



Situation Report 2023 on the Growth of Islamic Terrorism in Africa

Dr. David Doukhan
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Abstract

This paper critically examines the escalating issue of violent Islamic extremism in Africa, spotlighting the significant rise in terrorist activities by groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda. Drawing on a July 2022 report from the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), it underscores the continent's transformation into a fertile ground for extremist activities. The study reveals a grim reality where extremism thrives amid rising military regimes, complicating counterterrorism efforts. The analysis delves into the root causes fueling the surge in radical Islamic terrorism, encompassing environmental, socio-economic, and political instabilities. It also highlights the growing sophistication of these terror groups, particularly in their use of advanced technologies. A critical assessment of the international community's response is presented, with a focus on the roles of the African Union, the United Nations, and Western nations, pointing out the need for a more comprehensive and integrated approach that goes beyond mere military action. The paper advocates for a multifaceted strategy to combat radical Islam in Africa. This approach should not only encompass security measures but also prioritize socio-economic empowerment, improved governance, and human rights advocacy. Addressing these foundational issues is deemed essential for effectively curbing the spread of terrorism and ensuring long-term stability on the continent.

Keywords: Africa, Radical Islam, The Sahel Region, Global Jihad; Terrorism

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Introduction

The African continent has become a central hotbed of violent Islamic extremism, with a significant increase in terrorist attacks on the continent in recent years. The peak of extremism is expressed in the violent struggle between many radical Islamic terrorist organizations operating under the umbrella organizations of radical Islam on the continent: ISIS and al-Qaeda and many countries on the continent and even between the organizations themselves.

In July 2022, the International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT) published a joint research article with an in-depth review of the development of global jihad on the African continent under the title: "Processes and trends in global jihad on the African continent."¹ The comprehensive article extensively reviewed the processes and trends

¹ See the link: <https://ict.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Spread-of-Radical-Islam-in-Africa-1.pdf>

in the Black Continent and stated that the African continent has become the fertile turf of the radical Islamic organizations and the area of contention, over the spheres of influence between the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda, To prevent these dangerous trends, comprehensive solutions including African countries as well as Western countries are required. To prevent the spread of radical Islam, a revolution in the governing culture practiced in the continent's countries, a culture based on the principle of tribal loyalty and tainted by corruption, with the desire to strengthen governance and democracy, which are important and central tools in the toolbox for combating Islamic terrorism, is needed.

A year has gone; have there been any changes? What has changed? Unfortunately, not much, on the contrary, nothing has changed, and the situation has only gotten worse, precisely in the countries where the radical Islamic organizations 'flourish' and the regimes have turned into military regimes, military juntas, which cut ties with the West and removed from their territory the Western forces that were sent in the past to help them curb the spread of the radical organizations.

It can be stated that the danger facing the African continent from the spread of Islamic organizations has only increased and threatens to engulf more countries, such as those located in the Gulf of Guinea, and as a result the danger to the Western world is increasing.

As mentioned, everyone now agrees that Africa is now the epicenter of global radical Islamic terrorism. For reference, half of the victims killed last year by terrorist acts are in sub-Saharan Africa.² The violent Militant Islamists in Africa continue to focus on 5 arenas: the Sahel, Somalia, the Lake Chad Basin, Mozambique and North Africa.³

Regardless, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State affiliates remain widespread, persistent and active in other parts of the world with varying levels of activity.

The Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa is responsible for more deaths from terrorism in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa combined.⁴ The African continent, despite the extensive deployment of initiatives to combat Islamic terrorism in recent years, remains an arena for the rise of international jihad. According

2 For more on the subject, it is recommended: Global Terrorism Index (GTI); See the analysis of the Sahel region on pp. 60-70. See the link: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-terrorism-index-2023>

3 Center d'études stratégiques de l'Afrique, «Les décès provoqués par la violence des Islamistes militants d'Afrique augmentent de près de l'Afrique,» Center d'études stratégiques de l'Afrique.)10.2.2023(<https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/les-deces-provoques-par-la-violence-des-islamistes-militants-dafrique-augmentent-de-pres-de-50/>. For the English version see the link: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/fatalities-from-militant-islamist-violence-in-africa-surge-by-nearly-50-percent/>

4 The Sahel region: a vast area that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and includes the southern part of the Sahara, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea. The Sahel region is plagued by a myriad of conflicts and social unrest over poverty, drought and climate change. Due to its characteristics, the region has become a hotbed of radical Islamic terrorist organizations, and the scene of a struggle for influence and control involving France, the US, Germany and the European Union, the Gulf powers, Turkey, Russia and China, all seeking to profit from its vast mineral resources essential to modern industry.

to a study by the African Center for Strategic Studies conducted by Dr. Claudia Piper Cruz, published in February 2023, violence related to militant Islamist groups in Africa increased sharply, by 22% during 2022, with 6,859 incidents. This is a new record of extreme violence, and it has more than doubled since 2019.⁵

Deaths in the Sahel accounted for 43% of the global total in 2022, compared to only 1% in 2007. Of particular concern are Burkina Faso and Mali, which accounted for 73% of terrorist deaths in the Sahel in 2022 and 52% of all deaths from terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa. Both countries recorded a significant increase in terrorism, with deaths in Burkina Faso increasing by 50% to 1,135 and in Mali by 56% to 944. Attacks in these countries are also becoming more deadly, with the number of deaths per attack increasing by 48% from 2021. Most attacks in these countries are attributed to unknown jihadists even though both ISIS and JNIM operate in these countries. The escalation of violence in Burkina Faso has also spread to neighboring countries, with Togo and Benin recording their worst GTI (Global Terrorism Index) scores.

Undoubtedly, the data shows that the increase in Islamic terrorism in the Sahel was dramatic, increasing by over 2,000% in the last 15 years. Furthermore, the political situation in the Sahel, the military coups, adds to this increase, with 7 coup attempts since 2021, of which 6 were successful (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Guinea Conakry, Sudan and Gabon).

The causes of the flourishing of radical Islamic organizations and terrorism

The basic motivations for the flourishing of radical Islamic terrorism in the Black Continent are complex and systemic, including poor utilization of water sources, severe drought, food shortages, ethnic polarization, strong population growth, serious diseases, external interventions by economic powers with narrow interests, geopolitical competition, pastoral conflict,⁶ the growth of a transnational radical Salafi-Islamic ideology, weak and corrupt governments, lack of governance, weak armies that usually show loyalty to the ruler, poorly-equipped and properly trained armies in which low-motivated fighters serve, etc.

5 Claudia Pfeifer Cruz, "Multilateral peace operations in 2022: Developments and trends," SIPRI. 29.5.2023. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2023/multilateral-peace-operations-2022-developments-and-trends>

6 Pastoralism is the oldest type of production system that survives and serves millions of people in dry lands of Africa. This system supports 20% of the population of Ethiopia and 85% of the total population in the Somalia region, almost 100% in the Sahel. The pastoral area is known for drought that affects the livelihood of people living there. Pastoral societies have survived for thousands of years within their conflict-sensitive system thanks to the traditional dispute settlement mechanisms they developed and maintained. A pastoral conflict equation erupts because the system enjoys a traditional practice of raiding herds of sheep and cattle fueling conflicts between different groups and tribes. However, pastoral conflicts these days are no longer limited to competition for pasture and water resources or raids on cattle herds. The pastoral conflict has become very complicated and can only be understood by the multiple variables that can provide explanations for the challenges prevailing in the production system and the political context and geographic location in which the system operates.

Most radical Islamic terrorist activity occurs along borders where government control is loose and weak. The extremist and violent Islamic groups often find refuge in remote and isolated border areas, where state authority is weak or non-existent, as an example the border triangle of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, a refuge area known as Liptako-Gourma, where logistical bases are bases for launching attacks - The center of gravity of terrorism throughout the Sahel.

Significantly, out of the 830 million people facing food insecurity in the world, 58% live in the 20 countries most affected by terrorism located specifically in Africa. In addition to the complexity, I described above. One must consider the numerous criminal organizations that are increasingly portraying themselves as Islamic rebels, who are involved in the smuggling of people, goods, illegal drugs, and drugs, and who tend to join Islamic jihadist organizations, causing violent attacks to be attributed in part to non-Jihadists.

Regardless of the African continent, in reference to the increase in global terrorism, at a round table held at the United Nations, the representative of Interpol, the international criminal police agency, stated that terrorism related to extreme right-wing and racist ideology has increased 50-fold in the last decade, especially in Europe, North America and parts of Central Asia.⁷

It is possible to identify other trends that facilitate the spread of terrorism in all its forms in the world: the deterioration of security in certain countries of the world and its regional consequences. Terrorist organizations have become more sophisticated and have greater access to advanced technology, which widens the range of risks and makes them a serious concern in the form of the use of drones, drones, and access to AI (artificial intelligence) which helps to develop new avenues in planning effective and targeted terrorist activity.

Undoubtedly, if the Western world wants to live, it must unite, more than ever, in the fight against the spread of terrorism and not only in the aspect of military alliances and the establishment of ad hoc joint forces for a focused war on terrorism, but also in the aspects of de-radicalization of populations that live or have lived under a radical Islamic regime (changing the DNA of the population is requested- it's a long process) and exercising soft power such as: dealing with a more equitable distribution of the state's resources, maintaining human rights, fair judgment, rehabilitation vital infrastructures to improve the population's quality of life (energy, education, health and transportation), employment solutions to reduce rising unemployment and the like.

As mentioned, the continent of Africa has become the main battlefield of terrorism, with a significant increase in the number of groups active on the continent, a fact that directly causes a massive wave of refugees that hits the already collapsing African countries and knocks on the gates of Europe where several countries fail to deal with Muslim and other minorities.⁸

7 See the link: <https://fr.africanews.com/2023/06/21/lafrique-est-le-point-chaud-du-terrorisme-dans-le-monde/>

8 Like other regions of the world, Africa is faced with the violent spread of Salafi-Jihadiyah and with the political

In Africa, in many parts of the continent, from Burkina Faso to Chad, from Mali through Sudan, Somalia in Central Africa and all the way to Mozambique, we are still dealing with the spread of radical Islam and the consequences of the extremist organizations being armed with weapons from the warehouses of the Libyan army.⁹

This reality turns certain areas in Africa, into a new focus of violent extremism, with consequences that also extend to neighboring sub-regions. Therefore, the response to this threat goes beyond the borders of Africa and requires an integrated approach involving all stakeholders, including countries outside the African continent.

Takeover by radical Islamic groups - modus operandi

The presence of the jihadist organizations is reflected in their control over territories in the center and north of Mali, northern Burkina Faso, the area of the three borders, Liptako-Gorma and the Lake Chad basin. Jihadist organizations', such as the 'Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and the Islamic State' - JNIM, numbering about 15,000 fighters, managed in the last decade to take root and develop an ecosystem that deals more with agro- Pastoral. These jihadists act as they did in Algeria in the 1990s: occupying areas they describe as 'liberated', threatening and assassinating official state officials and police forces to impose a new political and religious order (Islamic courts settle local disputes on according to Sharia law).

The jihadist groups managed to take over and manage several territories, where schools were opened under their complete control and to secure income from taxes collected from the population - income needed to fight the central government and the Western enemy that supports it. For the most part, they harness the local populations to the radical Islamic vision by force. Their approach is to champion local goals (such as land distribution and inter-communal conflict resolution) and return the local communities to their land. The attractiveness of the jihadist groups depends on the intelligent and efficient management of the settlement strategy that guarantees life. As in Algeria in the 1990s and in the state of Borno in Nigeria, they demand that the local population sever all ties with the security forces and the official state mechanisms, if not, they will receive retaliatory actions and revenge. In exchange for their loyalty, the jihadist groups allow local populations to violate the prohibitions imposed by the authorities regarding

project of establishing Islamic emirates against the backdrop of the atrocities of post-colonial nation-states. Jihadist groups aim, in the long term, to replace the post-colonial state and political institutions with new organizations based on the application of Islamic law, Sharia, within the framework of an Islamic state or Islamic emirate.

9 Oil-rich Libya plunged into chaos after the NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. After the defeat of the Islamic State's self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq in 2017, many of its foreign fighters fled to the North African country. To the collapse of the regime Libya had an influence on North and West Africa. It paved the way for tribes with separatist tendencies to take up arms and challenge the central government in Mali in 2012. For, many of the local tribes - including the Tuareg, had previously fought for Gaddafi in Libya and received military training. When he collapsed His regime, these fighters returned to their homeland in 4X4 all-terrain vehicles equipped with heavy machine guns and missile launchers, with an agenda to act in their country as well.

hunting in protected areas, fishing, trans humanization, gold mining and allow them to collect taxes on animals.

These ways of operating, which guarantee income and food, attract many people who are willing to join jihadist groups if they create profitable activities, for example: highway robbers who the jihadists explain to them that their actions are blessed and have religious significance.

Jihad organizations offer protection and personal security to citizens in their spheres of influence. Like in the Mafia, once you are a full member of the organization, no one dares to mess with you.

Widespread phenomena of poverty, marginalization and socio-economic exclusion of entire populations, who are not connected to the government, on a tribal/ethnic background, create an environment that helps the radical organizations recruit new fighters and establish their governmental hold in these areas. Against the background of the lack of governance and the lack of personal security for the populations in the periphery, the radical organizations claim to replace the government and provide the residents with protection, education on the chapters of Islam and judgment according to Islamic law (Sharia), employment and everything that the state does not provide in its accountability as basic services to the citizen. The process of radicalization or transition to it is fast. Men tend to follow their friends; they are influenced by their actions and stories. Women, mostly married, will follow their husbands and children. Those who are born will one hundred percent be fighters of Islamic Jihad because in this framework they will grow up and according to the values of a Jihadist society they will be educated.¹⁰

The Islamic terrorist organizations work on the burning consciousness of the population in the context of the involvement of foreign armies on the country's soil. It is now clear that the intervention of foreign military dispatch forces, French or others, to fight the jihadist groups is not the solution, this is a fact, and this is how it is presented by them. To them, on the contrary, this foreign presence inflames the determination of the jihadists and undermines the credibility of the governments of the countries concerned, who are accused of weakness and incompetence and are forced to call on foreign armies to protect their populations.

In addition, there are other triggers that play a decisive role in the decision or the turning point of some people to go to violent extremism or join the radical groups. These triggers include anger, frustration and alienation resulting from human rights violations, acts of violence committed by official security forces, ethnic or religious discrimination, inter-communal conflicts or deep socio-economic frustrations.

10 In the many territories under their control, the radical Islamist jihadists demonstrate a willingness to rule a new political and religious order. The death threats against anyone who cooperates with the state and its representatives and with Western elements illustrate how much the jihadist insurgency aspires to replace these 'pagan states' and run society according to a radical interpretation of Sharia law: wearing a veil for women, enrolling children in Koranic Salafi schools, Closing drinking establishments for local populations and more.

The war against the spread of radical Islam

Violent Islamic extremism in Africa and its spread to other regions of the continent such as South Africa and the Gulf of Guinea is therefore a great challenge for all African countries and the entire world.

As in any war, the condition for success in it lies, in my opinion (know the enemy), in understanding the root causes that help the rise of radical Islamic extremism, studying the history of fighting them, drawing lessons from it, and implementing a holistic plan suitable for each country and its characteristics and the entire continent.

It seems to me that the key to success lies in the combination of security and development measures, as well as the promotion of justice, inclusion and respect for human rights. A combination of African and other forces may curb the rise of Islamic extremists on the continent. It may be easier for Africans to band together and unite in this task than to coordinate the interests of Russia, China, the US and France on the continent, interests that are often at odds.

Efforts over the past two decades by governments and regional and international organizations, including the African Union (AU), to suppress and contain radical Islamic extremist groups have failed. Africa's struggle with radical Islamic terrorism seems to indicate that the responses of the European Union and its member states are not commensurate with the nature of a threat that is not new.

Incessant attacks by violent Islamic extremist organizations have reached an unprecedented dimension in Africa. Organizations such as: Boko Haram, al-Shabab in Somalia (al-Shabaab) and Mozambique (Al-Shabab), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the activities of the Islamic State (ISWAP) and the branch of the Sinai Peninsula (Sinai Province) form the platform The center of radical Islamic terrorism on the continent and the main source of death for thousands of innocent people. Their influence crosses borders, some of them have absolute control over the territory and in remote territories where they have established quasi-states on the way to the dream of the Islamic Caliphate. All of these continue to exist and flourish despite several measures taken such as: the Algiers action plan to prevent and combat terrorism (2002) and the African Anti-Terrorism Act (2011) which were designed to contain the activity of violent extremist groups on the continent. The prevailing argument shows that the African Union (AU) initiated legislation and recording protocols to contain and deal with radical Islamic terrorism on the continent, but it does not, the African Union, does not have the ability to enforce the legislation and the necessary war on terror. If we take a deeper look at what is happening and judge by the concepts of cost-benefit, we will conclude that the member states of the African community prefer to cooperate with parties and organizations in plans to fight terrorism and against the spread of radical Islam, a cooperation that sometimes causes contradiction and cultural and other clashes between the locals and the external parties who join in to help.

African Union (AU) activities

Historical reminder, in response to concerns made in the late 1990s of the twentieth century, long before the September 11, 2001, attacks the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the 'Algiers Declaration' for the Prevention and Fight against Terrorism between the 12 July 14, 1999. This text, now 24 years old, noted the "scope and severity of the phenomenon" and the "dangers it represents to the stability and security of countries". The African leaders expressed their determination to eliminate terrorism "in all its forms and manifestations".¹¹

The African Union (AU), which replaced the OAU, developed an action plan for the prevention and fight against terrorism that was signed in September 2002 in Algiers (AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism). This program aims to implement the 'Algiers Convention' by enhancing cross-border cooperation through policing and surveillance. The goal was twofold: symbolically to demonstrate the African continent's commitment to the 'global war on terrorism' and in fact to give official validity to the AU in the context of the 'Algiers Convention' which discussed the prevention and fight against terrorism from 1999.¹²

Furthermore, as part of the implementation of the 2002 plan, the ACSRT African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism was established in Algiers in 2004.

The overarching mission of the ACSRT is to conduct research and research on terrorism and develop strategic policy, operational and training mechanisms in the context of international and continental legal tools to strengthen the capacity of the African Union and its member states to prevent and fight terrorism in Africa. The goal is for the center to function as a center of research excellence in issues related to preventing and fighting terrorism in Africa. As a structure of the African Union Commission, the Center is supposed to contribute to and strengthen the African Union's ability to address issues related to the prevention and combating of terrorism in Africa with the goal of eliminating the threat posed by terrorism to peace, security, stability and development in Africa. To this end, the center conducts research and research on terrorism. Also, the center maintains a database, collection and information center, studies and analyzes on terrorism and terrorist groups. The center also seeks to build counter-terrorism capacity in the member states and therefore develops training programs and packages and runs training sessions, workshops, meetings and symposiums with the assistance of countless stakeholders' partners. The ACSRT also provides a platform and forum for interaction and cooperation between Member States and regional mechanisms. The Center plays an important role in guiding the AU's counter-terrorism efforts and works collaboratively with several regional and international partners to ensure coherence and coordinated

11 See the link: https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/decisions/9544-1999_ahg_dec_132-142_xxxv_f.pdf; <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/protocole-lutte-contre-terrorisme-fr.pdf> (in French) https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/9544-1999_ahg_dec_132-142_xxxv_e.pdf (in English)

12 See the link: <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-anti-terrorism-plan-of-action.pdf>

efforts against terrorism on the continent.¹³

In 2011, the Model Anti-Terrorism Law was enacted, which established the definition of terrorist offenses, including money laundering and financing of terrorist organizations, hostage-taking and acts of sabotage.¹⁴

The African Union has carried out various operations to support peace and fight against the spread of radical Islamic terrorism, such as: the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) from 2007;¹⁵ The regional cooperation initiative to eliminate the LRA (The Lord's Resistance Army) in Uganda. The European Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) is a major supporter of the African Union, which coordinates combating bodies against Islamic terrorism in combination with regional economic development, such as: the multinational joint task force against Boko Haram The MNJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force),¹⁶ the G5 Sahel joint force in 2017,¹⁷ and more recently, the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM).¹⁸

13 The African Center for Research and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was inaugurated in 2004 - headquarters in Algiers, Algeria. The institute was established as a research structure of the African Union Commission, in accordance with the protocol to the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and the Fight against Terrorism. The protocol gives the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the responsibility for implementing regional, continental and international counter- terrorism instruments as well as harmonizing, standardizing and coordinating continental efforts in preventing and fighting terrorism. For more information about the institute and its activities, see the link: <https://caert.org.dz/>

14 To review the extensive and comprehensive law, see the link: <https://archives.au.int/bitstream/handle/123456789/8313/african-model-law-E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y;> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0974928419901197>

15 The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been supporting the Somali government in the fight against al-Shabaab for 15 years. The deal was supposed to be completed in December 2021, and finally an agreement was reached on what appeared to be simply a name change and the extension of the existing mandate. The African Union (AU), the United Nations and the Government of Somalia decided that on 1 April AMISOM will be replaced by the 'AU Transition Mission in Somalia' (ATMIS). The new mission will operate until the end of 2024, after which all responsibilities will be transferred to the Somali security forces. Scope The strength of ATMIS: numbering about 18,000 soldiers, 1,000 policemen and 70 civilians strongly reflects the previous scope and a large part of its mandate.

16 The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is a coalition of the member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to combat terrorism in the Lake Chad region. It includes forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. Since 2014, it has been actively fighting Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP).

17 The G5 Sahel, established on February 16, 2014, in Nouakchott, Mauritania, is an organization that brings together 5 terrorism-stricken countries in the Sahel: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The G5 Sahel allowed the member states to unite their efforts in the fight against armed jihadists in the Sahel. After the end of Operation BARKHANE and French military cooperation in general, the Malian government announced on May 15, 2022, its withdrawal from the G5 Sahel, including its joint force, which raises serious doubts about the survival of this force, which has now become the G4. Of the five member countries, Mali has the largest GDP, although it was only \$17.39 billion in 2020. Three of these countries (Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali) are currently in political and military transition, i.e. after a military coup.

18 The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) was deployed on 15 July 2021 following the approval of the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of Member States as a regional response to support the Republic of Mozambique in the fight against terrorism and acts of violent extremism. The SAMIM forces consist of forces from 8 countries: Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, working in cooperation with the Armed Forces of Mozambique (Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique - FADM) and other forces deployed

In some cases, these efforts led to the liberation of territories from violent Islamic extremists to their weakening and containment of the situation. Despite the European Union's commitment to assistance and the deployment of considerable material, financial and human resources, Islamic terrorism and violence are worsening and spreading in Africa, with terrible immediate and long-term ramifications for the continent and its people.

Fighting the spread of radical Islam in the continent - approaches

The spread of the radical Islamic threat and its intensification reveals two main gaps in the response in Africa.

The existing approaches, as a rule, do not address the roots of the problem that allow the radical groups to flourish and expand their spheres of influence.

On the one hand, the persistence of the phenomenon can be attributed to a complex cocktail based on one main ingredient: deep governance problems, which no one is really addressing. The vacuum created due to the lack of governance draws into it groups/tribes with a character and a desire for separatism, local Islamic groups and international terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda who impose their patronage on the local groups, improve their means of warfare and guarantee the financing clause, and in this way succeed in obtaining a foothold foot in Africa, to establish themselves in areas where a wide flexibility for growth and expansion of the areas of influence and action is also guaranteed, despite the military efforts to thwart their actions.

According to the African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSRT), the increase in the activity of these extremist Islamic groups is supported by the 'constant increase in their capacity', an increase resulting from the construction of a trained and equipped military force that enjoys the broad support of a relatively alienated population, and their ability and willingness to fight the state's security forces, often successfully high.

On the other hand, the regional and continental responses, including international support, remain largely reactive and military, cryo-kinetic, and do not place enough emphasis on sustainable and preventive measures that address the roots of the problem.

One of the reasons for this may be that such long-term strategies depend on stable and strong governance structures, which are sorely lacking in regions and countries affected by radical Islamic terrorism.

African countries face enormous challenges in fighting the spread of radical Islam. The lack of political courage, national consensus and in the face of weak, degenerate and

in Cabo Delgado to fight terrorism and violent extremism. Since its deployment, SAMIM has recorded victories, including recapturing villages, displacing terrorists from their bases, and seizing weapons and munitions, helping to create a relatively safe environment for the transit of humanitarian aid. This mission is an example of sub-regional deployment in Africa with encouraging results.

corrupt institutional structures as well as the lack of resources creates an imbalance between the web of threats and the national or integrated response and thus personal and regional insecurity is fostered and growing.

The world's involvement in Africa in the fight against Islamic terrorism

African countries are not marching alone in their war against the expansion and spread of radical Islamic organizations. The following data will demonstrate how involved the world, as governments, actors, and the UN organization, is in Africa.

United Nations (UN)

The UN currently has 6 active missions on the African continent:

- 1.** The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) with 17,753 soldiers.
- 2.** The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) with 18,486 troops.
- 3.** The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) with 17,430 soldiers.
- 4.** The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) with 17,954 soldiers.
- 5.** United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) with 3,156 personnel.
- 6.** The sixth mission, that of the United Nations for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), consisting of a total of 469 personnel, including 20 soldiers and 2 policemen, is not intended for combat.

In total, there are 75,248 UN personnel engaged in peace operations in Africa.

The organization most committed to the fight against Islamic jihadists is MINUSMA, which was created by Security Council Resolution 2100 of April 25, 2013, to support the political process and secure Mali.

The mandate of MINUSMA was reaffirmed by the adoption of resolution 2164 in June 25, 2014, which emphasizes priority tasks such as security, stabilization and protection of civilians, support for national political dialogue and national reconciliation, as well as support for the restoration of state authority throughout the country, the rehabilitation of the security sector in Mali, promotion of human rights and their protection and

humanitarian aid.¹⁹ As of February 2023, the MINUSMA personnel deployed in the field number about 17,430 soldiers, of which 11,739 are soldiers, 1,601 police, 3,384 civilians, 504 managers and 202 volunteers. However, this force was unable to prevent the security situation from deteriorating, leading to successive military coups in 2020 and 2021.

United States

The United States has provided nearly \$8 billion in defense sector assistance since fiscal year 2019. Its partners in Africa include Libya and the West African littoral states. Over the past two decades, U.S. counterterrorism efforts across Africa have focused primarily on training and mentoring African partners, programs, training designed to build the capabilities of African armies and security forces. The US has also regularly supported France's efforts in the Sahel, providing logistical support and assistance Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) for French military interventions against terrorism since the start of Operation Serval in 2013 (and later Operation Barkhane).

After the Tongo Tongo ambush in 2017, in which four American soldiers were killed alongside five soldiers from the Niger army as well as interpreters, many questions were asked about the usefulness of the physical presence of American soldiers in the Sahel (boots on the ground).²⁰ In addition, the deterioration of France's relations with Mali and Burkina Faso in recent years has complicated US counter-terrorism efforts. An American drone base is under construction in Agadez in northern Niger, at a cost of 110 million dollars.²¹ The US maintains an archipelago of bases in North and West Africa as part of its broader security efforts in the region.

France

France, the former colonial country, is the main Western partner in the fight against radical Islamic terrorism in Africa. France signed cultural, technical and military cooperation agreements and defense agreements with most of its former colonies when gaining independence in 1960.

19 See the link: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/fr/mission/minusma>

20 The Tongo-Tongo ambush occurred on October 4, 2017, when a military motorized convoy of the American commandos and the Nigerien army returning from an intelligence gathering mission on the Islamic State on the Niger-Mali border, stopped in the village of Tongo-Tongo to replenish supplies, and left The village fell into a deadly ambush by a large force from the Sahara branch of the Islamic State, during which 4 American soldiers, 5 Nigerien soldiers and more than a dozen ISIS fighters were killed; the ambush might have ended in the destruction of the entire American-Nigerian convoy, had it not been for the arrival of fighter jets The French army at the last minute from neighboring Mali.

Haim Isarowitz, "The Shameful Affair in Niger: How Four Dead American Soldiers Succeeded in Entangling the US President," Maariv (November 4, 2017). <https://www.maariv.co.il/news/world/Article-607309>

For more, see: Oct 2017 Niger ambush summary of investigation at the link: https://dod.defense.gov/portals/1/features/2018/0418_niger/img/Oct-2017-Niger-Ambush-Summary-of-Investigation.pdf

21 See the link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03071847.2018.1552452>

France experienced and has experienced in recent years a sharp decline in its shares among the Sahel countries in favor of competing powers, primarily Russia.

Between 2013 and 2022, the French armed forces operated in the Sahel as part of operations 'Serval' (2013-2014) and 'Barkhane' (2014-2022), and Takuba vigorously and lost over 50 fighters, a fact that influenced French public opinion which demanded explanations from the French government as to the necessity of the war, and for the presence of French fighters on the battlefield. After more than 9 years of military presence in Mali, France has been ordered by the Malian authorities to leave the country without delay. Last January, Burkina Faso also requested the departure of the special forces of Operation Saber based in Ouagadougou, the capital of the country.

However, France has several military bases established over decades, from the end of the colonial era in the 60s of the 20th centuries as follows:²²

- 400 fighters have been in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, since 2011, in an operational center for regional cooperation. The EFS (éléments français du Sénégal) are located at Camp Frédéric Geille in Ouakam as well as Camp Protet in the military port of Dakar.
- 950 soldiers are at the French operational base in the Ivory Coast, after the signing of a security partnership signed in 2012 between Paris and Abidjan and after the end of the peacekeeping 'Operation Licorne' (2002-2015).
- 1,500 soldiers, the largest military force outside French territory, are in Djibouti, with which a new defense agreement has existed since 2014. The military facility serves as a training ground for special forces who also contribute to the fight against piracy in the Red Sea and around the Horn of Africa.
- 350 men are stationed in Gabon, where France signed defense agreements with the country's independence in 1960, which were renewed in 2011 between Paris and Libreville.

On October 5, 2023, France announced that the withdrawal of the 1,500 French soldiers in Niger would be completed by the end of 2023.

In Chad, there are close to a thousand fighters as part of EFT (Les éléments français au Tchad). The task assigned to them is to ensure the protection of French interests and its citizens living in the country. They also provide logistical and intelligence assistance to Chad's armed forces, in accordance with the cooperation agreement signed between the two countries.

In Gabon, the French elements include a command echelon, a ground unit (the 6th

²² Forces françaises en Afrique: de quelles bases l'armée dispose-t-elle encore?

See more details in the link: <https://www.la-croix.com/Monde/Forces-francaises-Afrique-quelles-bases-larmee-dispose-elle-encore-2023-02-28-1201257135>

See also <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/cpdm7jg0yd2o>

Marine Infantry Regiment or 6th BIMA) located at Camp Charles de Gaulle in Libreville and an air unit located at Guy Pidoux Air Force Base.

Russia

Russia is strengthening its presence on the African continent in a very controversial way, mainly through the Wagner Group. Russia's strategy in Africa is quite complex and dynamic, involving conglomerates of mineral mining, sales of illegal arms, and the deployment of paramilitary forces - mercenaries. In the framework of securing the interests of the state, the Russian government allows private and semi-state actors to support its goals by promoting their own interests. In the diamond mining, aluminum and energy sectors, for example: Lukoil, Alrosa (RUSAL), Rosatom and Gazprom are active throughout the African continent.²³

The Wagner force has a presence in Libya, Mali, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Madagascar and Mozambique. There are other private military companies also active such as the Patriot group, which can be found in Burundi and the Central African Republic.²⁴ Russia has strengthened its ties with the military regimes in power in Guinea and Mali, while playing the alternative power card in the face of the rise of jihadism in these countries.

Russia conducts an open competition on the African continent against the USA and France and it seems that currently it has the upper hand. In the last five years, from 2018 to 2022, Russia took the lead from China in the sale of foreign currency on the continent and is now the leader with a total market share of 26%, compared to 21% in the previous period, according to a report published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in March 2023.²⁵ This rate even rises to 40% if we include the Maghreb region, where Algeria has historically been a major client of company's Russian weapons. China, for its part, saw its market share drop from 29% to 18% in the sub-region, dropping to second place, ahead of France (around 8%) and the US, 5%.²⁶

The continent of Africa as a playground for other players

The above, together with the governmental instability in several countries in Africa where military coups have taken place, shows that there is no constant pressure on

23 See the link: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-africa-energy-cooperation-challenges-and-prospects/>

24 Molly Dunigan and Ben Connable, "Russian Mercenaries in Great-Power Competition: Strategic Supermen or Weak Link?" RAND. (9.3.2021) <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2021/03/russian-mercenaries-in-great-power-competition-strategic.html>

25 Marion Douet, "Russia overtakes China as leading arms seller in sub-Saharan Africa," Le Monde. (29.3.2023) https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2023/03/28/russia-overtakes-china-as-leading-arms-seller-in-sub-saharan-africa_6021018_124.html

26 Joseph Vincent Ntuda Ebode, "Défis et bilan de la lutte contre le jihadisme en Afrique», https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374261994_Defis_et_bilan_de_la_lutte_contre_le_djihadisme_en_Afrique

the perpetrators of dangerous radical Islam. When military coups take place, the focus is diverted from the war on terror to other directions resulting from damage to the democratic axes and involvement, mainly verbal - issuing threats and resorting to an economic boycott, of the Western countries and African economic organizations such as the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) that demand to return the situation to the way it was before.

Beyond the internal African chaos, it seems that the involvement of external countries such as Russia, China, the USA, France and the European Union is more reminiscent of a geopolitical struggle for the control of spaces and resources, the results of which are not quite clear. As in other areas such as infrastructure, energy or mineral mining, the arms export competition Africa is at its peak (I detailed this in the discussion above about Russia). An economic-diplomatic struggle is taking place in which Russia sets the tone, and its activity has a negative effect, in my opinion, on the effectiveness of the joint struggle against radical Islam on the continent.

When there are many state actors, sometimes driven by geopolitical rivalries and state interests, their presence and degree of involvement in what is happening with changing powers in the African arena contributes not only to the persistence of security threats related to global jihadism, but also to the emergence of new challenges and risks for African countries.

The entry of paramilitary groups into the African arena, such as the Wagner Force, with direct consequences in the fields of mining and energy, calls into question the sovereignty of fragile states. If France has been accused by former colonies such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso of neo-colonialism, what about those quasi-state forces that form alliances with local leaderships, providing them with protection and military aid in exchange for control of the mining of vital resources such as gold and diamonds or control of Energy infrastructures. In practice, we are simply witnessing the real occupation of countries by paramilitary groups acting on behalf of Russia in most cases.

This is the clear case of the Central African Republic (DRC) which is seen as a kind of property of the Wagner Group, a strategic subcontractor of Russia.²⁷

The capture of a state in this way illustrates and expresses a particularly harmful form of systemic governmental corruption, as a group of people acquires such a deep influence over a series of senior officials that the state institutions prefer the benefit of their private interests over the public good.

Under the guise of providing a response to the needs of security and reconstruction of the country, we are witnessing the return of authoritarian regimes in countries where the

27 Joseph Siegle, "How Russia is pursuing state capture in Africa," LSE.)21.3.2022(<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/03/21/how-russia-is-pursuing-state-capture-in-africa-ukraine-wagner-group/>; / Guido Lanfranchi, Kars de Bruijne, The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming? Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' (June 2022). https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/The_Russians_are_coming_4eproof.pdf

democratization process has begun to take root. This is reflected in military coups or the hardening of existing regimes. From August 2020 to the present, for example, 7 coups have occurred in French-speaking Africa in Mali, Chad, Guinea (Conakry), Burkina Faso, Sudan, Niger, and Gabon. The return of a series of military coups in Africa undermines the use of multi-party elections as the only legitimate way to win political office.

It seems that this is part of a wider process of 'Autocratization' that has been observed in recent years in several countries and regions around the world. The military interventions in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Guinea, Sudan reveal that Africa, despite attempts to assimilate the values of democracy, is not immune to this trend, the process emphasizes the fragility of the democratization processes taking place in Africa.

Some believe that the 'chaos' occurring in Africa confirms the basic correctness of Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution:²⁸ the former colonial nations cannot satisfy any of their most basic needs - freedom from imperialist oppression, access to land, democratic rights, jobs and social equality - under the leadership of some faction of the bourgeoisie the national at the same time. I do not believe that the working class in African countries, if they take the reins of power, will perform better than those of the bourgeoisie.

It can certainly be said that the African countries gained independence in the 60s of the last centuries, they gained political independence but not economic independence, the former colonial powers and the superpowers continue to dominate the economic field against the background of the natural wealth inherent in the African soil and its shores.

The military coups and governmental instability are a direct and central result, in my opinion, of the geopolitical competition between the great powers on African soil. The growing anti-French sentiment in West and Central Africa, for example, is accompanied by public protests, on behalf of the government and its pro-Russian institutions, the Russian flag is proudly raised, and French flags are trampled and burned. What happens is the conversion of one master into another, and this time the winner is the Russian master. The Russian success is due to the influence of the pro-Russian propaganda on the population. Whether it is France, the USA, Russia, China or other countries, they all use the communication channels at their disposal to influence and win the battle for public opinion and public consciousness. Satellite television and social networks are among the most current and widespread tools in Africa.

The hostility towards the Western powers in general and France in particular is led and motivated mainly by young Africans who are more aware of the international situation. Today, 62% of Africans are under the age of 30. With more than 200 million people between the ages of 15 and 24, Africa has the largest youth population in the world. With a population where hundreds of millions live on \$2 a day, without electricity, running water, without health and education infrastructure alongside rising unemployment,

28 To read Leon Trotsky's article The Permanent Revolution, in Hebrew see the link: <https://www.marxists.org/hebrew/Trotsky/1929/BP-Permanent.htm>

it is no wonder that there is an aspiration for better conditions. This segment of the population was and remains very vulnerable on the one hand to extremism, violent extremism, recruitment to armed and jihadist gangs and on the other hand to the influences of external factors, as I explained above. The socio-economic disparities are high and result in the concentration of wealth among a small group of people. In all countries, 10% of the population receives 40% or more of the national income.²⁹ Socio-economic inequality is reflected at the territorial level, with Gaps between capital cities and the rest of the country, between urban and rural areas, and in the case of coastal countries, between the coast and the interior of the country. The Sahel and the Lake Chad region best represent the disparities and dilemmas they produce. The local economy is relatively undeveloped, and people struggle to make a living. Thus, the radical Islamic terrorist organizations take advantage of the situation and direct their efforts to recruiting poor unemployed youth from disadvantaged backgrounds while promising a better life. Jihadist Islamic groups manage to exploit internal, economic, demographic, political and security fault lines to establish themselves. The jihadist groups bring a touch of justice and exploit a deep post-colonial resentment, as well as a rejection of corrupt and apathetic urban elites, shared by some of the youngest and most disadvantaged populations on the planet.

Military and security measures alone cannot fully and eliminate the terrorist threats in Africa. Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria and others have a common denominator - they are fragile countries, some under the definition of 'failed countries/states'.³⁰ This means that the mechanisms of the central government are required to improve their efficiency and function, the restoration of national cohesion and the improvement of economic capabilities not only to enable governance and control in all parts of the country, but the improvement of national resilience, within the parameters I have mentioned, is required for the ongoing war against the spread of jihadist organizations if they wish to expand.

The support of the West and the European Union must prioritize non-military responses at the national, regional and continental level that address the roots of the problems and in this way prevent the emergence of new threats. No matter how much the West and the European Union invest in aid to African countries, success in the fight against The spread of radical Islamic groups depends on the establishment of proper

29 Amandine Gnanguénon, Antonin Tisseron, «West Africa: structural fragilities, jihadist expansion and regional conflicts», *Politique étrangère* Issue 2, April 2023, pages 123 to 134, p. 123-134.

See the link in French: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-etrangere-2023-2-page-123.htm>

See the link in English: <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-politique-etrangere-2023-2-page-123.htm>

30 A failed state is a sovereign state and body politic that has disintegrated to the point where the sovereign government no longer functions properly. This situation can also happen when the government loses the legitimacy of its existence because it does not perform its role properly - Accountability. For the country to have a stable government, the government must be both effective, and not lose the legitimacy of its existence. 1) The main characteristics of the failed state are loss of control over its territories, or monopoly over the legitimate use of physical force; 2) erosion of the legitimacy of the authority to make collective decisions; 3) Inability to provide public services; 4) Inability to interact with other countries as a member body of the international community.

and stable governance in countries that focus on the fight against poverty and on the equitable distribution of state resources - parameters that stand as a rock for separatists, extremists and rebels. Such initiatives, in the civil and economic sphere, can be carried out alongside the need to take kinetic measures to suppress gangs/radical groups as complementary actions that moderate the tension that the threats create in the country.

Summary

The obvious and inevitable question is, are African leaders willing and able to take the reins and do they have a burning political will to make bold decisions, to implement the established action frameworks and seek long-term solutions for the benefit of the countries on the continent.

Africa's uncompromising fight against radical Islamic terrorism seems to indicate that the responses of the European Union and its member states are not commensurate with the nature of a threat that is not new.³¹ Strengthening the security capabilities of the African countries should be the 'order of the hour' and a guided necessity that will be reflected in the national priorities, while respecting the local partners and encouraging good governance practices and redistribution of the state's resources. It should be honestly said that the international community, since the end of the era of colonialism, has been taking care of and investing astronomical sums in African countries to put get them on their feet and reduce their dependence on them, but it seems that this is a Sisyphean struggle without limits. Addressing the weaknesses that characterize the Black African countries should include building security and military capabilities, alongside economic and social capabilities. Huge budgets are required for this, it was done in the past, with funding and direct military involvement, but it was not successful - the threat of the radical Islamic groups was not stopped, it grew, while exacting huge prices from the population and it is spreading towards other countries.

The local efforts and the support from the outside of the Western world and the African Union are not sufficient now, they deserve some kind words but more than anything, a task-oriented joint effort and a paradigmatic change in the concept of action against radical Islam is required to uproot it from the continent.

Unfortunately, I believe that even in 2024, Africa will continue to experience wars, violence, drought, epidemics and a host of other shameful things (trouble, problems, breakdowns).

³¹ See the link: <https://issafrica.org/fr/iss-today/lapproche-africaine-de-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme- reste-inadaptee>