's establishment in these regions may increase the tension between the organizations and lead to violent clashes.

## IS

In recent years IS is in an expansion mode in Africa. In the first half of 2022, three new provinces have been announced: IS-Mozambique (who originated from Central Africa province), IS-Libya and IS-Sahel (originated from West Africa province, ISWAP, which is concentrated in Nigeria). They joined the existing provinces IS-Sinai, IS-Somalia, West Africa (ISWAP) and Central Africa (ISCAP).

Among IS provinces the West Africa one (ISWAP) is on the rise. It focuses its activity mostly in northern Nigeria and lately expanded into new rural areas in central and southern Nigeria<sup>34</sup>. Its activity also spills over to neighboring countries such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

ISWAP's main goals are hitting Nigerian military forces (vehicles, posts, installations), African Union forces, government elements and buildings and economic targets such as electricity lines. Moreover, there is an increase in attacks on Christians (in entertainment centers, retail, commerce and residential areas).

ISWAP activists widely use motorcycles and attack in a variety of methods, including mortars, explosives, assassinations, shooting and at times suicide bombings. Their scope of attacks is among the highest in Africa. Whereas most of the attacks are of low intensity against pinpoint targets sometimes it is able to carry out more complex attacks.

Another dominant IS province is Central Africa (ISCAP) which concentrates in the Democratic Republic of Congo along the Uganda border and in Mozambique – until it was announced as an independent province in May 2022.

33 Louis Platts-Dunn, "Al-Shabaab and increasing civilian harm in Somalia", AOAV, Apr 22, 2020.

<https://aoav.org.uk/2020/al-shabaab-and-increasing-civilian-harm-in-somalia/>

34 See <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b180-after-shekau-confronting-jihadists-nigerias-north-east>

ISCAP mainly attacks, militias loyal to the central government, Christians and elements identified with the above. For example, they attacked a convoy carrying supplies to Christian communities in the Ituri region. They also deploy multiple ambushes on routes used by security forces or attack military posts. Their modus operandi is mostly shooting attacks or laying explosive devices and arson. In its publications, ISCAP brags about what it was able to loot in its attacks on the security forces.



Left: a summary of IS activity against Christians in Congo (April 2022); Right: ISCAP activists

During 2021 IS increased its activity in Mozambique and managed to take territories in Cabo Delgado district, an economically strategic district wherein many western conglomerates are active. Counter-terrorism efforts partially drove it out of the region, but it continues to attack the security forces and the local Christian population. The BBC documented the destruction they left behind and featured photos of total destruction of villages, burnt churches, pharmacies and houses<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, the perceptual effect and the economic ramifications of the attack on Mozambique's energy sector also damaged tourism, especially in the island of Matemo where IS attacked in March 2022.

Since the formation of IS-Sahel province (formerly known as IS in the Greater Sahara - ISGS) at the beginning of 2022 there has been an increase of IS activity in the region, especially against western African security forces. Even though it was able to carry out attacks in this region, al-Qaeda's dominance in Mali and its relationship with the local population challenged IS-Sahel's ability to expand, let alone its expansion efforts ignited violent clashes with al-Qaeda. That said, in the first half of 2022 it was able to increase the scope of its activity, mainly attacks on security forces.

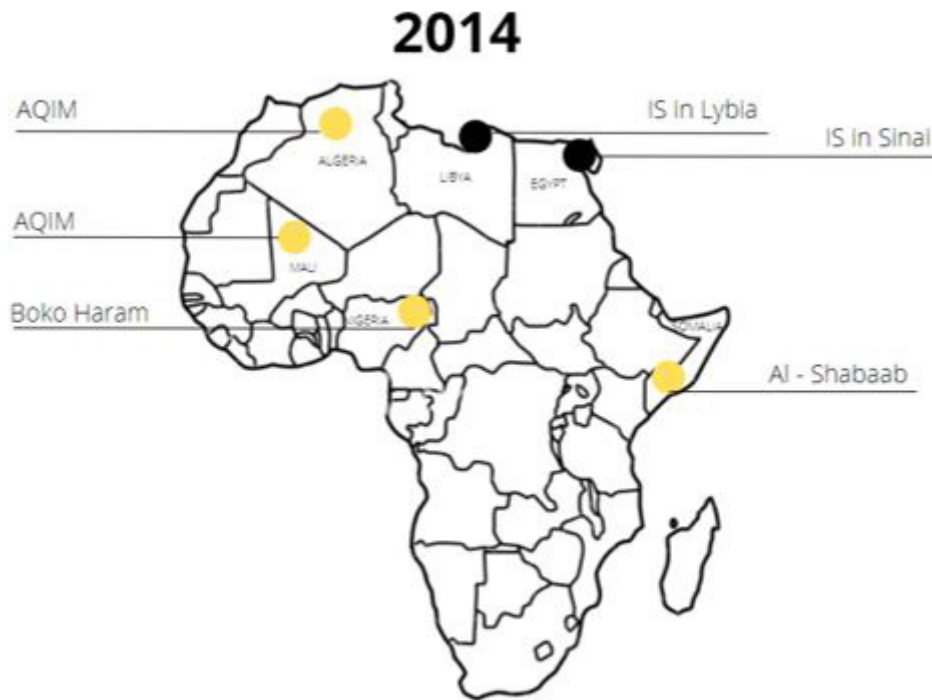
Other provinces (IS-Sinai, IS-Somalia and IS-Libya) mostly operate low key and attack pinpoint targets. In Somalia, IS is mainly active in the Mogadishu region and its ability to act is limited by al-Shabbab's dominance in the region. IS-Sinai has been in recent years under a pressure from Egypt's security forces and local tribal militias, but it still manages to carry out successful attacks against security forces and quality targets such as energy installations. IS-Libya was reestablished in April 2022 after having ceased operations in 2017. Among the first attacks it carried out was the detonation of a car bomb close to

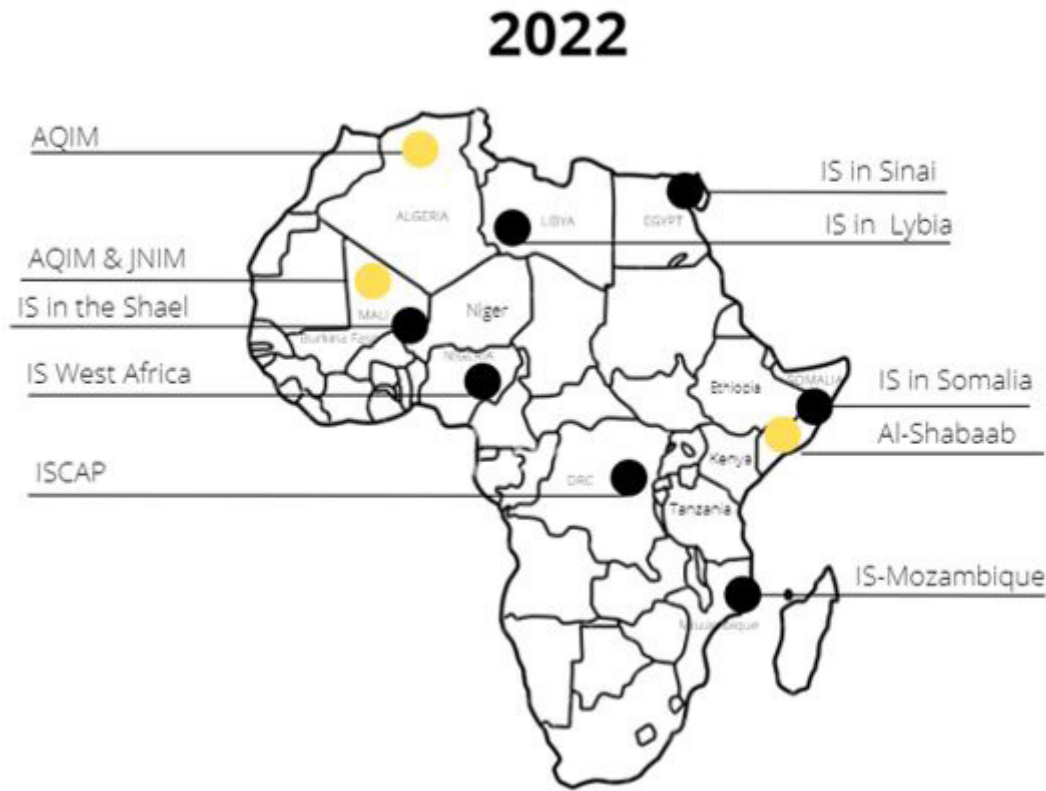
35 See: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-58671942>

one of General Khafatar military bases which may attest to their operational capabilities however the “jury is still out” on this topic.



Left: Aamaq official publication – IS-Libya: activists watch IS clips; Right: an increase of IS-Sinai activity in 1H/2022 (al-Naba infographic translated to English by IS supporters)





## Global Jihad in Africa - Characteristics and Central Trends

### Leveraging Local Conflicts and Forging Ties with the Local Population: Cooperation Through coercion

Global jihadi organizations continue to expand their activity in Africa, thanks to the number of local conflicts and the jihadists' ability to leverage them to their needs. Moreover, global jihadi organizations identify and capitalize on opportunities on their path. For example: leveraging weak socio-economic elements (traditional tribal structure, poverty, unemployment, hunger, drug trafficking, gun running, human trafficking), political culture (the Arab Spring, weak state institutions), geopolitical elements (disregard to state borders, involvement of foreign entities and authorities, developing gray areas) and Salafi religious awakening (jihadi organizations inject the religious element into the boiling cauldron of alienation, resentment of corruption, oppression, injustices and unfair division of wealth and power)<sup>36</sup>, all greatly contribute to these organizations' expansion and the formation of networks and alliances with other organizations.

There is also a strong tie between the expansion of global jihadism in Africa and local communal/tribal violence that revolves around survival: tradition sources of making one's living (agriculture, herding, fishery), ethnic/tribal traditions and exacerbation of

<sup>36</sup> Salafism is a modern radical Islamic current that seeks to restore Islam to the days of its founding fathers – the Rashidun (the righteous guided caliphs) and impose strict Sharia law in every territory. What characterizes Salafism is a call to Muslims to return to the pure Islam as it was in the days of Muhammad's generation and the two generations that followed. At this time the Muslims were called al-Salaf al-Salih, the holy fathers. The Salafi jihadi activity was crystallized around the 1980s fights in Afghanistan.

the above due to climate changes. Jihadi organizations are experts in capitalizing on the opportunists they encounter in the context of tribal/communal rivalry for water and food sources. For example, in Mali's Macina area, home to several shepherd groups, the latter relied on assistance from jihadi groups to regulate access to grazing areas<sup>37</sup>. In another case in Mali, JNIM managed to use the alienation and resentment towards the state to recruit activists as well as take control over mines and natural sources that became a means for them to provide employment to the local populations<sup>38</sup>. For expansion on tribal conflicts see appendix A).

Global jihad's ability to leverage local conflicts is based on their policy regarding the local population which consists of a wide spectrum from cooperation to coercing the local population to obey their commands. Al-Qaeda's policy regarding the local population is different that IS', as follows:

### Al-Qaeda's Policy Regarding the Local Population

Al-Qaeda's policy regarding the local population is based on Winning Hearts and Minds. Winning hearts and minds refer to a side in a conflict that wishes to win not by force but rather through an appeal to its rival's emotions and intellect. This concept was first used by the French general Louis Hubert Lyautey as part of his strategy to contend with the Black Flags Rebellion in the Indo-China border in 1895<sup>39</sup>. Later this approach was tried in the Vietnam War and also by Israel after the Six Days War in 1967 under Moshe Dayan's "enlightened conquest" and even later under Moshe (Bogie) Yaalon's "perception branding".

This concept is an important tool in terrorist and guerilla organizations' toolbox. They are aware of the alienation the local population feels towards the central government, especially in the periphery, they calculatedly get closer to the local population and offer various solutions to their problems. This strategy is also manifested in its leaders' statements and its members' activity across Africa. In 2013, Ayman al-Zawahiri posted a strategic plan for its affiliates titled "Guidelines for the Mujahidin" that stressed cooperation with local jihadi organizations even if they don't share the same values as al-Qaeda but have common interests, first and foremost toppling the local regimes.

In a notebook captured from al-Qaeda operatives in Mali after their 2013 defeat, AQIM's leadership instructions on this subject read as follows: "it is advisable to use the current time to win the hearts and minds of the people of Azwad (Mali), to make realizing this dream easier at a later date and to bridge the rifts among Arabs, Tuareg, Africans and various militias' members". Per the notebook, "the Mujahidin's stature will benefit from

37 International Crisis Group, "A course correction for the Sahel stabilization strategy," Crisis Group Africa Report No 299, February 2021 <http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/299-course-correction-sahel-stabilisation-strategy>

38 Natasja Rupesinghe & Morten Bøås, Local Drivers of Violent Extremism in Central Mali UNDP Policy Brief (2019). <file:///C:/Users/%D7%93%D7%95%D7%93%20%D7%93%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%9F/Documents/ICT/Rapportextremismeanglaisversionfinale.pdf>

39 Émile Duboc, Trente-cinq mois de campagne en Chine, au Tonkin, Paris (1899).

such brokering within the people of Azwad and help them blend into its society and thus avoid alienation and social isolation”<sup>40</sup>.

Evidence from the point to an implementation of the above strategy in northern Mali in 2012 by a cooperation among local organizations and al-Qaeda. The process started with al-Qaeda operatives emerging from their hiding places “just to say hello”, then they repeated this with the AK-47s hanging from them and just asked to pump a little water from the well and before leaving town they distributed chocolates to the frightened children. Since then, as “good neighbors”, they didn’t leave but rather forced their authority on the locals – a classic script of radical Islamic organizations taking over territories in the neglected periphery. Other than chocolates the terrorists also give cash to their “hosts”. If a child is born in the village, they give his parents baby clothes. If a person falls ill, they provide medicine. If a child is hospitalized, they foot the bill and also provide food for the child during the hospitalization. Al-Qaeda operative in Mali even go further and marry local women in order to further blend into the population. Additionally, to spread the religious word, the organization donate a few hundred dollars to the head of the village to build a mud hut to serve as a mosque where the village children are being gathered and indoctrinated. Slowly but surely as “good neighbors” they dictate the women how to behave and what to wear and those who violate the rules are being severely punished in accordance with Sharia law<sup>41</sup>.

That is how, without any real resistance, al-Qaeda managed to plant roots in Mali. In terms of Islam, winning hearts and minds is akin to Dawah, i.e., an invitation to join Islam or to get secular Muslims closer to Islam without violence. As discussed, it is a central tool for jihadi organizations to achieve their goals. Dawah is supposed to provide Islamic education and values to the local population and bring it closer to Islam. De facto the goal is to cement the control of the jihadi organization of the territory and radicalize the population including indoctrinating it to start a jihad against the French or any western force.

And yet, per the above captured notebook “Sharia was hastily implemented in Azwad because they haven’t lived by Sharia law for centuries...a rigid implementation of Sharia may cause anger and resentment towards the mujahidin and lead to total rejection of Islam, endanger the project [...] the ground must be laid through Dawah, to educate and convince the population before implementing the Sharia”<sup>42</sup>.

Al-Qaeda leveraged this modus operandi on the organizational level as well. Other than operating official affiliate groups it also cooperates with local jihadi groups and by doing so eliminates their resistance to al-Qaeda’ “foreign” element and its global agenda while proving a place on stage for the local leaders and in return many of them pledge their allegiance to al-Qaeda. A prime example for that is the cooperation

40 See <file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/The%20Notebook%20of%20Abd%20al-Malek%20Droukdel.pdf>

41 See <https://afriqueactuelle.net/2020/11/12/mali-menaces-de-plus-en-plus-recurrentes-des-dji-hadistes171-villages-sous-laile-protectrice-de-lexorciste-gabriel-sagara/>

42 See <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/The%20Notebook%20of%20Abd%20al-Malek%20Droukdel.pdf>

between AQIM and local organizations in Mali such as JNIM.

### IS and its Relations to the Local Population

IS policy regarding the local population is radical compared to al-Qaeda's. IS requires total identification with the organization, its values and modus operandi and it does not hesitate to use force to impose the above on the local population. For example, it does not hesitate to eliminate chieftains, kidnap women and children and so forth. When it controls a territory, it strictly exercises and enforces it through mechanisms such as the Khasba (the religious police in charge of enforcing Sharia laws) and at times by severe punishments and conscription to the organization.

The above attitude is evident in IS' recruitment policy which is characterized by an extensive propaganda effort that calls the local population to ignore tribal-familial elements and fly the banner of Islam that connects all Muslims highest. "You have a country and cilapha...this is a country where the Arab and the non-Arab, the white man and the black man, the oriental and the western are all brothers. This is a caliphate that united the Caucasus, Indian, Chinese, Semites, Iraqi, Yemenite, Egyptians, Maghreb people, Americans, French, Germans and Australians" (Dabiq Magazine vol. 8).

IS stresses the education of the young people and indoctrinating them to the values of the organization. Either by propaganda or by coercion, IS manages to plant roots within the local population and gain support. In January 2022 ISWAP posted a video titled "the Power Generation" where it featured its curriculum and training program for children in Africa. Moreover, in many cases it posts photos of children in its possession while pointing to the organizational effort to educate the next generation. It should be noted, in most cases the children featured in the photos have been kidnapped by IS.



Left: banner for "Generation al-Tamachin", i.e., the generation that will take over the territories and impose Sharia law there; Right: ISCAP – one can see that there are very young children in the group

Evidence given by local Mozambiquans said that IS kidnaps locals. Women are forced to serve them, and in some cases marry the "Shabbab" (the locals nickname for IS

operatives). In some cases, it was reported that those who were kidnaped were also robbed of their money<sup>43</sup>. In other cases, it was reported that IS showed defiance against the local school system in Cabo Delgado – they preached to avoid attending government schools, refrain from participating in national events or fly the national flag, avoid carrying national identification card and more<sup>44</sup>.

## Action Strategy Trends

### The Quest for Territorial Control

Global jihadi organizations seek to establish an Islamic caliphate ruled by Sharia law. To that end they operate to establish territorial control through a strategy that combines filling a governability vacuum, addressing the local population needs in the absence of a functioning governmental system coupled with introduction and implementation of Sharia law and embedding their ideology. In places where there is a government presence of multi-national force presence the jihadi organizations are having a hard time implementing the above and they are forced to seek new territories, mostly in remote rural areas where the population is mostly disconnected from the central government, alienates it and is sympathetic to the Islamic ideology<sup>45</sup>.

Lack of governability and ethnic conflicts in many areas in Africa paved the way over the years for al-Qaeda to take over territories in Africa and govern them as it does in Somali and Mali. At times this is only for a limited period of time, due to the activity of international counter terrorism joint task forces. For example, in 2012, AQIM in cooperation with local tribes and organizations managed to conquer northern Mali and govern it for nine months until the French military intervened. A notebook captured during the attack in Timbuktu shed light on al-Qaeda's strategic plan for the Islamic Maghreb. The document said that conquering Azwad was more than forming a new base for operations but rather the goal was the establishment of an Islamic emirate in the region as an ante for the establishment of the caliphate (per al-Qaeda, establishing emirates will eventually lead to the establishment of the caliphate)<sup>46</sup>.

The collapse of the Islamic caliphate brought a shift from the al-Tamkhin strategy (i.e., taking over vast territories and imposing Sharia law on them). Since 2019, per al-Baghdadi's orders, IS adopted a different strategy called al-Nahiya which promotes guerilla warfare and expansion to new territories<sup>47</sup>. Even IS' former spokesperson,

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43 See footnote 36

44 Ibid

45 Mathieu Bere, "Armed rebellion, violent extremism, and the challenges of international intervention in Mali," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, Vol. 7, No 2, 2017, pp. 60-84.

<file:///C:/Users/%D7%93%D7%95%D7%93%20%D7%93%D7%95%D7%9B%D7%9F/Downloads/ARMED%20REBELLION.pdf>

46 see The Notebook of Abd al-Malek Droukdel.pdf; <file:///C:/Users/Dell/Downloads/The%20Notebook%20of%20Abd%20al-Malek%20Droukdel.pdf>

47 Harleen Gambhir, *ISIS's global strategy: a wargame* (middle east security report 28), ISW Institute for the Study of War (2015);

Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, supported it and in a post from 2020 explained that guerilla warfare was characterized by raids on infidel concentrations, setting ambushes, planting explosive devices, destroying posts and roadblocks, increasing the velocity and intensity of attacks, and torching the enemy's fields<sup>48</sup>. That said, when an opportunity to conquer a territory presents itself, like in Mozambique<sup>49</sup> or Nigeria, IS will capitalize on it and take the territory. For example, in 2014 Boko Haram took over territories in north-eastern Nigeria and intended to announce it as part of the Islamic caliphate. In recent years most of the territory has been taken back by the Nigerian government assisted by the African Union. It should be noted that the dissolution of Boko Haram and the rise of IS presents a significant challenge to the security forces and raises the risk the territory will be taken again.



IS' posts after the conquest of the territory in Mozambique

IS and other radical organizations in Africa capture wide territories in Africa while providing the local populations with state-like services (education, health, legal, taxes). At the same time they use the natural resources to fund their operations and use the local

<https://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/ISIS%20Global%20Strategy%20-%20A%20Wargame%20FINAL.pdf>

48 Barak M. (2021) "Processes and Trends in Global Jihad", ICT.

49 <https://www.ict.org.il/images/%D7%94%D7%92%D7%99%D7%94%D7%90%D7%93%D7%94%D7%92%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%91%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%91%D7%90%D7%A4%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%94%D7%94%D7%A1%D7%9B%D7%A0%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%95%D7%94%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%92%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D.pdf>

population to recruit fighters to their ranks after having radicalized it.

It should be noted, the current body of research distinguished between “presence or attendance” and “control”, in connection to a terrorist organization’s hold on a certain region. Measuring the geographic expansion of a terrorist organization is not just the reflection of its attack in a certain area but also its presence on the ground, its day-to-day interaction with the local population and imposing its authority on it. A terrorist organization that sends its fighters to attack in a certain region and then return to their base in another region does not control the region it attacked in. Yet, it is safe to assume that the attacks affect the fabric of life in the attacked region which after all is one of terrorism’s goals. As aforementioned, a presence does not mean control. Technically and practically there may be a clandestine presence that will become exposed in certain circumstances such as overt actions to conquer the territory.

### Quality vs. Quantity: Global Jihad’s Modus Operandi in Africa

Over the years, counter-terrorism activity vs. al-Qaeda changed its perception in connection with the search for territorial control and large-scale operations, such as the conquest of northern Mali. As of 2013 one could observe a shift to a more complex activity, e.g., hostage attacks, foreigners’ kidnappings and violent attacks on targets connected to foreigners such as hotels, economic installations or security forces.

One of the more complex attacks occurred in January 2013 when al-Murabitun (under AQIM) attacked Tigantourine gas field near In Amenas in the Algerian southeastern desert. During the raid, the attackers captured some 150 Algerians and a few tens foreigners as hostages. Mokhtar Belmokhtar, leader of Signed in Blood Battalion<sup>50</sup>, affiliated with al-Murabitun, pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda and claimed responsibility for this attack<sup>51</sup>.

Another prominent attack occurred on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014, when four armed al-Shabbab members attacked Westgate Mall in Kenya (per the attacker the mall was built by Israelis)<sup>52</sup>. The attackers barricaded for four days with tens of hostages. Per reports, the attack opened with indiscriminate shooting and grenade throwing until the attackers gained control. Once in control they separated non-Muslim hostages from the Muslim ones<sup>53</sup>. The attack claimed the lives of 67 people and injured approx. 200, among them western citizens<sup>54</sup>.

During 2015 AQIM and its affiliates perpetrated multiple hostage attacks in Mali and

50 <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-mulathamun-battalion>

51 <http://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/events/2016/2/2/%D9%87%D8%AC%D9%88%D9%85-%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B3>

52 A special edition of al-Shabbab’s digital magazine saw light after this attack

53 See <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CTCSentinel-Vol6Iss10.pdf>

54 <https://www.fas.org/srg/crs/row/R43245.pdf>

Burkina Faso. On August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the organization's activists attacked Byblos Hotel in the Sevaré (Mali), known for hosting westerners. The attack claimed the lives of 13 people. During the attacks the attackers took hostages among them five UN employees, tourists from South Africa, Ukraine and France. The attack lasted for 24 hours until the local security forces broke in and killed and arrested the terrorists<sup>55</sup>.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015, al-Murabitun (identified with AQIM), attacked Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako (Mali's capital city). The attackers took 170 hostages and held them for more than seven hours until the local security forces broke in, killed the two terrorists, and freed the hostages. It should be noted, during the attack the attackers released 10-15 hostages that knew to recite verses from the Quran. In January 2016, Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso's capital city), came under attack. The attackers took some 150 hostages of which 29 were killed, 18 of those held foreign citizenships<sup>56</sup>. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for this attack.

In February 2016, al-Shabab attacked a passenger plane in Somalia to hit western elements. Moments after take-off a laptop detonated, and the plane turned back for an emergency landing<sup>57</sup>. Per the organization the attack was "retribution for crimes committed by the western crusader coalition and its intelligence agencies against the Muslims of Somalia"<sup>58</sup>.

Despite these attacks goals to hit foreign citizens, economic interests and draw the west's attention, al-Qaeda focused on attacking local, regional and international security forces. For example, in January 2020, al-Shabab attacked a US military base in Manda Bay, Kenya<sup>59</sup>.

The above strategy was reiterated by Abu Ubeida Yusef al-Anabi, AQIM's leader as of 2020. Al-Anabi encouraged attacks on US military bases all over the world until the last of the American troops will withdraw from Muslim soil.

Like al-Qaeda, IS operates in Africa mostly under a terrorism and guerilla warfare configuration. This modus operandi was approved by its leadership and expressed in their "war of Attrition" campaign. In this context one can observe that IS, especially ISWAP, stresses the number of attacks perpetrated by organization rather than their quality.

Even though most of the attacks are perpetrated in remote border areas far from the centers of government, there are exceptions such as the attack on the Russian passenger

55 <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1597/Terrorist-Incidents-and-CT-Operations-August-2015>

56 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/security-forces-battle-suspected-jihadists-in-burkina-faso-capital>

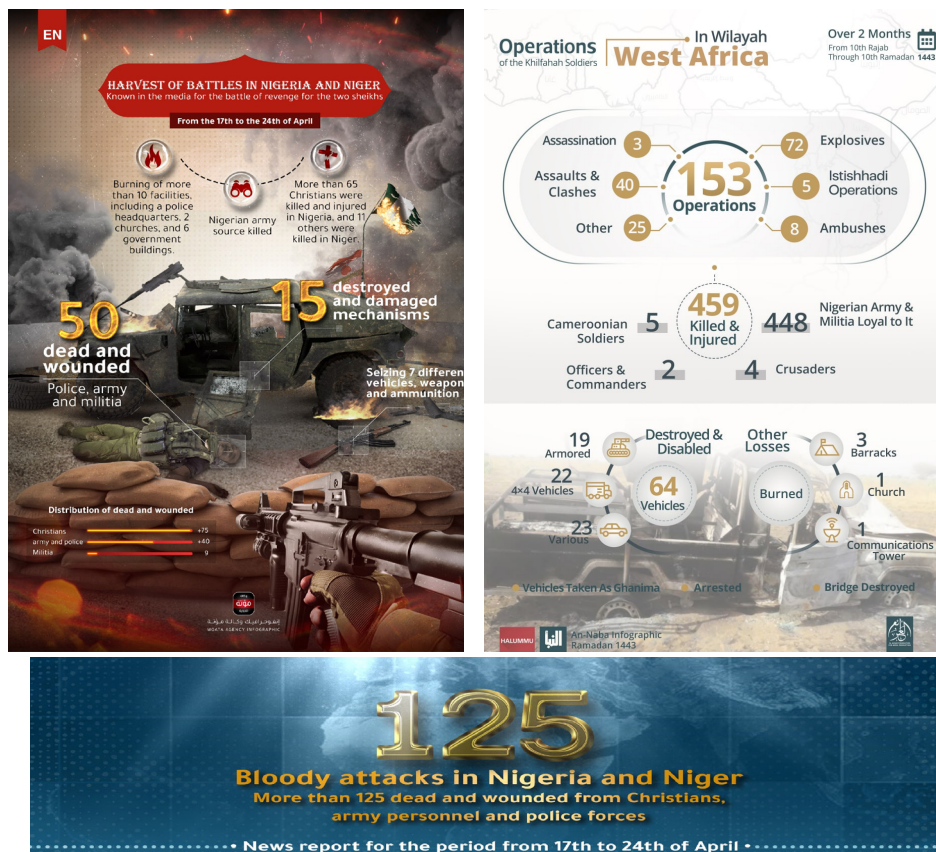
57 <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/ICT-trends-aviation-terror-aug-16.pdf>

58 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/2/13/al-shabab-claims-somalia-plane-bomb-attack>

59 <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/22/world/africa/shabab-kenya-terrorism.html>

plane. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, an A321 Russian passenger plane was brought down en route from the Sinai Peninsula to St. Petersburg by a bomb hidden under one of the seats<sup>60</sup>. IS claimed responsibility and said it capitalized on a security breach at Sharm al-Sheikh International Airport. The blast wave was equal to the detonation of 1kg. of TNT that per IS was hidden in a soft drink can. The attack, perpetrated due to Russia's involvement in Syria crashed the plane and killed all 224 passengers<sup>61</sup>.

It should be noted, each IS province in Africa has different operational capabilities depending on the number of its activists which ranges from single digits to tens of 0 fighters.



IS publications and reports from the field show that their main goals in west Africa for example are Christians, military and police forces and supporting militias.

In the period between 2020-2022, IS launched a few campaigns calling for operations that is implemented even today by its African provinces: (i) campaign to attack Christians (civilians, villages, burning churches, bars and more); (ii) campaign to free prisoners intended to increase the number of activists in the provinces; (iii) economic war campaign (attacks on power poles, gas trucks, commercial convoys and more). In Sahmukh al-Islam forum, identified with IS it was argued that "the crusaders today are confused for fear that their great involvement in this war will lead more Muslims in Mozambique

60 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34687990>

61 <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/ICT-trends-aviation-terror-aug-16.pdf>

and the region to join the ranks if the caliphate soldiers in this important region due to its wealth and economic potential. If the crusaders believe that by supporting the infidel government in Mozambique, they will protect their investments and guarantee their looting of the region's riches they are delusional". It was further argued that "by announcing the Islamic State in Mozambique and prior to that the announcement of control in Palma caused billions of Euros of projects to be cancelled. At that time, the soldiers of the caliphate thwarted the Europeans' dreams to control the resources which they have worked on for decades"<sup>62</sup>.



A hit on an oil truck in Congo – ISCAP 2022



An attack on Christian village (Ituri region) – Congo 2022

## The IS - al-Qaeda Conflict

The competition between al-Qaeda and IS includes fighting for (i) operation theaters; (ii) resources and funding; (iii) recruitment of activists and supporters. Since 2014 IS encouraged individuals and groups from al-Qaeda to desert and join its ranks and through that establish a presence on the ground. If, at the beginning it seemed that IS wasn't gaining the support it had hoped for from the local African population then in recent years there is a clear trend of rising IS activity and a decrease of al-Qaeda's.

The struggle between the organizations is also manifested through violent confrontations in west and east Africa. For example, in 2015 some al-Shabbab members deserted to IS and pledged their allegiance to the organization. In November 2018 IS posted

62 <https://jihadintel.meforum.org/identifier/149/shumukh-al-islam-forum>

a threatening message in al-Naba where it warned al-Shabbab that a confrontation was coming. A few days later al-Shabbab leadership posted a document that allegedly exposed IS' crimes in Somalia and directed its members to hit IS infrastructure in Somalia<sup>63</sup>. A month later IS made good on its threats. Per Aamaq news agency IS activists killed 14 al-Shabbab activists in northern Somalia. In west Africa too, a perception campaign coupled with violence is taking place between Boko Haram and ISWAP and AQIM and ISWAP in the Mali region.

## Global Jihad Organizations in Africa and their Connection to Criminal Activity in the Continent

Banditry – radical Islamic jihad in Africa consists only a small portion of the array of actors in the various unstable theaters on the continent. Alongside the jihadi expansion, banditry is on the rise (e.g., the Christian south in Nigeria, especially the Niger delta which harasses the energy companies operating in the region and elsewhere). Ransom kidnapping today is not a jihadist monopoly anymore and, in many cases, they are perpetrated by criminal gangs that in many cases are in cahoots with local authorities whom they share the ransom with. The kidnap economy is flourishing in the Sahel and Nigeria without any political or religious affiliation – purely economic activity<sup>64</sup>. In the same breath we might as well mention the pirates in Somalia and the linkage to al-Shabbab. There is also ambivalence regarding narcoterrorism. There is no doubt that Mujao is actively trafficking drugs across the Sahel, but we currently don't have reliable information regarding AQIM's involvement in drug trafficking. Per Islam anything connected to drug trafficking is forbidden and the offense is punishable by death. Without going into more details at this point, the west is well versed in the drug trafficking and the smuggling networks of the radical Islamic organizations such as Hezbollah and the Taliban. Evidence of drug use and drug trafficking that clash with the extreme ideology come from Nigeria as well. During the fight with Boko Haram drugs and other narcotics have been captured in camps formerly occupied by Boko Haram and Boko Haram activists that fell into captivity gave evidence of frequent drug use.

Can Africa become Mexicanized or Colombia-nized? In Mexico and Colombia drug traffickers formed private militaries to protect their business (e.g., FARC in Colombia). They may cooperate with other gangs, because it makes sense economically and join forces to threaten the central government that may provide concessions to survive. Even now, Guinea-Bissau works in a similar configuration. The above raises, in the above context, questions as to Mauritania, Morocco, Algiers and Senegal because the "product" travels north to Europe via land or sea.

Maritime Piracy as a Funding Source – the threat to Africa from radical jihadi organizations is amplified by their activity in the maritime medium. De facto, maritime piracy takes

63 See [https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2353/al\\_shabab\\_and\\_isis#gsc.tab=0](https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2353/al_shabab_and_isis#gsc.tab=0)

64 Catherine Van Offelen, «Le vrai visage du terrorisme Sahélien : le grand banditisme et la criminalité ordinaire», CONFLITS (28.7.2020).

place on both sides of the continent. It began in the early 2000s in east Africa (Somalia, Aden, Seychelles, and Mozambique Canal). In recent years piracy thrives in the Atlantic Ocean off west Africa, from Guinea Bay to Angola.

Terrorist organizations, whoever they are, cannot exist without funding sources and thus like to diversify (human trafficking, gems, diamonds, antiques and more). In the maritime medium they take over fishing vessels for food and money, as well as engage in piracy. Taking over boats, yachts and tankers as well holding people hostage guarantees a negotiation with a ransom at the end which can fund their various operations and needs<sup>65</sup>. An added “bonus” is that beyond rising insurance costs, piracy further destabilizes the economy of the already destabilized countries they operate in and adds fuel to the fire of lit by the radical organizations to sow chaos and take over that country.

## Central Trends in Contending with Global Jihad in Africa

### Takuba Task Force's Future

The European Takuba Task Force was formed on the heels of the Pau Summit on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It is tasked with advising, assisting and training conventional Mali Army units on fighting the Islamic organizations on its territory. Takuba has been integrated into Operation Barkhane activities. Operation Barkhane launched on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014. It is led by France in cooperation with the G5 Sahel states<sup>66</sup>. The rationale behind Operation Barkhane is based on a strategic partnership with the main countries in the Sahel – Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger<sup>67</sup>.

As discussed above, on the heels of the Pau Summit, initiated by the French president Emanuel Macron and attended by the commanders of the G5 Sahel forces as well as the leaders of the above states and representatives of other international organizations such as the European Council and the UN Tacuba Force started to gain traction<sup>68</sup>.

After eight years Macron arrived at the conclusion that the current military approach of the various military forces (either local, regional or international) in the Sahel simply didn't work or at the very least wasn't working well enough and there was a need for a new approach<sup>69</sup>.

65 For expansion see Eric Pichonh, Marian Pietsch Piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Africa EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, PE 635.590 – March 2019.

66 Operation Barkhane's goal is to “apply and maintain pressure to armed terrorist groups and to specifically act to prohibit and prevent the rehabilitation of refuge areas and drying out the jihadi organization logistic arrays”

67 G5 Sahel was formed on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, on the heels of the crisis in Mali. The force is comprised of Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso. It is a regional force that is headquartered in Nouakchott, Mauritania's capital. The force has a wide mandate that includes regional development. Its main goals are indeed preserving and increasing security within the member states' territories, i.e., the Sahel region. G5 Sahel embodies the idea of “military partnership for cross-border cooperation” that coordinated and executes joint operations to increase security in the border regions.

68 Tacuba is the sword typically used in the western Sahel and among ethnic groups such as the Tuareg, Hausa and Fulani.

69 Per Macron's plan there will be two active forces: Tacuba and Sabre each with its own mission. The French element will be

Following multiple guerilla attacks on Mali military bases there was a concern regarding the ability to safeguard the lives French troops on these bases. Therefore, the French president wanted to change the paradigm for fighting in the Sahel and came to an inevitable conclusion that the Barkhane Force modus operandi must change on the military level as well as the political level, and there is a need to “pass the baton” to the local forces to take the lead on the military operations. Moreover, he invited the US as well as South Africa and other African countries to provide military assistance to the campaign against the Islamic terrorism in the Sahel<sup>70</sup>. Within this framework the African leaders signed a joint statement authorizing the French presence in the Sahel and encouraged other European countries to join in and help them restore peace and quiet in the region. Estonia, the Czech Republic, Norway and Sweden answered the call within days. The European countries that signed the statement were Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the UK<sup>71</sup>.

Takuba Task Force was launched on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. 14 European countries together with Mali and Niger partake in this task force that has approx. 1,000 troops most of whom French. Takuba Force is mostly comprised of European special forces (Sweden withdrew in January 2022) and its role is to advise and support the Mali armed forces in coordination with the other G5 Sahel members, the multi-dimensional UN force in Mali (MINUSMA) and EUCAP, the European Union’s military and civilian missions in Mali and Niger.

Due to its structure, mobility and advanced weaponry, Takuba Force, can rapidly respond to a changing threat stemming from jihadi groups in the region. Its main goal is to play a key role in a quick “passing of the baton” to the local armed forces, i.e., the Mali and Niger militaries will take the lead on the frontlines.

These days the European involvement in the Sahel is at a low point and is facing a dilemma vs. Mali, the host country. The dilemma of European countries regarding their involvement in Takuba Force stems from Wagner Force mercenaries’ presence in countries where Takuba Force is to provide assistance to fight Islamic jihadists, to juntas that carried out military coups in their countries using undemocratic means<sup>72</sup>. The western states these juntas (in Burkina Faso and Mali) and impose various sanctions on them. This by the way is the reason for the Swede withdrawal from Takuba Force. Sweden was joined

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comprised of French commandoes that will focus on night raids, locate and eliminate the enemy or capture it. The troops will be equipped with the best military equipment including weapons, vehicles, comms, observation systems such as the Black Hornet (a dragonfly size UAV) which is equipped with advanced camera and low light operation capabilities and more.

70 The problem with Barkhane Force’s operations in the Sahel is rooted in the military-society relations. In military operations that involve African militaries their lack of commitment to the local population is glaring and these populations are regarded as targets for them, including robbing, looting, raping and killing them. These military forces were trained and equipped by France to fight the jihadists however in their own countries they are not accountable for the above crimes against the local populations.

71 For expansion see the joint statement at <https://www.regeringen.se/495e58/globalassets/regeringen/dokument/forsvarsdepartementet/takuba/joint-press-statement-task-force-takuba.pdf>

72 See : <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220114-sweden-to-withdraw-from-french-led-special-forces-mission-takuba-in-mali>

by Denmark on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022, when it announced the withdrawal of its troops from Mali after a 100 troops force arrived at its intended base in Menaka but was turned back by the military junta that controls Mali<sup>73</sup>. The Danish foreign minister, Jaffa Kofod explained that "Denmark is not welcome in Mali. We don't accept that and for that reason we decided to bring our troops back home" Kofod also condemned the "dirty political game" of the junta and accused them of "unwillingness to quickly plan to return to democracy"<sup>74</sup>.

As aforementioned, the reasons for the Mali junta conduct, that undermines the concept of Operation Barakhane and Takuba Force to curb radical Islam, must be viewed through the prism of the conflict between the junta and France and part of the international community. The west demands, rather ultimatums, that the power of government be returned to the people whereas the junta stalls and creates provocations on the ground.

Since the Economic Community of the Western African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions on Mali (January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022), the Mali junta decided to openly confront France and its neighbors (it expelled the French ambassador on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022<sup>75</sup>). Mali has already officially requested from France to amend the bilateral defense agreements between the two countries. The junta demands that any Takuba Force mission will be preapproved by her.

In defiance to France, the junta approached Russia and hired the services of the Wagner group for \$10,000,000<sup>76</sup>. It seems the junta believes that the Wagner Group troops will assist its military to recapture the territories controlled by the radical Islamic organizations, a task that integrated African militaries assisted by the French failed to accomplish. The involvement of a private mercenary group is resented by the junta as sovereign actions by the Mali government in the name of the Mali people. The junta recognizes the power of the media and its effect on public opinion, amplifies through this medium the alleged capabilities of the Wagner Group, highlights ECOWAS and the other French led forces' failures and portrays a "light at the end of the tunnel" with the assistance of the Wagner Group. It is reasonable to assume that sobering from the Wagner Group illusion will be quick and painful, especially in light of the information gathered on their activities and capabilities in other countries either in Africa or elsewhere.

## The Qatari Double Game in Africa

Since Islamist groups capitalized on the 2012 coup in Mali to take over the northern part of the country, the voices and accusations about a Qatari involvement in the crisis grew louder. Qatar

73 See : <https://inbefore.fr/mali-la-junte-exige-le-depart-immediat-des-soldats-danois-de-la-force-tabuka-359708.html>

74 See <http://sacer-infos.com/le-danemark-retire-finalement-ses-soldats-du-mali-sous-la-pression-de-la-junte/>

75 The expulsion notice read as follows: "the government of the Republic of Mali announces to the national and international opinion that today (...) the French ambassador in Bamako, his excellency Joel Meyer, was summoned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and was notified of the government's decision requesting him to leave the national territory within 72 hours. The explanation is the criticism voiced by the ambassador and other French dignitaries regarding the government as illegitimate and one that makes irresponsible decision with regard to fighting Islamic jihad".

76 See <https://inbefore.fr/mali-la-junte-exige-le-depart-immediat-des-soldats-danois-de-la-force-tabuka-359708.html>

has been designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism that enjoys leniency from the west due to its economic power and financial involvement around the world. Qatar plays a role behind the scenes in disseminating radical Islam in Africa<sup>77</sup>. The presence of Qatari NGOs in northern Mali is no secret<sup>78</sup>. Following the separatist takeover of the north the Qatari Red Crescent was the only humanitarian organization that was granted access to this vast territory.

The first to raise the issue of Qatari financing in Mali was the French satirical magazine *Le Canard Enchaîné*. In 2012 it quoted a French military intelligence source saying that armed organizations in Mali “got Qatari Dollars assistance”. The National Movement for the Liberation of Azwad (MNLA), Ansar al-Dine, AQIM and Mujao were worried because of this publication<sup>79</sup>.

A month later, Sado Diallo, the mayor of Gao, said on RTL that Qatar actively supports AQIM and launches daily flights allegedly filled with food and humanitarian aid<sup>80</sup>.

MNLA received a field hospital from Qatar. The Qatari Red Crescent was accused in 2012 by the International Committee of the Red Cross of enjoying the protection of Mujao.

The Qatari relationship with the Muslim northern Mali is deeply rooted. Since the 1980s Qatar has been establishing funding multiple institutions such as Madrasas, schools and charities. It stands to reason that this has been a long-term investment to reap the benefits of the huge oil and gas potential in the region as well as the gold and uranium ores that Mali has in abundance<sup>81</sup>.

Qatari foreign policy is also driven by religion and the success in Mali may increase its influence in west Africa and the Sahel regions. Qatar is unlikely to emerge as a fighting party but rather a broker in any future negotiations between the Mali government, the rebel in the north, France and Algiers.

## The Fighting Requires Joint Forces

G5 Sahel Force, comprised of soldiers from Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad cannot fight in both arenas: Sahel and West Africa. It was primarily built with the understanding that the job at hand was to deal with a lateral expansion, i.e., across the Sahel from east to

77 For Qatar, KSA and UAE active role in disseminating Salafism in Africa see : As Africa Faces More Terrorism, Experts Point to Saudi-spread of Fundamentalist Islam: <https://www.voanews.com/a/africa-terrorism-saudi-fundamentalist-islam/3908103.html>

78 Elliott Abrams, Qatar in Mali: Which Side Are They On? CFR (January 2013); <https://www.cfr.org/blog/qatar-mali-which-side-are-they>

79 <https://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Monde/Au-Sahel-le-role-flou-du-Qatar-2014-07-16-1179855>

80 <http://news.abamako.com/h/50287.html>

81 See <https://www.france24.com/en/20130121-qatar-mali-france-ansar-dine-mnla-al-qaeda-sunni-islam-doha>; For Qatar as a State Sponsor of Terrorism see Jonathan Schanzer, A Survey of Global Terrorism and Terrorist Financing Congressional Testimony Washington, DC April 22, 2015. pp.12-15. <https://web.archive.org/web/20180923111846/https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-114-ba00-wstate-jschanzer-20150422.pdf>

West, but a vertical expansion wasn't taken into account even though there were those who cautioned from it.

An artificial bifurcation into two separate sectors, Sahel and west Africa, ignores the existing human and political fabric of the countries involved. In a nutshell, colonial residues are an impediment to a unity in G5 Sahel Force. Said residues are manifested through historical rivalries between Francophone and Anglophone coupled with an assessment that France, the main military force but also a former colonialist, embodies pure neo-colonialism with its current involvement.

De facto there are several integrated forces on the ground: the United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Mali, G5 Sahel in Mali and Niger, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNTJF) in Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon (around Lake Chad), that cannot prevent the expansion of radical Islam. Some think that the most effective force should operate under ECOWAS that ties Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Togo to fight specific organized crime and violent extremism within the territories of the above countries. Similarly, the 2019 Accra Initiative is also taken into consideration<sup>82</sup>.

the establishment of MNTJF in the late 1990s to block the expansion of Boko Haram from northeastern Nigeria into the Lake Chad region is a reminder and a clear example for the manner local conflicts expand and cross borders, which requires inter-state cooperation among the relevant states and regional solution for the subject region through an integrated regional security force. Yet, oftentimes, these forces are economically and logistically weak and rely on western support. Further, military cooperation poses a national challenge for any country as each state has its own interests and its own direction as far as analyzing problems and their preferred solutions.

When a few countries come together to form a joint military force, it is imperative that all of them should have a common interest, which in this case is curbing radical Islamic jihadists. Further, each country will have to contribute troops, funding and logistic support as well as put their egos in check.

ECOWAS seems to be the best suited to coordinate the fight in the jihadi expansion on the regional level. It is the only platform where all the heads of the member states can meet regularly, consult with one another and find common ground. Since most countries in the region have a presidential system with the head of state wielding a considerable power, this is a valuable asset for arriving at decisions that require wide regional integration and cooperation including on collective security issues. It seems that Nigeria, the regional economic and demographic power in the region should play a

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82 The Accra Initiative was launched in 2017 by Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Togo in response to the growing insecurity regarding rising violence in the region. Its goal is to prevent a spillover of terrorism from the Sahel and contend with cross border organized crime in the region. In 2019 Mali and Niger have been accepted in an observer status due to their proximity to the coastal states and their experience in fighting Islamic radicalism. See Sampson Kwarkye, Ella Abatan and Michaël Matongbada, "Can the Accra Initiative prevent terrorism in West African coastal states?" RELIEF-WEB (30.9.2019); <https://reliefweb.int/report/benin/can-accra-initiative-prevent-terrorism-west-african-coastal-states>

leading role on this but it is currently mired in internal problems, sometimes even more violent than the fight with Boko Haram in the north. De facto, the forces operating in the region see only limited success. Attacks by radical Islamic organizations on innocent civilians are prevalent and occur on almost daily basis and the case is the same for attacks on army bases and convoys. Nigeria, Mali, Chad, Niger and Mauritania cannot control and govern vast territories within their borders<sup>83</sup>.

### The Time for a Dialogue with the Heads of the Radical Jihadi Organizations

In Mali and Burkina Faso, the hardest hit countries by radical Islam, local chieftains started to informally negotiate with the radical Islamists to end terrorism against them. Their initiative stems from the lack of state sovereignty on the ground, lack of security and support of any kind, non-existent accountability, no vision or hope. The chieftains plight forces them, if they wish to survive, to find alternative solutions including negotiating with those who butcher them.

Not only chieftains negotiate with the terrorists but also governments. The Mali government announced on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021, that it was looking to negotiate with the local al-Qaeda branch and empowered their high religious council to conduct the negotiations<sup>84</sup>. The Mali government started the negotiations earlier<sup>85</sup> but because they were exposed it issued a public announcement, which France frowned upon. In December 2021 Mali's interim prime minister, Moctar Ouane, that negotiations were the "people's will"<sup>86</sup>. The French response was one: President Macron said that the French military would not cooperate with states that "decided to negotiate with organizations that shoot at our children"<sup>87</sup>. France also cautioned that the Islamic organizations may use local cease fire to regroup, increase their caches of weapons and recruit additional fighters.

Burkina Faso too voiced opinions in support of negotiations with the enemy. On February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Burkina Faso premier, Christoph Dabire, gave a speech wherein he said he didn't rule out negotiations with jihadi groups. Dabire only spoke about the "the possibility to conduct talks with jihadi groups" and alluded that no step has been done so far in that direction. He gave the impression he was open to possible negotiations: "negotiations with terrorists, we are not saying that Burkina Faso is opposed to that... even though the big countries (...) came in a period when someone else needs to sit to

83 ACLED database shows that between May 2015 – May 2020 there have been 1,120 events connected with explosives and 3,860 attacks that caused 19,151 dead in west Africa (Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso).

84 See <https://www.courrierinternational.com/revue-de-presse/sahel-le-mali-veut-negocier-avec-des-groupes-djihadistes>

85 "The chances of beating them by force are slim" said Coulibaly that secretly met with Amadou Koufa (the leader of Katiba Macina, identified with al-Qaeda). "We stayed with him three days this summer, read the Quran, discussed Sharia. He promised us he would keep fighting in the state until good and real justice would be achieved". See: [de/Afrique/Discuter-terroristes-Sahel-piste-experimentee-discretement-Mali-2019-12-13-1201066241](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/Discuter-terroristes-Sahel-piste-experimentee-discretement-Mali-2019-12-13-1201066241)

86 See: [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/negocier-avec-les-djihadistes-une-solution-pour-le-mali-08-12-2020-2404709\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/negocier-avec-les-djihadistes-une-solution-pour-le-mali-08-12-2020-2404709_3826.php)

87 See: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/07/10/au-mali-un-dialogue-avec-les-djihadistes-sous-pression\\_6087824\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/07/10/au-mali-un-dialogue-avec-les-djihadistes-sous-pression_6087824_3212.html)

the table with the terrorists"<sup>88</sup>.

The facts are as follows: Katiba Macina (Led by amadou Koufe) fighters agreed to lift a siege off several towns and stop killing residents. The above was arrived at within the framework of a cease fire from March 2021 that led to a peace agreement in April 2021 and applied to 12 municipalities. The agreement included the implementation of Sharia law and was brokered by the High Islamic council of Mali.

A similar process took place in Burkina Faso in November 2020 with the siege on Djibo (Soum district). During the presidential elections between November 2020 to February 2021 there was a cease fire between the national army and jihadi elements. Other areas in Mansila (northeastern part of the country) remained under jihadist control<sup>89</sup>.

### A Dialogue with Jihadists?

As a rule, one does not negotiate with the jihadists because at the end of the day one cannot arrive at a fruitful outcome out of such negotiations. The jihadists have one goal on mind and that is to build an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. The goal directly contradicts and denies the mere existence of the modern democratic state. In light of the above one should ask, what would then be the common ground the parties can negotiate on?

One must fight radical jihadists wherever they are on all fronts and levels: social, political, legal, military etc. Therefore, chieftains and state representatives across the Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso) that approach the jihadist to start a dialogue because they deem it necessary is a big mistake that will haunt them sooner rather than later.

Aspiring to negotiate with an enemy is legitimate. After all, you make peace with enemies, however such a negotiation is justified when all parties acknowledge that negotiations are the right way to put out the flames and stop the bloodshed. Further, all parties also realize that they will have to compromise on issues they were willing to either kill or die for. The above is not the case with radical Islamist/jihadists whose goal is one and only – establish an Islamic caliphate.

As a rule, negotiating with jihadi organization is perceived by them as a weakness and an acknowledgement of inability to beat them. The recent classic example for that is the US-Taliban agreement. The US made a strategic mistake when it negotiated and arrived at an agreement with the Taliban at the beginning of 2020 which never led to any political agreement. The Taliban never let go of its original goal to take over Afghanistan and make a radical Islamic state – which they did.

Similarly in Somalia, the Somali authorities negotiated with al-Shabbab. Al-Shabbab's basic position was to not negotiate but over time and fighting as well deaths and

88 See <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210205-burkina-faso-les-autorit%C3%A9s-pr%C3%A9sidentielles-n%C3%A9gocier-avec-les-groupes-jihadistes>

89 For expansion in ACLED database see: <https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard>

desertion of some senior members it started to lean towards negotiations. Al-Shabbab had a hard time disguising that on the macro level it was against negotiations but on the micro level it conducted an indirect negotiation with the central government while using the tribes' elders as negotiation counterparties<sup>90</sup>. In other words, negotiations with a radical jihadi organization will not a good enough guarantee for the cessation of violence (for expansion see Appendix B).

## Wagner Group Shuffles the Deck

Wagner Group is a private military group that employs mercenaries in eastern Ukraine, Syria, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Libya, Madagascar, Venezuela and more. Its force is comprised of groups of mercenaries who are sent on fighting, security, or training assignments anywhere on earth per the Russian interests' needs. The Russian advantage of sending mercenaries instead of Russian military troops is that the mercenaries provide Russian with a very wide deniability berth and in case of killed fighters, the government is not being publicly criticized for the loss of Russian soldiers' lives because the dead acted as mercenaries who are fully aware of the perils of their profession. Diplomatically this is a huge Russian success. Further, Russia can back up its allies around the world without violating the international law that prohibits military intervention in foreign countries.

The name Wagner comes from its leader's nickname Col. (res.) Dmitry Utkin. Utkin served in the GRU and there, due to his fondness of the Third Reich, asked to be called Wagner. The ambitious penetration into Africa is done under the auspice of Yevgeny Prigozhin, an oligarch close to Vladimir Putin<sup>91</sup>.

The Wagner Group involvement in Africa allows Russia to expand across the continent and Russian companies to sign lucrative natural resources deals. Further, this involvement causes friction with the EU over Wagner Group's activity in countries like the Central African Republic, Mali and Niger. In fact, France finds itself in its former colonies in an impossible competition with the Russians who offer the local leadership lucrative terms which bloc France from winning projects it has a clear interest in winning to preserve its influence as well as its massive military assistance to the local militaries. Russia implements in Africa the Putin-ized version what it calls Russkiy Mir, whose original meaning was to spread the Russian culture and power beyond the Russian borders<sup>92</sup>.

The Wagner Group activity at Russia's behest undermines sanctions and weapons embargo imposed by the UN on several African countries such as the Central African

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90 In Africa, tribes' elders have a heavy weight on decision making on issues connected to their clans/ tribes' interests – as advisors, brokers and references. That is the case in Somalia, Nigeria and across the Sahel. They are highly respected; the governments welcome their involvement and connection with the jihadists as they serve as a means to get messages across between the parties.

91 Prigozhin was indicted in the US (2018) for running a "troll factory" (the Agency for Internet Research) that in 2016 conducted a wide social media campaign to intervene with the US elections and assist Donald Trump to win the presidential elections.

92 See "Russkiy Mir" as the Kremlin's Quasi-ideology <https://uacrisis.org/en/russkiy-mir-as-the-kremlin-s-quasi-ideology>

Republic and Chad. Russia is trying to reverse the UN's decision within the UN but simultaneously, through the Wagner Group arms the countries subject to the sanctions and embargo. Russia obviously denies the above and argues that the Wagner Group is a private enterprise which it has no connection to. In this context the European concerns are that the weapons will fall into the wrong hands.

Mali is far from being a Terra Incognita for Russia. Since its independence in 1960 Mali and Russia have been having tight military cooperation that has been ratified and fortified in a new agreement executed in the summer of 2019 and allowed for the training of many Mali officers as well as equipping multiple units with Russian weaponry. Mali doesn't hide its ties with the Wagner Group and its desire to cooperate with Russia, which weakens the ties with France that started to fray on the background of the Mali government's desire to negotiate with the jihadi terrorists on its soil, a matter fiercely opposed by France. Even though the negotiations were initially denied they were confirmed by the government later on (see separate discussion on that later in this document). Further, the ties with Russia allegedly come with no political strings attached which make it easier for the Mali leadership.

The interim Defense Minister in Bamako, Col. Sadio Camara, explained that "considering the security situation, the public opinion supports an increased cooperation with Russia, and the country is considering hiring Wagner Group"<sup>93</sup>.

The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, confirmed that the Mali government, asked Russian security companies to increase the security in the conflict riddled country and stressed that Moscow has no connection to the above: "these are legitimate activities" he said in a press conference at the UN headquarters in NYC. "We have nothing to do with that", he said<sup>94</sup>.

### Military Coups Lead to the Collapse of Sahel G-5 Force

Since 1960, Africa has seen 82 military coups which had devastating effect on the continent because they amplified the political instability, increased corruption and human rights violations and deepened illiteracy, poverty and backwardness in the continent.

Military coups are contagious in that they tend to spill over to neighboring countries. The latest wave of coups is therefore a harbinger of bad news for Africa. In the past two years we have witnessed coups in Mali (twice), Chad, Guinea, Sudan, Tunisia, Algiers and Burundi – all during a period of transition to democracy. The reasons for the coups are many and complex and we will not delve into them in this paper save for noting that the coups that occurred in western Africa, especially Sahel states, have a common

93 See: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20211001-mali-receives-russian-helicopters-and-weapons-lauds-moscow-partnership>

94 Michelle Nichols, "Lavrov says Mali asked private Russia military company for help," Reuters (26.11.2021) <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-asked-private-russian-military-firm-help-against-insurgents-ifx-2021-09-25/>

denominator in the form of the spread of the jihadi organizations and lack of security. The governmental vacuum, especially in the periphery that causes lack of security and no existent regime/military presence draws jihadist organizations that expanded their presence and control over wide areas, especially in the “Trois Frontiers” region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso border triangle)<sup>95</sup>. The terrorists attack state symbols in the territories under their control and successfully fight off security forces sent to drive them out, all while mercilessly attacking the local population that doesn’t accept their authority.

As aforementioned, Mali had experienced two military coups (five since its 1960 independence)<sup>96</sup>. The latest coup took place on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, when Col. Asimi Goita deposed president Bah Ndaw and took the presidency. The west and the African Union member states called upon the Mali junta to restore the president and alternatively announce when a general free and democratic elections will take place. The Mali junta appeared to be confrontational vs. France and its neighbors and with its own aspirations. See expansion in the relevant paragraph.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the Mali junta “dropped a bomb” and announced that it would withdraw from all of G-5 Sahel’s joint forums and frameworks. As far as Mali is concerned the bilateral relations with the rest of the Sahel states are being preserved but the military relationship within G-5 would not. The background for Mali’s withdrawal is its disappointment with France in connection with the latest coup, which France condemns and has acted with other west African (and other) countries to impose economic and other sanctions on Mali until the president is restored and a date for a free, democratic general elections is set.

Many wonder whether G-5 Sahel’s is necessary. The countries comprising the force have different agendas, they are not always coordinated and march to the beat of their own drum. For example, on August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Chad announced it would withdraw some 600 out of 1,200 troops it deployed in the Trois Frontiers region and excused this act as “strategic redeployment”<sup>97</sup>. Mali’s above withdrawal from G-5 Sahel (announced on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022) came after the expiration of its cooperation agreement with France in 2014.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the spokesman for the Mali military junta, Abdulai Maiga, explained that Mali’s withdrawal came on the heels of the deep deterioration of the cooperation with France which in and of itself was explained as follows: (i) France’s unilateral attitude that decided on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to suspend its joint operations with Mali’s armed forces and terminate Operation Barkhane (on February 17<sup>th</sup> France announced unilaterally and without consultation with Mali the withdrawal of Barkhane and Takuba

95 See [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/27/la-zone-des-trois-frontieres-point-brulant-de-la-guerre-au-sahel\\_6020752\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/27/la-zone-des-trois-frontieres-point-brulant-de-la-guerre-au-sahel_6020752_3212.html)

96 See <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/mali-5-coups-detat-depuis-l-ind%C3%A9pendance/2471551>

97 See <https://www.ndjamenaactu.com/sahel-le-tchad-retire-600-soldats-de-la-force-conjointe-du-g5-sahel/>

forces troops<sup>98</sup>); (ii) the junta condemned the multiple violations of its airspace by French military companies, despite a temporary no fly zone it set; (iii) Mali condemned the “expansive French maneuver” when it asked to schedule an experts meeting to examine the France-Mali defense treaty instead of just submitting its amendments, and that over two months after Mali submitted its own amendments in December 2021<sup>99</sup>.

The question now is whether G-4 or even G-3 are capable of contending with the spread of jihadism and radical Islam in a territory of more than 5 million square kilometers (10 times larger than France).

It should be noted, G-5 Sahel was formed in 2014 as a regional collective entity to operate under a joint policy aimed to contend with the massive security challenge in this vast space. Now, when Chad reduced its participation and Mali’s withdrawal questions emerge on whether maintaining G-5 Sahel is still beneficial and also whether G-5 Sahel can survive without Mali? Of further note is the fact that by its withdrawal Mali relinquished all the financial and technological support it was entitled to as a member of G-5 Sahel which adds up to significant financial loss to Mali.

### The Rejection of the French Policy in the Sahel

The sentiment of rejecting the French policy in Africa and particularly in the Sahel state is alive and kicking. In government orchestrated demonstrations, such as in Mali, one could observe signs like “No to France, Barkhane Force, ECOWAS” or “end the monarchizing of government”, “no to French neo colonialism”, “Macron is a Fancafrique<sup>100</sup> missionary”. France’s rejection is mostly explained by neo-colonialism<sup>101</sup>, however each country in the region treats it differently.

Mali – the internal political crisis in the country worsened since the second colonels’ coup in May 2021 and the decisions of president Macron to reorganize Barkhane

98 See <https://fr.africanews.com/2022/05/03/le-mali-rompt-ses-accords-de-defense-avec-la-france/>

99 See <https://lanouvelletribune.info/2022/05/retrait-du-mali-du-g5-sahel-les-raisons-de-la-transition-communique/>

100 The term Francafrique was coined in 1955 by then president of the Ivory coast, Francois Houphouet-Boigny, to describe African leaders’ desire to maintain special relationship with France, the ex-colonialist country. At the time, the moniker had a positive connotation, however these days it carries a negative one that points to an illegal control of French conglomerates on Africa and its resources. These companies “anoint” heads of state who do the French’s bidding rather than promoting their own country’s interests.

101 Neo-colonialism is the effect the developed world mostly the west, has on the developing countries through economic rather than military means. Rather than direct governmental control such as it was in the colonial era, in the neo-colonial era, commercial companies (international or multinational) headquartered in developed countries as well as economic bodies of the former colonialist states, influence the former colonies through economic means. The developed states indeed assist the developing countries, but the latter are dependent in them both politically and economically, a dependency that spills over to national security and military intervention. The dictionary definition for neo-colonialism is an international political practice using capitalism, globalization and cultural imperialism to influence other countries, whether via direct military control or via indirect political control. Neo-colonialism mostly differs from classic colonialism in the use of economic and cultural practices rather than military ones. The term was probably coined by Quame Nkruma, the first president of Ghana and served as the title for his 1965 book “Neo Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism”.

Force in Mali<sup>102</sup>. Mali already struggled with accepting and understanding the ways the French military mechanism worked. The French approach was focused on security and technical aspect and much less so on the political aspects connected to internal politics. This approach was popular among the local population that got disillusioned by their country's and its neighbors' politics. The expectation that the direct French involvement in its former colony will be perceived as a negative degrading act didn't materialize. On the other hand, the local population didn't understand that the technologically advanced French military cannot eradicate the radical jihadists and restore security to the country. France, in Operation Serval in 2013, supported the separatist Tuareg movement (the National Movement for the Liberation of Aswad in Kidal), not in order to support separatism but because it believed that the Tuareg could assist it with fighting the jihadists. A wrong calculation in the context of an internal Mali political issue, turned the Mali public opinion against France (which was accused of interfering with Mali sovereignty and a neo-colonialist conduct). It is safe to say that the above events caused the Mali government to turn to the Russians as a no-strings-attached alternative for assistance, however the Russians dispatched the Wagner Group.

Burkina-Faso – has similar sensitivity as Mali albeit it doesn't publicly express it. It should be noted that President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré that was deposed in a military coup on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, criticized president Macron's invitation to the Pao Summit (December 2019). The summit is dedicated to fighting the jihadi terrorism in the Sahel and France's military presence there within the framework of Barkhane Force<sup>103</sup> and said that "the form and substance (of Macron's invite) are tactless. That is what causes the outcry today. We have had G5 Sahel meetings with France without any problems, we are in a democracy. We can't block everybody from voicing their opinions. The role we have as guarantors of this democracy is not to prevent people from speaking their minds and voice their opinions on those who criticize the presence of foreign forces in their country. I clearly understand there is an attempt to pacify the French public opinion (...) but we forget that others have opinions and when opinions collide there are problems. Today, questions are asked: Barkhane Force is there, G5 is there but why don't we have results? We have to clarify all of this"<sup>104</sup>.

102 President Macron officially presented on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the broad strokes of the plan for partial withdrawal of up to 5,100 French troops from Barkhane Force which have been at play in the Sahel since 2014. This Barkhane reorganization will commence with closing bases located in northern Mali, in Kidal, Tassalit and Timbuktu by the beginning of 2022. The redeployment will lead to a reduction of at least 40% of the French contingency. "We weren't meant to stay in the Sahel", Macron justified the reorganization. This statement aimed at adapting the political framework to the military reality: withdrawing from a complete region in Mali to concentrate effort in the last region of the country that is considered developed, hope to stop the advancement of jihadi groups in the south and more broadly in the Guinea Bay where there are many more economic interests than in Mali, or the famous Trois Frontiers region (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger). See <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20210610-op%C3%A9ration-barkhane-emmanuel-macron-va-annoncer-une-restructuration-des-troupes>

103 In his invitation, president Macron mentioned that the goal of the summit was to reestablish the framework and terms of the French military involvement in the region. Macron said, he needed more "clarity" from his Sahel counterparties regarding the French presence that caused growing protests; see <https://fr.africanews.com/2019/12/12/reunion-france-g5-a-pau-les-presidents-vont-se-concerter-en-amont-kaboré/>

104 Ibid

Like Mali, Burkina Faso views the French foreign policy as invasive in terms of their national sovereignty but knows it needs Barkhane Force, else the jihadist will be victorious.

Like Mali, official elements don't rule out negotiations with the enemy and have started a dialogue with it.

Niger – at face value the France-Niger relationship and the relationship with the democratically elected president Muhammad Bazoum seem fine but the country which is one of the poorest on earth faces huge challenges. Bazoum is part of an Arab minority in the country and was almost deposed soon after his election in February 2021. Part of the population in Niger (26 million of which 99% are Muslim) is deeply influenced by radical Salafism. Niger was the only Sahel state that experienced violent riots against churches and Christian owned/managed businesses when the Charlie Hebdo Muhammad caricatures were published in 2015. ISGS, JNIM, ISWAP and Boko Haram are active in Niger.

Chad – has a lower-level animosity towards France than the above. Like Mauritania, Chad has been ruled for decades by a military junta. When the minority and the northern ethnic warrior groups are in control of the capital city of N'Djamena, there is always a chance that another northern warrior group will seek to remove them from power (northern Chad's population is Muslim and Muslims comprise of 51.8% of the population). The southern population has virtually no opportunities to partake in government and power centers and is mostly Christian. General Mahamat Deby, the son of former president Idris Deby and the new president as of April 2021 has to solidify his control over the country after his father's death in a battle with FACT (Front for Change and Concord in Chad) rebels in April 2021. Chad's army was the only military force that constantly partook in Operation Serval in 2013 and remained a strong French ally.

Mauritania – the government in this Muslim country managed to block any insecurity on the ground through an effective control of their territory and through negotiations with radical Islamists. On the local level, certain communal militias negotiated with JNIM, just like in Mali and Burkina Faso.

## Why do the African Militaries Fail to Stop the Jihadi Expansion?

A book published in June 2021 by Les Trois Colonnes, titled "Western Africa Militaries and Terrorism: Uncertain Answers?" tried to answer the question firsthand<sup>105</sup>. The main point in the book is actually its author: Col. Paul-Henry Sandaogo Damiba which the president of MPSR (Mouvement Patriotique pour la Sauvegarde et la Restauration) – the military junta that rules Burkina Faso after the January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, coup. The book serves as a firsthand account of the

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<sup>105</sup> Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba - Armées Ouest-Africaines et Terrorisme : Réponses Incertaines ? (Edition: Les Trois Colonnes 28.06.2021).

reasons for the military failure on the ground, the population's frustration with international and governmental inability to provide personal security, all reasons that led, inter alia, to the above coup.

It seems that the above question is valid to any theater where one fights jihadi terrorist organization. We can agree that national militaries, wherever they are, have similar tasks based on the following: (i) provide security, sovereignty and national territorial integrity; (ii) partake social-economic development; (iii) contribute to prevention, management and resolution of conflict; (iv) defending populations and their property from enemy attacks.

Starting from the end, contrary to popular thinking, the reasons for the collective failure of the African militaries in fighting jihadi organizations do not stem only from the quality of the soldiers and commanders and not from the level of officer training (at least the senior ones, a large number of whom graduated from the best military schools in the west), nor from poor logistics and inadequate equipment and weapons. The above portrays only a partial picture that sometimes is skewed and obscured by practical (either political or commercial) interest. What these militaries lack is motivation to fight and a sense of their responsibility. Fighting an invisible and ruthless enemy without knowing the real reasons why one should fight this enemy coupled with a constant sense of the rank and file are not backed up by the higher echelons (that often shakes them down on their salaries) or the political level – effectively paralyzes the troops. Take the Mali military for example, the fighting troops is deployed far from Bamako in a harsh terrain where temperatures may rise to 50 degrees Celsius in the hot months, the soldiers are under a constant threat of IEDs and sniper fire when they are on patrols and therefore the hunker down as a garrison in remote villages however they lack proper defenses, supply of food and water is irregular, the population is hostile, ethnically different – in this kind of situation the soldiers are wondering – what's the point?

In Mali, like the Central African Republic, the military is convinced it is being betrayed by the civilian population so much so that they are obsessed with fifth column as a compensatory syndrome for their failures against the jihadi organizations on the battlefield. De facto, there is a worrying game going on – the military doesn't trust the government and vice versa. In any system, lack of trust causes numerous errors and malfunctions let alone when the system is an army during a fight. The errors are being manifested on all levels: recruitment, training, procurement, resource allocation, fire support (near or far), casualty evacuation etc.

It seems from analyzing the facts on the ground that the main reason for the African militaries inefficacy in fighting the jihadists – are themselves.

That said, there is no single approach to understanding the African militaries failures. Also, one can't classify them all as failures. Despite what is written above African militaries are heterogenic rather than homogenic. They contend with multiple problems definitely

considering the scope of the resources they have at their disposal<sup>106</sup>.

By and large the African militaries are mostly at the initial stage of their training and procurement of weapons required to fight terrorism. Therefore, flaws in their organizational structure, procurement and training, directly affect their efficacy in fighting terrorism. In fighting guerilla and terrorism even at a low intensity, the fighting force needs resources, training on urban warfare and fighting among civilians, capabilities to distinguish between the enemy and an uninvolved civilian, various real time intelligence platforms, improved command and control systems, ongoing maintenance, funding and of course paying soldiers salaries<sup>107</sup>.

In light of the above the militaries' failure is almost inevitable and it is "aided" by the economic, demographic and geographic bases of the countries (Mali, the Central African Republic and other countries) which are extremely weak. The populations are mostly rural and poor, illiterate, spread over vast areas and rely on tribal (rather than state) loyalty. In this kind of setting, it is hard to enforce governmental authority, security included. The military and other law enforcement elements are required to provide the population with personal security. However, it has been proven more than once that external/foreign military support alone cannot eradicate Jihadi terrorism. Suffice to mention the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Vietnam, Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq and more as examples where foreign militaries who had been invited under this or that pretense had to withdraw under this or that excuse.

### Lack of Motivation – the Main Factor

The African militaries fail against jihadist terrorism not just because of the economic element or the quality of their equipment. For example, when 276 Chibok tribe female members have been abducted by Boko Haram in Nigeria on April 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, the Nigerian military didn't understand what had happened and couldn't locate their whereabouts. Why? Lack of intelligence<sup>108</sup>?

On September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, at Westgate Mall, terrorists took over the mall and at the same time viciously attacked villages along the coast. What did the Kenyan soldiers do? Used the opportunity to loot the mall instead of fighting to stop the massacre of civilians. Similar African examples are abundant<sup>109</sup>.

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106 In this context it is recommended the IRIS Institute research <https://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Note-de-IRIS-Arm%C3%A9es-africaines-avril-2018.pdf>

107 One of the main reasons for the weakness of the African militaries is funding. A number of reasons led to the reduction in the militaries' budgets. First, there was the weakness of the African economies, but that was only part of the reason. The multiple military coups that ravaged the continent convinced leaders to cut the militaries' budgets so as to curb potential coups and cooperation and defense agreements with western states provided the illusion that a strong national army was unnecessary.

108 Nigeria: 'Massive Destruction, Deaths from Military Raid,' Human Rights Watch, May 1, 2013.

109 Daniel Howden, "Terror in Nairobi: The Full Story Behind Al-Shabaab's Attack," The Guardian, October 4, 2013.

At their core the above failures don't stem from a budgetary shortage but from a deeper and much less manageable source: motivation.

It is acceptable to economically analyze motivation in terms of financial incentives that are directly connected to measurable monitored metrics. Yet, in many contexts that is not the most effective solution. In the private sector, if a company wants to preserve an employee's motivation it gets him to internalize its goals. Through that as well as professionalism and scalability the company can preserve the employee's motivation. However, in as much as internalization is an economically efficient solution for a private sector entity, it has far greater importance in the public sector.

The nature of the job on the public sector usually limits the use of high impact financial incentives because personal performance is hard to monitor but on the other hand internalizing the organization's goals is easier than in the private sector. That is true for the military and in order to understand military organizations that are not economically productive in nature it is essential to understand the psychological mechanics of internalization. In the military this de facto translates into an identity change.

In discussing an identity change in this context, one discusses a change in perception of several aspects on reality the way the world works. Psychology scholars have determined that people acquire their understanding of the world through narratives, not analytic descriptions. In the military a soldier changes his perception on the basis of narratives such as "the military is crucial for country's peace", "it must protect its citizens" and so forth. Identities, narratives and norms are being created through a dynamic of communication and transfer of information. To that, one needs a proper infrastructure and joint organizations. Africa lacks in this field if only for the most banal human/societal reason – the country is an array of tens if not hundreds of tribes and ethnicities that have very little in common that can bind them into a shared collective national identity. If such an identity actually exists then one can expect the soldier to tenaciously fight and even give his life in protection of his country and fellow citizens, even if they are from a different tribe. Around the world it is acceptable to view the military as the organization with the monopoly on the right to promote the narrative that its fighters protect the nation – it is unclear that this is the situation in Africa.

### Tribal and Ethnic Affiliation as Military Weakening Factors

In as much as it may seem strange even these days, the organizational structure of militaries and units in them is still based on tribal or ethnic considerations. No wonder that African leaders survive for decades in office because they cultivate a military force/presidential guard whose troops come from the same tribe as the leader's and effectively guarantee the continuity and security of the regime. Therefore, it is no wonder that such forces do not have the general population's trust and are delegitimized by them. When such a military is being deployed into the battlefield one should expect stellar results. The soldiers are being drafted without understanding their place and goals within the fighting force. Many don't have an inkling regarding regional issues, tribal conflicts and risk. Many simply won't risk their lives for their

country – which is a basic component of the commitment required of them.

In Mauritania for example, where the armed forces are divided along racial, ethnic and cultural lines, and where many political, economic and military institutions have been under the Arab-Berber minority (approx. 33% of the population) since its independence and after accusations of an ethnic plot to threaten this dominance were voiced in 1987, president Ould Taya committed to an almost complete mix of all of Mauritania's armed forces<sup>110</sup>.

Like Mauritania, Chad's armed forces composition doesn't reflect that of the population. The Zaghawa, a group president Mehmet Deby belongs to controls the armed forces and its people hold key positions, after they removed Hissani Habre from power in 1990.

In Togo as well the military demonstrates this phenomenon: 77% of the military come from the northern part of the country of which 70% are members of the Kabye tribe, president Eyadéma's ethnic groups and 42% are from Piya, his childhood village, yet the Kabye ethnic group comprises only 10-12% of the Togo population<sup>111</sup>.

Recruiting to the military and the presidential guard mostly from the president's ethnic group is a common practice in Africa and reminiscent of the Roman Praetorian Guard<sup>112</sup>. The officers in this corps are more loyal to the president than to the country's constitution. This practice undermines the professional standards of the military and pits troops in the same army against one another due to different ethnic backgrounds.

On the other hand, a heterogeneous army that is comprised of all ethnic groups in the country can provide a solid foundation on which a democratic country can be built. A diverse force also provides more comfortable environment to promote professionalism as promotion is based on merit rather than ethnic or tribal affiliation. A good example for the above may be found in the Tanzanian army whose troops come from all walks of Tanzanian society.

When the British from the Sixth Battalion of the King's Fusiliers at the end of WWI, they recruited soldiers from various ethnic groups around the country, including those who served in the German Colonial Army. Since Tanzania (Tanganyika, at that time) wasn't considered essential for the development of its colonialism, the British chose not to form an ethnic based force to control the population<sup>113</sup>. Upon its independence, Tanganyika's first president Julius Nyerere purposefully kept a professional distance from the military

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110 Boubacar N'Diaye, "Mauritania, in *Security Sector Governance in Francophone West Africa: Realities and Opportunities*," eds. Alan Bryden and Boubacar N'Diaye (Geneva: Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces - DCAF, September 2011), pp.152-153.

111 Comi M. Toulabor, "political Satire Past and Present in Togo," *Ibid.* p. 232

112 The Praetorian Guard was an elite unit of the Roman military. For 300 years its members served as bodyguards and in military intelligence gathering, initially for high-ranking officials in the republic and later for the emperors. Early on, the commanders of the Praetorian Guard amassed significant political power which they wielded at will to appoint or depose emperors, accumulate properties and acquire a special status among all government entities of the Roman empire.

113 Stefan Lindemann, "Civilian Control of the Military in Tanzania and Zambia: Explaining Persistent Exceptionalism," *Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2* (London: Crisis States Research Centre, 2010), p.3.

because it regarded it a colonialist oppression tool. Only in 1964 when Tanganyika and Zanzibar united to form Tanzania and when the soldiers revolted to get salary hikes Nyerere changed his mind. Afterwards, he set out to create a national identity among the military to prevent any involvement of the latter in politics<sup>114</sup>.

### Lack of Operational Capabilities

The professionalism of a military force in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on efficient command and control system, skilled and efficient fighters and appropriate resource allocation to allow the force to meet its goals. Without any of the above, that force is irrelevant.

The Mali military defeat vs. the Islamic rebels in 2012, the conquest of Goma by the rebel group M23 in the Democratic Republic of Congo that year<sup>115</sup>, and the disintegration of the RDC military force following the easy conquest of Bangui by the Seleka rebels in 2013<sup>116</sup> are a few of the examples that demonstrate the poor professionalism of the militaries south of the Sahara.

### Lack of Procurement Review Processes

When military procurement decisions are made by a political-military oligarchy who is allied with local and international trade partners then corruption runs rampant.

Military procurement must be made based on actual fighting needs, i.e., counter-terrorism equipment. However, the decision is made, de facto, in accordance with the economic interests of the corporations involved or with the personal decision made by head of the system (chief of staff, police commissioner, head of intelligence etc.) as a derivative of the level of the commission that person will earn from the "deal". Bribes and hidden commissions lead to sales of equipment at an inflated rate, shipment of faulty equipment or even equipment that is ill fitting the job it is supposed to do and tasks the fighters must accomplish. In some African states internal review boards have been established to analyze the needs and review that procurement processes of the local militaries. They are in charge of monitoring the military's professional capabilities and advising on the required military capability to achieve the military's goal. Even so, these review boards are being bypassed and sterilized of any operational authority.

### Low Troops' Morale

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114 Stefan Lindemann, "Civilian Control of the Military in Tanzania and Zambia: Explaining Persistent Exceptionalism," Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2 (London: Crisis States Research Centre, 2010), p.3.

115 The M23 rebels are called that because of a peace agreement they executed with the Congo government on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009, when they fought as part of a group that called itself the National Congress to the Defend the People (CNDP). Many CNDP fighters integrated into the Congolese army (FARDC).

116 The Seleka was formed in December 2012 following an agreement among several rebel group who had fought against the government of the Central Africa Republic

Perception of superiority among the troops rely on their morale, their fighting spirit and their utter trust on their commanders and the fact that they are doing the right thing. The above are “soft” components that are invisible to the naked eye and aren’t measured by the number of troops or the quantity and quality of their equipment. Adversaries are aware of the above and therefore employ psychological warfare tactics to lower the troops morale and confidence as well as the home front’s morale. In the regions where the fight against the jihadists take place it is reasonable to assume that they employ psychological warfare tactics but that is not the problem. The problem is that the troops’ morale is being hurt by their own commanders for various reasons.

Officers who have been trained in the best military schools in the world arrive at neglected unit in remote areas and quickly find that there is no one to address their military needs on the one hand and that their promotion prospects are low on the other.

Stagnant operations, hunkering down in posts in the villages and the fear of contact with the enemy or alternatively being on the receiving end of an explosive device physically and morally wear down the troops and without morale a defeat is inevitable. Now, if the commanders all along the chain of command are frustrated and have low morale what would the rank and file say?

Low morale problems were exhibit in the following examples: (i) in less than three weeks the RDC rebels took control of almost the entire territory facing an ill equipped, untrained and ammunition starved army which was loyal to the president. Without the presence of the Joint Mission of the United Nations Interagency Task Force the regime would have collapsed.

In Mali too the scenario was similar. With only a few days of fighting the National Movement for the Liberation of Azwad (MNLA) and other Islamic movements easily took the northern part of the country from the Mali army. The morale issues were manifested by hasty and disorganized withdrawal, leaving weapons and documents behind, deserting to the enemy and more.

## The Challenges Facing the African Militaries

The Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in Stockholm published a report wherein it said that in 2020, 20 of the 48 militaries south of the Sahara were involved in fighting<sup>117</sup>. The report lists a number of challenges facing the African militaries starting with bad reputation of some of them, through lack of professionalism, corruption and lack of funding transparency. Per the report, soldiers in some of the militaries, such as DRC, Cameroon, Sudan or Ethiopia have been accused of violating human rights, rape, torture and serial executions but their number is not high. The above weakness may be explained by the internal weakness of the state’s political institutions which stems from lack of national consensus within the heterogenic society in the subject country and unwillingness to enlist to the military/drafting

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<sup>117</sup> For the full report see [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/yb21\\_summary\\_fr.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/yb21_summary_fr.pdf)

based on tribal/ethnic considerations that results in the military acting as criminal gang a times.

An additional challenge is the regional or international dimension of the conflict in the subject country. For example, when Libya becomes an arena for the Turkish, Russian, French and American gladiators, each of which backing a different local armed militia there is no wonder the military looks for ways to survive and thus lives at the expense of the citizens of the state it is supposed to protect.

That said, per the report one can see some positive developments as well. For example, in Angola, where the government formed an effective review and enforcement system to root out corruption that didn't hesitate to lock up multiple officers and soldiers that were close with the former president Jose Eduardo Dos Santos for embezzling the military's funds.

## The Weakness of the Militaries Project on the Democratization Processes

When speaking of the weakness of some African regimes and the danger to the continent as well as the country itself, the prime example would be the collapse of Mali. The military coup in 2012, put Mali and its Sahel and west Africa neighbors into a vortex of severe political and military crisis. All that was need was for a handful of low-ranking officers and volunteers to depose an elected president of a democratic country and in one fell swoop wipe out 21 years of democratization and efforts to form professional military. In addition to the constitutional crisis created by said coup, the latter endangered Mali's territorial integrity and opened the door for radical jihadi organizations that spread out until they almost reached the capital city of Bamako and forced France and other western countries to intervene to stabilize the regime – and since then Africa has been boiling.

To give their militaries effective capabilities, African countries must examine and implement a few measures such as: elimination of nepotism, recruiting to the security forces independently of any tribal/ethnic affiliation, improvement of the soldiers and police officers' compensation and benefits – in short, stop being a militia at the pleasure of the president but rather a true republican patriotic force.

The prolonged and ongoing lack of professionalism in African militaries is a prevalent phenomenon that drives their commanders in many cases to act against the state's interest. In many cases, such as in Mali, the military simply ended the democratic process. In Guinea Bissau, a former Portuguese colony, no elected head of state saw the end of their term in office. The Guinea Bissau military is regarded as corrupt and actively involved in drug trafficking<sup>118</sup>. The January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, coup in Burkina Faso is

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Camille Dubruehl, Mathieu Olivier, « L'Afrique n'est plus seulement un acteur passif dans le trafic de drogue. La consommation augmente, » Jeune Afrique, April 24, 2012.

another example of the weak African regimes.

## The Challenges Facing African Countries

The main challenges facing Africa are political conflicts that lead to military coups, radicalization, radical Islamist terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, gun running, marine piracy and money laundering.

The general security of the African countries is increasingly threatened by political crises connected with the democratic process, growing poverty and unemployment that increase social demands, religious radicalization, terrorism and religious fanaticism. Violence, armed revolts, communal conflicts and separatist aspirations, crime, plagues and natural disasters (drought, floods, Tsunamis) that uproot entire populations and cause massive migration wave of homeless, sick and starved refugees.

Since the collapse of Libya and Mali instability has been infecting the Sahel region and spread into Lake Chad where radical Islamic organizations such as Boko Haram and ISWAP butcher the local population which is predominantly Muslim. The Sahel has become a safe haven for armed terrorist groups.

From this haven they venture out to expand their control to the Bay of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, to countries in the eastern coast of Africa such as Tanzania and Mozambique and even to central and southern Africa.

The African countries are mostly secular which make them an attractive target to jihadist who wish to abolish any western characteristic and install Sharia law.

Around the world, Africa in particular, the heads of the radical Islamic organization make a lot of effort to recruit followers and supporters. They do that via massive propaganda on any available media, Islamic education in madrassas, and various manipulations of their target audience's perception. The goal is to put the current regimes in the worst of lights, deepen the alienation to it and present their Islamic ideology as the one that provides the target audience with what it needs. The public space in African societies has become a battlefield of ideologies that threaten the states, their sovereignty and governability let alone their ability to preserve and solidify the democratic institutions.

In many African countries the authorities are having a hard time securing the equal participation of all the communities that make up the human fabric of their society in the state institutions and natural resources. Branding communities as political or business pariahs based on ethnic affiliation, slavery based on same, lack of hope and prospects for such communities are an integral part of the African political landscape.

The above, widely and justifiably regarded as unjust by those who experience them, give these people good reasons to bear arms or join local militias and radical jihadi organizations.

The religious dimension at the beginning of the cooperation with the jihadist is limited. The motive to join them is based on survival needs. Religious radicalization oftentimes occurs after one has joined the ranks of the jihadists. In the eyes of the latter, the jihadi groups are guided by equality and justice, absent from the attitude of the state's institutions towards them.

The quest for justice and equality sometime turns into a vendetta against the authorities, however, that comes with a price – the authorities retaliate and thus all are sucked into a vortex of blood and violence that destroys the society and the country and that provides the “fertile ground” the jihadi organizations seek.

## Appendix A: The Reasons for the Success of Global Jihad in Africa

The expansion of radical Islam is a dangerous global phenomenon that relies on the unchecked dissemination of such ideology by organizations with a radical religious ideological orientation, that paradoxically are being sponsored by countries such as Iran and Qatar. This phenomenon poses a special threat to Africa because among other factors Africa is home to multiple Muslim populations (some 330 million people) in multiple African countries, which live in stark poverty and despair, whose main common denominator is their alienation from the central government, thus they provide a low hanging fruit to the radical Islamist terrorist organizations. The latter from that end are very open and focused on their intentions and activities.

There are quite a few contributors to the spread of global jihad in Africa such as lack of governability, neglect of the periphery, political corruption, political exclusion, ethnic and tribal rivalries, mental rigidity and adherence to old customs and traditions. Moreover, the slavery legacy, poverty, rising unemployment, plagues, drought, fights to control natural resources (water, agricultural land, pastures, minerals, oil etc.), the weakness of the national security forces, the growth of the Muslim population in Africa, wide open borders and more.

In light of the above, the spread of Islam, seems inevitable. Islam, as a monotheistic religion purports to provide solutions to social problems. At its core, Islam means submission to Allah. A discriminating and exploitative policy in African society destroyed the social systems such as schools, public healthcare, employment, drove the harmed population to seek alternative institutions that will provide their basic needs. The alternatives presented themselves in the form of rich radical Islamic organizations subscribing to extreme ideology that offer such substitutions provided Sharia law is implemented and a caliphate formed. One can argue or disagree with the harsh Sharia law, but one cannot deny that it provides a legal solution in areas that contend with corruption, arbitrary customs and policies, or lack of governability. That said, one must understand, radical Islam wants to turn things upside down, uproot the old and plant the new. It is a by-product of several historical developments, including the economic, political and social dysfunction of the Muslim societies that blocked their development.

The above opened the door to the radicals that subscribed to a doctrine that despises and blames the west and everything it represents for the above dysfunctionality.

There are a few key points that are common to radical Islamic organizations in Africa: (i) Islam is in danger and jihad is the only way to save it; (ii) rulers, either Muslim or infidels, stripped Islam's power by regarding it as a form of paganism, tyranny or illiteracy (except maybe the Taliban); (iii) a demand to install Sharia law but reject many required Islamic institutions such as scientists and informational web sites; (iv) the only way to contend with the west and corrupt Muslim governments is through a life and death jihad, which is considered an individual obligation for every Muslim; (v) the west wishes to distort and falsify Islam from within through culture and science; (vi) Islam is threatened by the import of a western political system, i.e. democracy, that contradicts Islam and threatens it; (vii) the other western political systems such as socialism, communism or nationalism are forbidden by Islam and every Muslim must fight to regain Allah's seniority and hegemony. The jihadist organizations in Africa reverberate these ideas among the weak populations and by doing so seek to gain their support.

It should be noted, the radical Islamist organizations differ from one another, and their goals are different. For example, AQIM is a trans-national movement although it predominantly spawned from Algerian fighters who fought the government in the 1990s after military cancelled the elections to prevent the victory of the Group Islamique Arme (GIA). In Nigeria, Boko Haram was a part of a local millenarist<sup>119</sup> tradition that relies on the social basis of former slaves and poor and illiterate populations. In Mali, Ansar al-Dine and Mujao took over the Tuareg and through them took northern Mali. There is a considerable cross mobility among the fighters of these organizations.

The threat of radical Islam is perceived differently among the Africa countries based on the level of threat to the central government. In certain countries the daily life in the big urban concentrations might be minimally affected by the jihadists but in the periphery where there is less government presence and where organized crime and militias are a prevalent phenomenon they can thrive and create a "state within a state", yet even this chaotic scenario doesn't threaten the central government.

On its face the above is extremely alarming but at the same time have a calming note. Why? Because it is very difficult to control the local organizations and their joining the auspice of either al-Qaeda or IS just deepened the conflicts and rifts among them and de facto they fight among themselves on regional influence and control of resources<sup>120</sup>. That said, one shouldn't mistakenly regard these activities as struggles for just local territories, the organization's commitment to the caliphate dream is unwavering and their internal conflict may be eliminated immediately when they see success against the local government

119 The Millenarism is a religious movement that resemble messianism but differs from it in that is based on the faith that a new kingdom will appear in a way that will restore the environment of the beginning of time.

120 The al-Qaeda – IS violent competition for the loyalty of the local terrorist organizations isn't unique to Africa. It exists elsewhere and almost always means bad news for the countries wherein they are active. The competition escalates the violence and the lethality of said violence and the attacks are aimed at either rivals, local populations, Christians or western military presence on the ground, all as part these organizations' jihad against the west.

or a western military force.

Special emphasis should also be put on the effect tribal rivalries may have on terrorist organizations' ability to put down roots in Africa. These rivalries have previously opened the door to Islam (and these days to radical Islam) to put down roots and establish itself within the tribes' spheres of influence.

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019, more than 157 people were killed in an attack that took place in the village of Ogossagou, in central Mali. Armed Muslims, members Fulani ethnic group, one of the largest groups in western Africa, raided at night on the village where the Dogon minority lived, butchered its inhabitants and torched it as well as the people. The above is just one of tens of violent acts taking place in Mali and unfortunately typical of the violent daily existence in the country. The tribal conflicts and the fight to just survive (which, as aforesaid serve as fertile ground for the spread of radical Islam) have spilled over from Mali and now threaten the rest of the countries along the Bay of Guinea.

The Fulani and Dogon have an old conflict. Since the beginning of 2018 it claimed the lives of hundreds of people. The violent incident took place while a UN Security Council mission toured the area to assess the level of threat the jihadists posed to the region<sup>121</sup>. The immediate explanation for the root causes of the conflict is the competition for herding lands and access to water sources but the area is also influenced by radical jihadists. Prior to drilling down into inter-tribal rivalry, one should note the French political researcher Jean Francois Bayart that argues that the analysis of the spread of radical jihad in the Sahel is simplistic. Per him, the problem is not Islam but rather a group historical, political and social elements that stem from the former-slave society, the end of colonialism that resulted in the formation of national entities that are warped at times and above all (per Bayart) the real issue isn't ethnic or religious but agricultural – who and how will control the agricultural land. Bayart argues that the west, in its global war on terrorism quickly connected Afghanistan and Mauritania and created an “arc of crisis” the response to which is only military<sup>122</sup>.

Per Bayart, the countries that controlled Africa amateurishly ignored the religious aspect because most of the Maghreb and Sahel population is Muslim albeit from different

121 Jean-Hervé Jezequel, «Centre du Mali : enrayer le nettoyage ethnique,» International Crisis Group, 25 mars 2019. [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/icg\\_commentaire\\_centre\\_du\\_mali.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/icg_commentaire_centre_du_mali.pdf)

Christian Losson, «Au Mali, l'escalade vers le 'nettoyage ethnique,» Libération 24 mars 2019.

[https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2019/03/24/au-mali-l-escalade-vers-le-nettoyage-ethnique\\_1717110/](https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2019/03/24/au-mali-l-escalade-vers-le-nettoyage-ethnique_1717110/)

Cyril Bensimon, «Au Mali, l'ampleur du massacre est inédite, mais elle était prévisible,» Le Monde 27 mars 2019.

[https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/03/27/au-mali-l-ampleur-du-massacre-est-inedite-mais-elle-etait-previsible\\_5442286\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/03/27/au-mali-l-ampleur-du-massacre-est-inedite-mais-elle-etait-previsible_5442286_3212.html)

Marie Casadebaig, «Ogossagou : qui sont les meurtriers ?» RFI 26 mars 2019.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/emission/20190319-france-champs-elysees-casseurs-gilets-jaunes-paris-manifestations>

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Jean-François Bayart, «C'est la terre, pas l'islam, qui explique le djihadisme au Sahel,» Le Temps (4.8.2021), <https://www.letemps.ch/opinions/cest-terre-lislam-explique-djihadisme-sahel>

currents. Per him the jihadi groups should not be similarly regarded and their violent activities against each other come from a background of survivalism and interpretation of Islam and that their affiliation with al-Qaeda or IS opportunistic. Once these organizations act to promote their agenda, they make sure they are visible to the world through terrorism and guerilla warfare.

In fact, the scope of violence and the legitimacy of the armed Sahelian movements is national and local. Their jihadism is a symptom of a political crisis – the failure to integrate within the state institutions in the periphery or when they are from weakened population regarded as inferior (i.e., former slaves) and an agricultural crisis.

Since the independence in the 1960s, a few contributors to the spread of radical Islamist organizations joined together: the great droughts of the 1970s and 1980s that caused the seasonal herders (transhumance, in French) to migrate hundreds of kilometers south, land grabs by the central governments who gave these lands to the ruling class and western mining companies which uprooted people from their homes and complicated the relationship between the farmers and migrant herders, liberalization of agricultural sectors that intensified the migration from the villages and abandonment of agriculture in search of other forms of employment, the reduction of government aid for development, the closure of the EU borders to immigration and the spread of Covid, the implementation of the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s that destroyed the public healthcare and education infrastructure and opened the door to the Islamic actors from the Gulf, the “destructive” military intervention of the French, British and American intervention in Libya in 2011 that their aftershocks are still felt south of the Sahara.

The jihadists provide concrete solution to the above multifaceted crisis. In the areas under their control in 2012 prior to the French military intervention in Mali they guaranteed freedom of movement and security by removing the Army and Gendarmerie’s roadblocks that were used to loot the travelers. Moreover, they managed to settle land disputes faster and more efficiently than the local legal system, which in and of itself was corrupt, slow and culturally impenetrable. They did so by relying on Islamic law but also on local agreements and local judgements.

When state of affairs is as above no wonder the local population was cooperative. Further, the jihadist in the Sahel now expands to control trade routes like Boko Haram did in the Tri border area (Cameroon, Chad and Niger).

In this complex reality it is quite clear that the military solution is inadequate and cannot change the above state of affairs. On the contrary, it exacerbates the problem at least on the human level. The militaries, either national or international, fighting the jihadists in the Sahel cause more civilian casualties than the jihadists. Their involvement perpetuates the internal conflicts, forces the local populations to form militias to defend their agricultural land and face the jihadists, and forces the jihadists to leave the country and invade neighboring countries to survive and find refuge and in turn destabilize the

neighboring country in question.

After having set the background with the above explanation let's discuss the warring tribes/ethnic groups and how the jihadists use this rivalry to cement their hold among the tribes and recruit them for their cause.

## The Fulani People

The Fulani (approx. 60,000,000 people) are a group of communities who make their living especially from animal husbandry, often subject to land disputes, climate changes and at times the subject of an institutional racism. Over the course of history, the Fulani built empires as follows: (i) the theocratic state of Fouta-Djalon in central Guinea (18<sup>th</sup> century); (ii) the Macina empire in Mali (1818-1862) initially led by Sekou Amadou Barryi and later by Sekou Amadou that also conquered Timbuktu; (iii) the Sokoto empire in Nigeria (19<sup>th</sup> century). The above empires didn't last long and to date the Fulani don't control any state<sup>123</sup>.

Traditionally, the Fulani are seasonal migrant herders and follow this way of life even if some of them put down roots in permanent settlements (either due to desert expansion in certain regions or governments' initiatives which predominantly aimed at controlling them better). The Fulani are mostly Muslim and played an important part in the penetration of Islam to western Africa.

## The Fulani and Jihadism

All over Africa there have always been conflicts between farmers and migrant herders. The former accuses the latter of destroying and stealing their crops to feed their herds whereas the latter accuses the former for stealing their animals, difficulty accessing water and generally putting obstacles in their path of migration. Since 2010 the conflicts multiplied and became more violent. They took on a new dimension especially in the Sahel. The ongoing expansion of agricultural land due to the rapid population growth comes at the expense of herding pastures and migration routes. Moreover, the big droughts of the 1970s and 1980s caused the herders to migrate further south and thus encroach on agricultural land<sup>124</sup>. Further, the governmental development policy preferred the cattle ranchers over the migrant herders and pushed them even further to the fringes. Outside of the governmental programs, the herders believe they are the victims of discrimination on the one hand and a target to the ranchers and farmers on the other hand. This feeling, of living in a hostile and discriminatory environment drives them to protect their interests – at any cost.

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For expansion see Fulani people and Jihadism in Sahel and West African countries

<https://www.frstrategie.org/en/programs/observatoire-du-monde-arabo-musulman-et-du-sahel/fulani-people-and-jihadism-sahel-and-west-african-countries-2019>;  
<https://bmcbgenomics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12864-019-6296-7>

124 Dougoukolo Alpha Oumar Ba-Konaré, « Mali : Peuls et Dogons, histoire d'une longue relation ambivalente », Le Point (29.3.2019). [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/mali-peuls-et-dogons-histoire-d-une-longue-relation-ambivalente-29-03-2019-2304664\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/mali-peuls-et-dogons-histoire-d-une-longue-relation-ambivalente-29-03-2019-2304664_3826.php)

The Fulani who either live in isolated rural areas close to the borders or in the desert, share their existence with armed terrorist groups, criminal gangs and smugglers, all of whom find refuge in the remote areas where government presence is scarce to non-existent and provides them with freedom of operations. Due to their migrant way of life, the Fulani are mostly illiterate, but this is also an outcome of their desire to preserve their traditions and culture from being changed by the modern western life. The above affects the education they give to their children that de facto takes place in Quran (quasi-madrassa) where preachers indoctrinate the youth to Islam. That is how Amadou Koufa, the leader of Katiba du Macina, one of the major western Africa jihadi groups and Ibrahim Malam Dicko (Soum District, Burkina Faso) to recruit hundreds of young people, by using their frustration from the way the government was treating and indoctrinate them with radical fatwabs and thus form the Fulani jihad (Djihad Peul)<sup>125</sup>.

It should be noted, most of the time the radical jihadi terrorists, as well as the local militias and criminal gangs, correctly read the map and are able to leverage the youth's frustration for their recruiting purposes and to cement their hold on the territory.

### The Dogon

One of the most tribes in Mali are the Dogon who live in Falaise Dogon – a rugged and impressive region where cliffs and valleys rise above the savannah sparsely adorned with Acacia trees. Their number is estimated at 1,200,000 people. Their lives revolve around agriculture with millet being their main crop. Millet is the promise of wealth. It feeds man and farm animals and serves as a basis for the local alcoholic drink.

### The Roots of the Inter-Tribal Conflict

Over the course of history, the Fulani-Dogon relationship have been strained. The move on the arc between violence and good neighbors and depend on the race for land and natural resources and technology. In most cases the tension is diffused after negotiations.

In 2015, the jihadi movement who invaded northern Mali in 2012, expanded to the central regions of the country. The instability in this part of the country is being exacerbated by saturating it with weapons and ammunition originated in Libya and from the local army's depots. The Dogon have become the victims of the jihadists terror attack and accuse the Fulani of supporting the jihadists.

The Fulani on the other hand, accuse the Dogon self-defense groups (Dan Na Ambassagou) who enjoy government support of being responsible for atrocities perpetrated against them and in fact they are the victims. The Fulani argue that the self-defense groups use the fight against the jihadists as an excuse to drive the Fulani

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<sup>125</sup> For expansion see Pape Ousmane Thiaw, *Terrorisme au Sahel: le mirage du djihadisme*, ACRE-SA (5.10.2020) <https://acresa.org/terrorisme-au-sahel-le-mirage-du-djihadisme-peul>

off fertile and rich land and take it for themselves, not to mention robbing looting the Fulani, which drives the Fulani to join the jihadists for protecting themselves as well as exacting revenge on the Dogon.

## Appendix B - A Dialogue with the Enemy: The Chosen Modus Operandi of the Tribes' Leaders Across the Sahel

In Burkina Faso and Mali there is a dialogue with the radical Islamist jihadi terrorist organizations to reduce the violence and enable reasonable existence. The above beg the question – is negotiating with the terrorists the right thing to do? Are the negotiations with the heads of the jihadi organizations, whose goals are clear and unwavering and to promote their ideology they violence and sow destruction and fear, the right strategy to curb the spreading violence and reestablishing national stability? There is a saying Mali “if through negotiations we can eliminate many perils we shouldn't ignore this or that person's views, especially at the right time”.

By and large the fighting the jihadist terrorism that spreads across Africa from the Sahel to the rest of the continent doesn't leave a lot of room for a peaceful dialogue. Since 2010, in Nigeria (Boko Haram), the Sahel states, and the Horn of Africa, military deployment was at the core of the states' response to the radical jihadi terrorism.

Deploying an army, be it a national or an international one under a western umbrella providing logistics, intelligence, training and active contingency in the ground, managed to win local tactical victories but couldn't uproot the radicalism and violence that ran rampant and made the lives of civilians' hell in Nigeria, Sahel states and the countries that share Lake Chad. Therefore, there is no wonder that a school of thought advocating a new thinking of possibilities other than kinetic force emerged. The above included the possibility of negotiating with the jihadists to curb the violence and the latter's expansion. As the cliché goes – one makes peace with one's enemies.

In some communities in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso the local leaders started to negotiate with the jihadists even though this frowned upon by the central government. The former took this approach to ease the lives of the civilians in the jihadists' fighting theaters and sphere of influence regions.

At the end of the day, these local initiatives do bear fruit. Indeed, the way the negotiations take place might seem surreal as the image is that of two groups negotiating under a tree and feasting on goat meat, yogurt and traditional tea.

On one side there are heavily armed fighters, connected to al-Qaeda, who perpetrate terror attacks on civilians and on the other side, unarmed civilians – the immediate victims. The goal of the negotiations is to save as many as possible people from the horror of terrorism as in the last few years thousands of people were killed and over 1,400,000 had to flee their homes from the advancing jihadists.

In Burkina Faso, in light of the growing violence and the failure of the government-negotiated cease fire (arrived at for the benefit of the elections that took place at the end of 2021), a few local leaders made a radical decision to directly approach the jihadists. They explained that they met with the enemy to better understand what the enemy wanted, what needed to be done to stop the bloodshed and let the refugees

return to their homes. Similar initiatives take place in neighboring Mali, where the local communities are exhausted and frustrated with the government's inability and its Barkhane Force/MINUSMA/etc. partners to militarily defeat the jihadists. These civilians who negotiate under dire circumstances don't have a lot to offer and the jihadists know this only too well. Therefore, the latter give the local population small concessions on movement and security but in return forces them to strictly adopt their version of Islam.

These populations don't have real choice in the matter, and they agree to the terms the jihadists dictate. They fear retaliation either from their government who didn't approve the negotiations and may accuse the local leaders of treason which is punishable by death or the jihadists for not fully complying with their Islamic rules or cooperating with the government or not providing them with food and medicine, or not joining their ranks to fight. Excuses are in abundance.

Factually, the lack of government support leaves the negotiations as local initiatives that may conclude in "temporary pockets of quiet" but the violence around runs rampant. Obviously, the government unwillingness comes from their recognition that the goal of the jihadists is to install Sharia law on their territory and total disconnection from any western value and they cannot ignore that.

Further, governments prefer to arrive at negotiations from a clear position of force which is not the case across the Sahel<sup>126</sup>.

In October 2021 Burkina Faso's Minister of Defense, Ima Bartholomey Simporé that military activities are not enough to defeat the jihadists. He didn't clearly call to negotiate with them but there is no doubt that he is aware of the reservations and unwillingness of foreign countries who contribute to the war effort regarding negotiating with the jihadists. Other Burkina Faso senior officials are ready to reintegrate Burkina Faso jihadists back into society on the condition they will renounce violence and radical Islam<sup>127</sup>.

At the beginning of 2021 the Mali government announced the formation of a representative body that will start negotiating with the jihadists, despite a fierce French protest<sup>128</sup>. Mali's then interim premier, Mukhtar Awan, said that his government authorized the negotiating body without providing more details<sup>129</sup>. This trend continues and the Mali government authorized the highest Islamic religious institution of the country (Principale Institution Religieuse Musulmane du Mali) to negotiate with the local al-Qaeda branch to end the violent conflict. The Mali authorities alluded as they had already done that, they were not opposed to such a negotiation and discretely supported

126 see: <https://www.africa-press.net/mali/top-nouvelles/securite-par-le-biais-des-negociations-oui-mais-sur-quelle-base>

127 See <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/fr/2021/12/16/parler-ou-pas-avec-les-djihadistes-le-dilemme-sahelien>

128 For expansion Mali: créer les conditions du dialogue International Crisis Group, avec la coalition jihadiste du GSIM, (Rapport Afrique N°306 | 10 décembre 2021). <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/306-mali-jnim-french.pdf>.

129 See <https://fr.al-ain.com/article/mali-le-pays-negocie-avec-les-terroristes> ; <https://ma-liactu.net/mali-negocier-avec-les-terroristes-une-fausse-bonne-idee/>

the local negotiations, which was frowned upon by France<sup>130</sup>. The Mali highest office for religious affairs (Haut Conseil Islamique – HCI) announced in October 2021 that it would open negotiations with the “support group for Islam and Muslims” (i.e., JNIM – the local al-Qaeda branch)<sup>131</sup>.

After the military junta ruling Mali “expelled” the French military force (Barkhane and Takuba) off Mali at the beginning of February 2022 and with the fate of MINUSMA is questionable, it is expected to exit Mali soon, a new reality starts shaping on the ground – devoid of any western forces. This is one of the jihadists’ goals – removal of all western forces from the region – and it makes it easier for the junta to resume their discreet negotiations with JNIM’s leaders. Per reporters and experts, in a meeting held in Nouakchott, the capital city of Mauritania, between February 8<sup>th</sup> – February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, within the framework of Conference Africaine Pour La Paix, a good connection was made between the parties that might lead for a positive negotiation for the benefit of Mali and its citizens<sup>132</sup>.

### Togo’s Handling of the Radical Islam Expansion Beyond the Sahel

Since 2018, the jihadi threat has been expanding into countries along the western African coast. For Togo, the threat materialized and became significant on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, when the jihadists attacked a mobile customs post in Nohao (Boulgou district, Burkina Faso) close to the Togo savannah. The attacked claimed the lives of five people, among them a Spanish priest and four customs officials. Togo is home to some 8,600,000 Muslims which comprise 14%-20% of the population.

The Togo savannah (Savanes) borders the central and eastern regions of Burkina Faso, which have been experiencing an increase of radical Islamic terrorist activity, mainly from groups such as ISGS (IS in the Greater Sahara) or JNIM (Jamaaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin).

Togo, accurately read the state of affairs in Mali and Burkina Faso, understood it was probably the next in line and took a series of forward-looking preventive measures. The Togo government formed on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019, an inter-office committee to prevent and counteract violent extremism (Comite Interministriel de Prevention et de Lutte Contre L’extremisme Violent - CIPLEV). As a non-military mechanism CIPLEV complements the steps taken by Togo since 2017 to prevent violent radical Islamic activity in its territory<sup>133</sup>.

The main goal is to eradicate or at the very least significantly reduce the spread of violent extremism within the Togo territory: “act to eradicate or significantly reduce the spread

130 See <https://fr.al-ain.com/article/mali-le-pays-negocie-avec-les-terroristes> ; <https://maliactu.net/mali-negocier-avec-les-terroristes-une-fausse-bonne-idee/>

131 JNIM also includes Ansar al-Din, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Mourabitoun, and Katibat Macina

132 See <https://malijet.co/crise-malienne/sortie-de-crise-le-mali-negocie-t-il-avec-les-terroristes>

133 For expansion on CIPLEV see <https://lomegraph.com/ciplev-togo-lutter-extremisme-violent/> ; <https://www.voaafrique.com/a/le-togo-se-dote-d-une-structure-de-lutte-contre-la-menace-d-jihadiste/4920175.html>

of violent extremism by providing to local communities the tools and support they need to fight this malady and to reinforce the cooperation between the government and security forces for an efficient prevention and control"<sup>134</sup>.

CIPLEV is comprised of representatives of 18 government offices, including the Togo military general staff (FAT), various religious faiths and civilian society. On the local level CIPLEV works with the district and cantonal committees and report to a monitoring committee comprised of the Security, Territorial Administration, Finance and Social Activity and Popular Development ministers.

In September 2017 prior to the formation of CIPLEV Togo joined the Accra Initiative (L'initiative D'Accra)<sup>135</sup> and partook in joint fighting operations within the framework of Operation Koudalgou<sup>136</sup>. Operation Kadougrou takes place in a region that spans several border settlements along the joint borders of the four countries involved (Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Togo) and it enjoys the troops and weapons required for a warfare against the jihadists in the region. Patrols and several control operations are included within the tasks of this force to ensure free movement of people and merchandise.

Further, in September 2018, the Togo government launched Operation Koundjoare in the savannah region. The goal of the operation is to prevent the entry of radical Islamists into Togo and reinforce the ties between the local population and the military by taking military-civilian actions for the benefit of the communities<sup>137</sup>.

Additionally, Togo enacted two laws to assist the government in fighting the spreading

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134 Ibid

135 The Accra Initiative was executed in September 2017 by and between Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Togo, in response to the growing violence and insecurity in these countries due to radical Islamic activity in the region. Its goal is to block the expansion of the violent radical Islamic activity from the Sahel and to fight cross-border organized crime in the border regions. Mali and Niger have been accepted to the Initiative in 2019 in an observer status due to their proximity to the coast and experience in fighting violent Islamic extremism. The Accra Initiative stands on three main legs: (i) Intelligence sharing; (ii) training intelligence and security officers; (iii) conducting joint cross border military activity. As far as coordination, every quarter the ministers of defense of the member states meet to discuss the situation and such meeting is preceded by a preliminary technical meeting by the heads of security and intelligence.

136 Operation Koudaglou occurred between May 15<sup>th</sup> -May 18<sup>th</sup> in four states within which 52 people have been arrested in Burkina Faso, 95 in Togo, 42 in Benin and 13 in Ghana. The authorities captured explosives and other weapons. Under the Koudaglou title additional raids took place in May 2018 and November 2019. On July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the operation was expanded and resulted in an attack that destroyed five terrorist bases of operations, arrested hundreds and captured tons of equipment and weapons. The West African sub-region faces security threats including transnational organized crime, radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism. The countries are aware of this, and that is why Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo decided on July 30, 2021, in Accra to carry out Operation Koudalgou IV Zone 2, after the three premieres in May 2018, November 2018 and November 2019 with varying success. See: <https://www.latribunedufaso.net/?p=4692> ; <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/four-west-african-states-mount-operation-against-islamist-insurgents-2021-11-30/> ; <https://defense.gouv.tg/operation-koudanlgou-iv/> ; <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/agency-wire/8175-military-of-burkina-faso-launches-koudalgou-operation>

137 See <https://www.republiquetogolaise.com/securite/1111-6243-operation-koundjoare-les-forces-de-defense-repoussent-une-attaque-au-nord> ; <https://reliefweb.int/report/togo/togo-ops-its-ante-against-terror-threats>

violence: the Decentralization and Civil Liberties<sup>138</sup> Law and the Internal Security Law<sup>139</sup> to adjust the legal system to contend with the threats emanating from the violence erupting in the country and the other Bay of Guinea countries.

The threat of the spread of violent Islamic extremism in Togo opens a window of opportunity for CIPLEV to reinforce the social contract between the people and the state and it is advisable that it cooperated with religious and traditional leaders, pillars of civil society and political actors at all levels.

### The Establishment of Radical Islamic Elements from Ansaroul Islam in Burkina Faso and Northern Togo

Northern Togo is a remote, undeveloped region that has low government presence. This state of affairs turned this impenetrable jungle area into a refuge and base of operations for Ansaroul Islam fighters hiding from the Burkina Faso military. The jihadists are not satisfied with hiding in the jungle but look to expand their sphere of influence. Thus, many villages in Togo and Ivory Coast are influenced by the jihadists who also plant sleeper cells in them. The religious preaching in the mosques and madrassas becomes more and more extreme, the jihadists assimilate into the local population. As is the modus operandi in other places around the world and particularly in the Sahel, the jihadists operate through Dawah charities funded by Gulf money, especially from Qatar and KSA that adhere to the strict implementation of the traditional Islam, of which approx. quarter of the Togolese follow.

These organizations' modus operandi is well known. At first they raise the population's awareness without causing any overt friction with the government but when they feel strong enough, they assassinate moderate imams and attack police and gendarmerie stations.

Like in the rest of Africa, the jihadists openly fight to win the hearts and minds of the people. This is same fight the government must fight, albeit in a different configuration to block the spread of radical Islam in the rural undeveloped regions. Without the support of the population the jihadists cannot win. Therefore, the Togo military in the north of the country offers medical assistance to the local populations, digs wells, rebuilds destroyed schools and cooperates with traditional and religious local leaders and elders<sup>140</sup>.

Per the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the Togo military had 8,550 soldiers in 2021 (excluding police, reserves and other security services). Additionally, Togo army has land, marine and aerial forces<sup>141</sup>. As of December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the army is led by Gen.

138 See <https://www.republiquetogolaise.com/politique/2606-3285-le-togo-dispose-d-une-nouvelle-loi-sur-la-decentralisation-et-les-libertes-locales>

139 See <https://www.republiquetogolaise.com/securite/1605-3143-vers-une-loi-pour-renforcer-la-securite-interieure-et-garantir-les-libertes>

140 See <https://www.togoactualite.com/togo-aux-avant-postes-de-la-guerre-contre-les-jihadistes-reportage/>

141 See <https://atlasocio.com/classements/defense/effectif/classement-etats-par-effectif-ar>

Deja Maganawe. The composition of the military relies on fighters from the northern tribe of Kabiye (13% of the population), the president's ethnic group. Of the hundreds of military commanders about 50 are from his home village of Piya. The mostly ethnically homogenic Togolese army is nicknamed the "the cousins army" (armee des cousins) and Togo is one more country where the ethnic logic reaches its peak when questions of recruitment to the security forces arises, the nepotism flourishes and not much is left for the remaining 36 Togolese tribes. Togo has been accused in the past (especially in 2005) of butchering rioters and arbitrarily infringing on human rights around the country.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Military Planning Law (Loi de Programmation Militaire) for the years 2021-2025. Through this piece of legislation, the government wished to adapt the military (FAT -Forces Armees Togolaises) to the challenges and threats facing the country<sup>142</sup>. Per the approved planning during these years more than 700 billion FCFA to cover the expenses to upgrade the military<sup>143</sup>.

The Togo military budget for 2022, is around 105 billion FCFA (approx. \$180,000,000) divided as follows: 43.3 billion FCFA for strategic procurement; 21.9 billion FCFA for training and organizing the troops; 38.5 billion FCFA for logistic procurement and inter-agency support; 140.2 million FCFA for military pensions. The military's budget has been significantly increased to prepare it for the jihadi threat spilling over from the Sahel via the Burkina Faso border<sup>144</sup>.

A contingency of approx. 1,200 Togolese troops operates within the framework MINUSMA (Mission Multidimensionnelle Integree des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Mali) in Mali. Since 2013 the Togolese army lost 24 soldiers in Mali and dozens were injured<sup>145</sup>. The cooperation among the countries in the region is lacking and encumbered by a culture of mistrust among said countries, among their governments and even within each government. It is safe to assume that once the UN and French led foreign frameworks are dismantled (following the February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, French decision to withdraw from Mali), the Togolese force will return home and take an active in defending the country from the jihadists' spillover from the Sahel.

The heads of Togo's logistics and procurement have visited a few global weapons' suppliers (UAE, Turkey, Russia) over the past year. The above does not sit well with France that loses stature on the international cooperation front with Togo as well<sup>146</sup>.

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[mees-nationales-afrique.php](https://www.mees-nationales-afrique.php); <https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance>

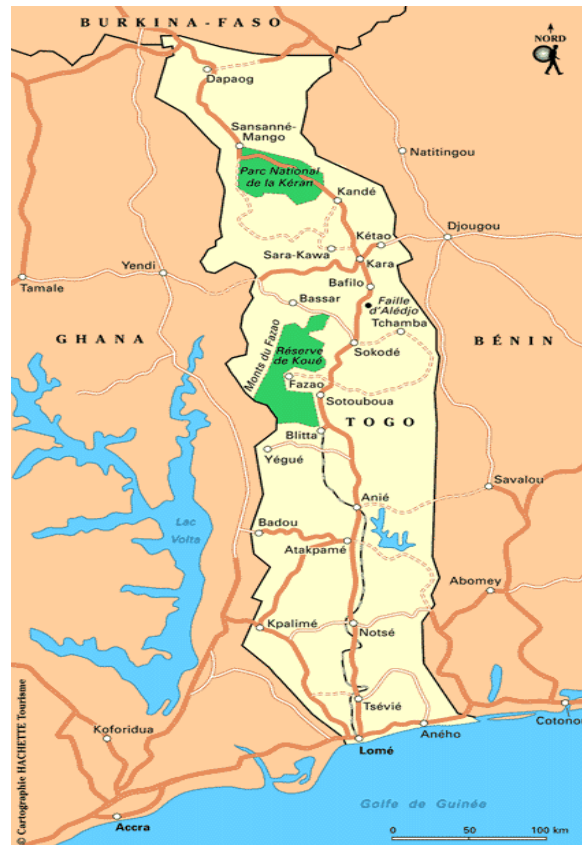
142 See <https://www.agenceecofin.com/sante/1012-83420-le-togo-adopte-une-loi-de-programmation-militaire-pour-moderniser-son-armee>

143 \$1 = 584 FCFA

144 For expansion see <https://www.togofirst.com/fr/securite/2601-9301-togo-face-a-la-menace-dji-hadiste-le-budget-de-l-armee-a-nouveau-en-hausse-mais-en-deca-des-previsions>

145 See <https://www.republicoftogo.com/toutes-les-rubriques/diplomatie/17-militaires-togolais-tues-au-mali-depuis-2013>; <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/mali-7-casques-bleus-togolais-tu%C3%A9s-dans-une-nouvelle-explosion-dans-le-centre/2442521>

146 See [https://www.africaintelligence.fr/afrique-ouest-et-centrale\\_politique/2021/09/17/armee-togo-laise--au-coeur-de-la-future-machine-de-guerre-du-president-gnassingbe,109691261-ar2](https://www.africaintelligence.fr/afrique-ouest-et-centrale_politique/2021/09/17/armee-togo-laise--au-coeur-de-la-future-machine-de-guerre-du-president-gnassingbe,109691261-ar2)



Map of Togo Source : [https://www.routard.com/guide\\_carte/code\\_dest/togo.htm](https://www.routard.com/guide_carte/code_dest/togo.htm)

## Appendix D – The End of an Era: France and its Partners Announce Their Withdrawal from Mali

On February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, president Macron announced, with the presidents of Ghana and Senegal as well as the president of the European Council in attendance, that France will be withdrawing from Mali after 9 years of anti-jihadi fight<sup>147</sup>. The French announcement lit a warning light for all those who are fighting the spread of radical Islam in Africa because this withdrawal has an immediate as well as long term ramifications for the spread of radical jihad in the continent.

De facto, the ruling junta in Mali showed the French and their Barkhane Force allies the door. The French presence in Mali commenced in 2013 within the framework of Operation Serval that then prevented Mali from falling into the hands of the rebels from the north which would have turned it to a Sharia law ruled country. The government of Mali has been deposed twice, in coups in 2020 and 2021. The military junta, led by Col. Asimi Goita, refuses to hold free elections, and capitalizes on an anti-French sentiment in the region that it makes sure to intensify.

The military withdrawal and the repatriation of the troops back to their home countries

147 See : <https://www.midilibre.fr/2022/02/17/mali-la-france-annonce-le-re-trait-complet-des-troupes-de-la-force-barkhane-10116495.php>

come from a series of provocations and obstacles the ruling junta put on the ground for the Barkhane Force and in front of the French government on the political level. In fact, the above denies any reasonable conditions/environment for Barkhane Force and Takuba Force to operate efficiently and therefore it was decided on a coordinated withdrawal and transfer of assets to the Mali military. Specifically, the last French bases in Gao, Menaka and Gossi will be shut down over a four to six months period and in the meantime, France will continue to provide MINUSMA with aerial and medical support<sup>148</sup>.

President Macron explained that “we cannot remain involved on the military side alongside authorities we disagree with their strategy and hidden agenda and who turn to a predator such as the Wagner Group<sup>149</sup>”.

Some of the obstacles put by the Mali military junta are the requirement that all Barkhane Force operations will be supervised and approved by the Mali general staff, speeding up the dialogue with the jihadists such as Amadou Koufe (Head of Katiba Macina), Ag Ghali (head of JNIM) under the guise that this was the people’s wish<sup>150</sup>. President Macron rejected the above and said that it undermined the war and the justification to it, as well the loss of 58 French soldiers of which 48 died while fighting in Mali.

The rift between Mali and France can be largely attributed to Macron’s 2019 plan to change the paradigm of the fighting in the Sahel which included a reduction in the French force, different deployment of said force and passing the baton on the battlefield to the local forces. The French force was to focus air support, artillery, intelligence, training etc. Macron wanted to minimize the French troops’ exposure to the perils of war. In June 2021 Macron published his plan which greatly concerned Mali<sup>151</sup>.

Macron said “this is a question of refocusing on our partners’ requests that our support is expected, always granted and even in a more coordinated manner [...] in the coming weeks and months we will define the support we will provide to each of the region’s countries based on their expressed needs. This support may include training and education, equipment or even counter-terrorism activity support”<sup>152</sup>. Clearly the French scaling down coupled with the above change in the fighting paradigm is a great shock to the Sahel states. That said, France and its allies wish to remain involved in the Sahel and expand their support to neighboring Bay of Guinea states as well as west Africa to block the spread of the jihadist organizations. It was agreed that the parameters of

148 MINUSMA (Mission Multidimensionnelle Integree des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation au Mali) was formed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2100 on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013, to support political processes and several security missions in Mali. See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma>

149 See <https://www.france24.com/fr/france/20220217-en-direct-fin-de-partie-pour-l-op%C3%A9ration-barkhane-au-mali>

150 See <https://fr.al-ain.com/article/mali-le-pays-negocie-avec-les-terroristes> ; <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/le-reportage-de-la-redaction/au-mali-lurgence-de-negocier-avec-tous-pour-faire-taire-les-armes>

151 See: [onomie.emploi/metiers/armee-et-securite/fin-de-loperation-barkhane-le-retrait-de-la-france-suscite-linquietude-au-mali\\_4659957.html](https://onomie.emploi/metiers/armee-et-securite/fin-de-loperation-barkhane-le-retrait-de-la-france-suscite-linquietude-au-mali_4659957.html)

152 See Sahel: nouvelle stratégie du Président français E. Macron (29 novembre 2019). <https://sahel-intelligence.com/17839-sahel-nouvelle-strategie-du-president-francais-m-macron.html>; It should be noted, the French military presence in the Sahel is estimated to be between 800 million to 1 billion Euro per annum

the French reorganization will be determined by June 2022. Meanwhile, Takuba Force troops will move to barracks in Niger and operate alongside the local army who enjoys a massive French support (France has an active airfield in Niger as well 800 soldiers on the ground).

The French and its allies' withdrawal and the Mali withdrawal from G5 Sahel Force has profound ramifications regarding the continued fight against the jihadi organizations in the Sahel whether they operate under the IS, al-Qaeda or an independent armed militia banner.

Those who think that fighting the radical Islamic terrorism in the Sahel is just Mali's business is frankly delusional. Mali doesn't have will or the capabilities, military or other, to block the spread of the jihadists. The current junta in Mali only control 25% of this huge country's territory (1,240,000 square kilometers). The other 75% are ruled by various jihadi organizations. The latter have a clear expansion strategy: to break through Burkina Faso into the Bay of Guinea states. The western forces withdrawal greatly assists this strategy. One should therefore expect that Mali will soon turn into a no man's land.

Further, one cannot ignore the similarities between the French withdrawal and the American withdrawal from Afghanistan however this is topic for another research.

Bottom line, these withdrawals provide a strong tailwind to the spread of radical Islam and very bad news for Africa.

## Appendix E – The Egyptian Coping with Global Jihad

IS in Sinai is considered these days as the main threat to Egypt's national security. Since al-Sisi took power in 2013 the Egyptians have been fighting a tenacious fight against the global jihad activists in the Sinai Peninsula and in "mainland" Egypt. Thanks to a number of military operations, cultivating the relationship with the Bedouin tribes in Sinai, tightening security measures along the Egypt-Libya border and counter-terrorism cooperation with various countries, including Israel, the Egyptian security forces managed to hit the jihadists' base of power but not eradicate them. IS in Sinai demonstrates remarkable survivability and continues to attack the Egyptian security forces.

In al-Sisi's view, eradication of the terrorist threat requires a considered integration of all state systems, including the military, the legal system, communication, education, religious institutions and the civil society, as well as regional and global alliances. In a summit that took place in Riyadh in May 2017 and attended by 55 countries, including then US president Donald Trump and King Salman of Saudi Arabia, al-Sisi addressed four major axes to fight terrorism:

1. Conducting an all-out war on all terrorist organization on all fronts without exception.
2. Eradicating all aspects of terrorism, including finance, weapons and anyone providing it political or ideological support: "the terrorist doesn't just carry a weapon, it also enjoys trust, finance, training, weapons and political and ideological support [...], unfortunately there are countries that have been tangled with supporting and financing terrorist organizations as well as providing them with political asylum....there states that refuse to provide information and databases even to the Interpol about terrorist foreign fighters"
3. Eliminating the terrorist organizations' recruitment capabilities by producing counter-narratives on the ideological level to undermine the appeal of the deadly terrorist ideology. Per al-Sisi al-Azhar institute is most qualified candidate for this task.
4. Strengthening the nation states of the Arab world and their institutions to prevent political vacuum or instability, which may play into the hands of the terrorists. The above is to be accompanied by reforms in politics, economy, society, preserving human rights, embedding the idea of the rule of law, women's rights and providing opportunities to young people<sup>153</sup>.

On the religious-ideological level al-Sisi recruited al-Azhar institute to fight the jihadists ideology. Al-Azhar is a leading Sunni religious authority which has been issuing religious rulings for over 1,000 years. In December 2014 al-Sisi announced his intention to fight Islamic terrorism from within al-Azhar and described it as the authority that plays a key role in providing an alternative interpretation of Islamic law which may tame the extremism in the religious Muslim society, disseminate values of tolerance such as accepting "the other" and challenge the radical discourse from the Islamic terrorist organizations school of thought. Al-

153 "The Riyadh Summit...al-Sisi presents a 'holistic approach' to contend with terrorism that includes four axes", RT, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017, [https://arabic.rt.com/middle\\_east/879553-السياسي-يعلن-الاستراتيجية-التي-تتضمن-محاور-اربعة-للمواجهة-مع-الإرهاب-والتطرف](https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/879553-السياسي-يعلن-الاستراتيجية-التي-تتضمن-محاور-اربعة-للمواجهة-مع-الإرهاب-والتطرف)