

## Fostering Regional Integration in Africa in the Wake of Military Takeovers in the Sahel: Recasting the Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville Debate?<sup>1</sup>

Kibang Cedrick Zuo-Kom<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region and the crisis surrounding the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has put back the question of regional integration and African unity to intense scholarly scrutiny. The Sahel has emerged as the epicentre of violent extremism in the world according to the Institute for Economic and Peace's 2024 Global Terrorism Index. The resurgence of military coups in the region further adds to the political dynamics of the region. The intervention of ECOWAS and the AU to restore constitutional order and the counteraction of the military juntas have resulted to the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States in the Sahel which has implications for regional integration in Africa in general. This study adopts a qualitative research strategy and case study design to examine the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel. It is based on desk review, particularly data sources such as Google scholar. The findings reveal that the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region has implications for regional integration and the objective of unity of the African Union. Military coups in the Sahel have raised the stakes and challenges for Africa unity via regional integration by complicating the role of the regional institution, ECOWAS and ultimately the African Union. It posits that revisiting the foundational discourse of African unity and integration that is the Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville debates is essential to understanding the current political dynamics in the Sahel region.

### Keywords:

Military coups; regional integration; violent extremism; African unity; Sahel region.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.289>

<sup>2</sup> MSC, Research Fellow at the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA); ORCID: 0009-0004-7881-2313; Kibang.zuokom@yahoo.com

## *Introduction*

The integration of Africa was and has been a major preoccupation of most post-independent African leaders as a solution to the myriad of challenges plaguing the newly independent states. African governments accepted regional integration as an important lever to attaining their development strategies (Hartzenberg, 2011:2, Hakuna & Tanyanyiwa, 2014:104). This quest for development through regional integration resulted in the conclusion of numerous regional integration arrangements (Hartzenberg, 2011). As such, economic motives informed earlier strides for an integrated Africa. In this understanding, the free movement of goods, services, people and capital between national markets has been the aspiration of African governments since independence (Conceicao et al, 2014). Regional integration was conceived to serve as a catalyst for the economic transformation of the Africa such as in its capacity for addressing major constraints to export competitiveness imposed by small national economies, increase competitiveness of local markets and also overcoming geographical challenges such as enclavement (Ibid, 2014:2, Oyejide, 2000).

Several arrangements and agreements have underpinned the efforts of African statesmen towards realising the vision of a united and integrated continent. They range from conferences to institutions-building. The broad consensus in scholarship on regional integration in Africa points to the fact that it has not succeeded in catalysing intra-regional and intra-Africa trade (Oyejide, 2000). The existence of a number of regional blocs initially for economic purposes translates to the commitment to the ideal of regionalism by African leaders as a catalyst to socio-economic and political transformation of the continent. The Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the Abuja Treaty in 1991 crystallised into concrete steps to regional economic integration. Still under the aegis of the defunct OAU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) emerged such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern Africa Development Authority (SADC) (Olubomehin & Dayo Kawonishe, 2004) just to name a few. The efforts at regional integration gained emphasis with the advent of the African Union (AU) in 2002 due to the weaknesses of the OAU. The role of the AU in fostering regional integration in Africa is specified in Article 3 (c) of the Constitutive Act which is to “accelerate the political and socio- economic integration of the continent” (African Union, 2002). This put the AU at the centre of all efforts to foster a more integrated and united Africa as underscored by Vision 2063 of a more integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena (African Union, 2013).

Despite strides made at regional integration in Africa, the African Union is still grappling with contentious political crises ranging from armed intra-state and inter-state conflicts with its attendant humanitarian consequences, democratic deficits and more recently a resurgence of military takeovers and putschist attempts. The latter is glaring and very recent in the Sahel region. Empirical literature presents the Sahel as a region with complex security challenges ranging from violent extremism, intra-state conflicts,

climate change related difficulties, external intervention among others. These complexities intermingle to create an image of a region sunk in political instability. Some have described the Sahel as a hot bed for extremism (Hassan, 2020). It has become the most violent zone in the world (Makombe and Akinola, 2022). In this purview, jihadists have taken the Sahel as a safe haven (Ibid, p. 202). The humanitarian condition in the region has been described as fragile, complicated by violent extremism and armed conflicts (Dieng, 2022). The Sahelian countries which have come under intense scholarly consideration on political instability of recent include: Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

The Sahelian States of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have since 2020 been governed by military juntas. Since independence, these states have experienced military rule in one or more eras of their political history. Despite certain remarkable moments of civilian rule in these states, the armed forces have remained the pre-eminent political actors (Elischer, 2019). The influence of the military in politics has always often provoked condemnation from both domestic and international institutions and actors. They consider military intervention in politics as undemocratic and unconstitutional. Despite the wind of political liberalization that swept across Africa in the 1990s, military coups have continued to pose a threat to the democratisation process in sub-Saharan Africa (Taruvunga, 2023). It has been argued that the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel in particular is correlated to leadership gaps in attenuating the severe socio-economic, political and security crises in the region (Makombe and Akinola, 2022, Oluyemi, 2024). These acts of military intervention in politics have been criticised as a qualitative reversal of democracy (Ibid, p.8). Some historical factors that underpin violent extremism generally in the Sahel include: Tuareg rebellion, the influence of religion, spillover effects of the Algerian civil war, impact of the Libyan crisis and the Fulani crisis (Sunjo & Nyadi, 2024).

Regional organisations have been vocal in condemning the upsurge of military coups in the Sahel. The African Union from a continental level and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the regional body in West Africa have been the leading institutions in this regard. Silencing of guns is one of the strategic focuses of the African Union to eradicate poverty and insecurity in Africa but the resurgence of military coups only helps to make this vision become more elusive and further compound the aforementioned challenges (Makombe and Akinola, 2022:11). The African Union and ECOWAS have responded to the spate of unconstitutional change of governments by imposing economic sanctions on the juntas, suspending their membership in the continental and regional bodies and called for a return to democratic rule (Adetuyi, 2020). The aborted attempt to use force on the military juntas by ECOWAS and counteraction from the juntas have put the regional bloc in a dilemma of balancing principles with pragmatism that puts it on the path to disintegration (Aning and Bjarnesen, 2024). The concerted efforts by ECOWAS to return the military juntas in the Sahel to civilian rule occasioned a coalition of the juntas against any action against one of them. The failure of both hard and diplomatic measures to revert military rule in this region is reflected in the creation of a military alliance by the juntas (Gbadamosi, 2024).

It is therefore evident that abundant scholarship on the Sahel has concentrated on insecurity, political instability, external intervention and peacekeeping but very scanty about the repercussions of these dynamics on regional integration efforts which is a strategic objective of the African Union. Thus, the issue at stake is the fact that while the African Union is focused on achieving the goal of a more integrated Africa, political developments and dynamics in the Sahel calls regional integration into question. The aim of this article is to critically analyse the political situation in the Sahel regarding the withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS regional bloc to form a new alliance of three military juntas called Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES). The objective is to find out how the latter impacts regional integration efforts in West Africa in particular and the African continent in general by invoking the Casablanca versus Monrovia debate which animated earlier discourse on regional integration in Africa. This article is structured into three parts. The first part is the introduction which gives a general background to the political developments in the Sahel region, the second part outlines the research methodology and the third part is the results and discussion on how military takeovers in the Sahel has a bearing on regional integration efforts in Africa.

### *Methodology*

The study utilised a qualitative research strategy and case study design to analyse the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel and how these developments has a bearing on efforts by the continental and regional institutions such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) respectively to foster regional integration and unity in Africa. The study invoked the foundational discourse on regional integration in Africa which is the Casablanca versus Monrovia debates through a historical lens using desk review in order to place the emergent regional bloc of three in the Sahel, the confederation, Alliance of Sahel States (ASS) comprising Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger within current academic discourse on regional integration in Africa. To this end, secondary data sources including published and unpublished works were employed. They include: articles, books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, policy briefs and reports which were valuable sources of the review.

### *Results and Discussion*

#### *1. The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel*

The Sahel has come under intense scrutiny due to the spate of military coups which have rocked the region since 2020. This is not a new phenomenon in the region as it can be said it is just a replay of the political situation of the region in the immediate aftermath of political independence when military dictatorship was the norm (Elischer, 2019). As espoused by Hassan (2020) the Sahel is the hotbed for extremism. This indicates that military coups are just additions to the political complexities of the region and not the sole issue. It is also a pointer to the fact that different conditions inform the different

coups periods. Strong military intervention in politics (praetorianism) in the Sahel in the 1960s and 1970s was enabled by autocratic civilian-led governments, compounded by their inability to live up to their promises made to the people immediately after independence such as economic and political development (Elischer, 2019:10). The above conditions created conducive grounds for the intervention of the military in politics in the Sahel region. Though some differences existed between the Sahel states, the conditions above were pre-eminent and common in most if not all. It is thus imperative to investigate the conditions which inform the resurgence of military coups in this region since 2020 on a country-by-country basis, that is to say: Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as the cases under consideration in this study.

### *The Case of Mali in 2020 and 2021*

Mali has a history of coup d'Etats but the resurgence of this phenomenon in early 2020 and 2021 points to the accumulation of factors conducive for the intervention of the military in politics. The drivers of the coup has been linked to many factors which include: public dissatisfaction with the manipulation of parliamentary elections as the immediate cause and government's inability to restore order and protect the civilian population against constant attacks by violent local armed groups and Islamic extremists as remote factors (Akinola & Makombe, 2024). The veracity of this justification is corroborated by the fact that, the coup was celebrated by majority of Malians (Ibid). It can be deduced that the populace saw it as a window of opportunity to exit the difficulties they faced due to governance deficits. Thus, the actions of Assimi Goita were positively received as liberating. By successfully executing two coups in 2020 and 2021 by deposing President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and Prime Minister Bah Ndaw respectively, Captain Goita reinforced his public perception that through him, order would be restored with an eventual return to civilian rule. However, some people viewed it as "people in power fighting among themselves" (Akinola & Makombe, 2024).

### *The Military Coup in Niger*

The attempted coup in Niger in March 2021 has been hinged on the irregularities owing to the February 2021 presidential elections in the country. The incumbent as at that time is said to have rejected the outcome of the elections despite persuasion that he should accept defeat in order to go down in records as the first seating civilian President to have relinquished power to another (France 24, 2021 as cited by Akinola & Makombe, 2024). It is reported that the opposition candidate, Mohamed Bazoum had 55.75 per cent of the votes while the incumbent, Mohamane Ousamane polled 44.25 per cent of the votes which was contested by the latter (France 24, 2021 cited in Akinola & Makombe, 2024). The opposition candidate contested the outcome in the constitutional court but it was rejected. The incumbent claimed he had won the election by 50.30 per cent (Akinola & Makombe, 2024). This political conflict created the fertile ground for an attempted military on the eve of the presidential inauguration in which



137 people were killed in western Niger due to a clash with jihadists groups (The Defense Post, 2021 cited in Akinola & Makombe, 2024). Thus, it can be inferred that the jihadists exploited the political skirmishes and vulnerabilities between the incumbent and opposition over the helm of the state to exact violence on the population.

### *The Military coup in Burkina Faso*

The forceful intervention of the military in politics in Burkina Faso in 2022 has been explained to be due to the escalation of the security landscape in Burkina Faso and the failure of the government to contain the jihadists' insurgency (Elischer & Lawrance, 2022). Before now, Burkina Faso was considered the "island of stability" in the conflict-prone region (Haavik et al, 2022). However, it has been posited that the relative stability of Burkina Faso during the reign of Blaise Compoare was due to the complex political network he planted which has been described as the "the big man deep state" which disappeared with his departure (Ibid). This led to the fragmentation of the state as it slid into political violence due to the emergence of multiple forces to contest political power. The two successive coups which took place between January and September 2022 under Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba was justified on the inability of the government to contain the jihadist insurgency in the country (Aluyemi, 2024).

From the three cases above, a common denominator can be derived to characterise the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region. Governance deficits underpin all three cases. The military juntas argued that the civilian Presidents failed to maintain order, protect the citizens and provide for basic economic needs. This was evident in the escalation of extreme violence by Non-state actors with the population bearing the brunt of their actions. Consequently, suspending the constitution in order to restore order for an eventual return to civilian rule is the thesis advanced by the juntas. However, the spate of military coups in the Sahel has been condemned by the African Union, the regional institution, ECOWAS and some members of the international community as unconstitutional and anti-democratic. Particularly important in this regard is ECOWAS which has engaged in both diplomatic and hard measures to roll back putchist tendencies in the Sahel. The reactions of the juntas have made it imperative to interrogate the role of ECOWAS in fostering regional integration in Africa on the heels of the re-awakening of the phenomenon of military coups in Africa, focusing on the Sahel region.

## *2. The Role of the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in rolling back Coup d'Etats in the Sahel.*

The continental institution, the African Union and the regional body, ECOWAS has not been indifferent to the frequency and scope of military coups in West Africa in general and the Sahel region in particular. Their intervention is expendable on account of

fostering democracy, constitutionality and most importantly, African unity via regional integration.

### *The African Union (AU) and resurgent military coups in the Sahel*

The Lome declaration of 2000 provides basic knowledge on the commitment of the AU to democracy and constitutionality in Africa. Initially drawn under the defunct OAU, the Lome declaration was aimed at fostering democracy in Africa on the tenets of regional peace, sustainable democracy and political legitimacy (Mohammed, 2022). This declaration is centrally based on outlawing unconstitutional governments and confers legitimacy to those that come into power through credible and competitive electoral process (Ibid). The AU's commitment to the rule of law and constitutionality is further crystallised by the Constitutive Act of the AU in which article 30 stipulates that "governments that come into power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union" (Phakathi, 2018 cited in Mohammed, 2022). The legal instrument which defines what the AU terms unconstitutional government is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance (ACDEG) adopted on 30th January, 2007 (Ibid). Having explored the legal and institutional framework of the AU regarding military coups, it is imperative to understand its intervention in the recent spate of coups in the Sahel: Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In Mali, the AU adopted a tough stance and its decisions were swift against the military junta. It rejected the transitional charter of the junta which extended into 2025 and immediately suspended it from participating in its activities until normal constitutional order has been restored to the country (Mohammed, 2022). The AU furthered its sanctions by imposing tougher measures such as border closures and restrictions on financial transactions (Mohammed, 2022:99). This stance of the AU triggered the second coup as Assimi Goita toppled the interim transitional President, Bah Ndaw and the Prime Minister, Moctar Ouane who were pressurised to resign which derailed the transitional timetable (Ibid). In Niger, the African Union immediately condemned the coup and suspended Niger from the AU until the restoration of the civilian-led transitional process (Oluropo et al, 2024). The AU went further to impose travel restrictions and targeted sanctions against the junta and their family members (Ibid, 34). In the Burkina Faso, similar measures were adopted. This created a contagion effect among the military juntas in the Sahel which will be explored in details subsequently.

### *ECOWAS and the creation of a junta contagion in the Sahel*

The tough stance adopted by the continental body, the African Union against the juntas was amplified by the regional body, ECOWAS. The original mission of ECOWAS was to foster regional integration among West African States. However, the imperative of responding to the multiple threats to peace, development and integration expanded its mandate (Kohnert, 2023). Following the speed and scope of military coups in the Sahel,

principally in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, the regional body, ECOWAS adopted a common stance against coup plotters in terms of condemnation and sanctions. In addition to the sanctions imposed by the African Union, ECOWAS, led by the regional power, Nigeria threatened a military intervention in Niamey, Niger if Bazoum was not released and reinstated within a week (Kohnert, 2023:2). Nigeria even went further to cut electricity supply to its neighbor, Niger which depends on 70% electricity from Nigeria (AFP & Le Monde, 2023 cited in Kohnert, 2023:3). This strategy further created problems for ECOWAS following the reactions of the coup leaders.

### *3. Emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES)*

The coup leaders in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso withdrew their membership from the regional bloc, ECOWAS on the grounds that it is ineffective and influenced by external powers (Africanews, 2024). According to Niger's military ruler, General Abdourahman Tchiani, ECOWAS has become a threat to their states (Ibid). They accuse ECOWAS of complicity with the West which does not serve the interest of the people but the former. General Abdourahman argued: "we are going to create an AES of the people, instead of an ECOWAS whose directives and instructions are dictated to it by powers that are foreign to Africa" (Ibid). The alliance of three countries culminated in an agreement of cooperation to fight armed rebellion and external aggression (Aljazeera, 2023). The eventual charter drawn in Niamey, Niger is known as the Alliance of Sahel States which binds the signatories to assist one another- including militarily in the event of an attack against any one of them (Ibid). The Liptako-Gourma Charter creating the Alliance of Sahel States is stated to have emerged due to the crisis within ECOWAS following the coup in Niger (Grutjen, 2024). This action further divides ECOWAS in a context where regional integration and African unity is a paramount goal of the African Union. It also raises important concerns about foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of the Sahel which requires a critical lens.

### *4. External influence in the political landscape of the Sahel region*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel has provoked concerns of foreign influence in the coup occurrence, scope and dynamics. Among the divided opinions, one school of thought argues that military interests and access to natural resources underpin external intervention in military coups in the Sahel which includes removing leaders who stand in their way (Institute for Security Studies, 2023). This perception is emboldened by the controversial positions some western countries take regarding the resurgent coups. Examples include the fact that the U.S and France endorsed the military coup in Chad in 2021 but condemned the coup and suspended aids in other Sahelian countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. They considered the case of Chad as a counter-insurgency move in the greater Lake Chad Basin but condemned that in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as unconstitutional (Ibid). However, the perception of western intervention has been strongly rejected by the African Union during its 1772nd Peace and Security Council session following the 26th July Niger coup (Ibid).



The role of the Russian Paramilitary Company, Wagner further crystalises the geopolitical dynamics of external influence in the resurgent military coups in the Sahel. Russia has been touted to heightening the geopolitical dynamics of foreign role in the resurgent coups in the Sahel. According to this account, Russia acts through the Paramilitary Company, Wagner to project Russia's influence in Africa generally (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021). To achieve the above objective, Russia leverages anti-western sentiments in Africa that dates back to European colonialism (Vuksanovic, 2023). France is a frequent target in Francophone Africa (Ibid). In addition, Russia views Africa as an arena to gain foothold on the continent and project its great power status (Ibid). There has been a drastic shift away by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from their traditional allies, U.S and France towards Russia and China (Melville, 2024). The above analysis underscores the controversial role of foreign actors in the evolving political landscape of the Sahel region.

The emergence of a new alliance in the Sahel, the growing division within ECOWAS and the intervention of external powers in the Sahel necessitates an interrogation of integration and African unity by revisiting the foundational discourse of regional integration which is the Monrovia-Casablanca and Brazzaville debates. This debate forms the basis of contemporary study and practice of African unity and integration.

### *5. The Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville debates on African unity and integration*

These were the major schools of thought which emerged, having diverse ideologies for African unity and integration. Despite their differences, they were united by the common sense of a united and integrated Africa. They were made up of different states and consequently, blocs. A careful consideration of the positions of the three schools is imperative to understand how it still informs contemporary discourse and evolution of African unity.

#### *The Casablanca Group*

The Casablanca Group comprised Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Algeria, Mali and Libya. They were preoccupied with the controversial role of external powers in the internal affairs of Africa and so advocated for political and economic unity among African states (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The group was guided by the conviction that Africa states should be independent and feared the intervention of colonial powers in the internal affairs of African states to compromise their independence (Ibid). The Congo crisis which erupted in 1960 was used by the group as a justification for external interference and destabilisation of Africa and so argued strongly for the unity of Africa in order to defeat such tendencies (Ibid). In essence, the Casablanca bloc of African unity stood for immediate independence and unity of African states as a bulwark against external intervention in the political evolution of the continent. Key figures in this radical bloc

of African unity included: Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea and Gamal Abdel- Nasser of Egypt (South African History Online, 2023).

### *The Monrovia and Brazzaville Group*

On their part, the Monrovia and Brazzaville group held a common position. They advocated for a gradual and piecemeal approach to African unity. Their version of African unity was based on the argument that unity could be better attained when the sovereignty of all independent African states were maintained (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The group comprised of Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Tunisia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malagasy, Mauritania, Senegal, Upper Volta and Niger (Burkina Faso), twelve countries comprising the Brazzaville group (Ibid, p.4). The peculiarity with the Brazzaville group is that they did not want to compromise their relationship with their former colonial master, France. This explains why they adopted a cautious approach to the Algerian liberation war of 1954-1956 by sorting mediation in the conflict without alienating France (Ibid). They posited that African unity was paramount but that former French colonies should continue their relationship with France. Their main position is captured in this excerpt from Congo Brazzaville's Foreign Minister "we want to keep our own personality within the framework of African unity" (Ibid).

The foregoing analysis shows that though African had different pathways to the question of unity and integration, the quest for a united and integrated Africa trumped over the ideological divide. While the Casablanca bloc vouched for a radical approach to unity, the Monrovia-Brazzaville group advocated for a gradual and procedural approach to African unity and integration. Also, while the former rejected external interference in Africa through a politically and economically united Africa, the latter argued for unity framework which gave room for the independence and sovereignty of all African states. However, both blocs met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 1963 and thirty-two countries signed the charter creating of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The organisation had the following objectives: to promote the unity and solidarity of African countries, defend the sovereignty of members, eradicate all forms of colonialism, promote international cooperation, having due regard for the charter of the UN, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and coordinate and harmonise the policies of member states in the educational, health, welfare, scientific and defense sectors (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The weaknesses of the OAU, led the establishment of the African Union in Durban, South Africa in 2002. Regional integration as the stepping stone to a more integrated Africa is among the strategic frameworks of the AU.

With the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel, the fragmentation of the regional body, ECOWAS, the defiance of the coup leaders with the formation of a new regional bloc, the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES), invoking the fundamental discourse on African unity and analysing its implication in contemporary Africa is crucial. Having discussed the founding schools of thought on African unity, the subsequent sections

delve into its relevance, stakes and opportunities in understanding and advancing regional integration and African unity.

### *6. The stakes, challenges and opportunities for regional integration in Africa with the formation of a new political bloc in the Sahel*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region have called into question the structure of the post-colonial State in Africa following the upsurge of anti-French sentiments across Francophone countries in the region in particular and West Africa in general. This dynamic which is currently gaining traction across the region has geopolitical undertones of great powers. For example, Russia is touted to be the architect in driving anti-French sentiments in West Africa as part of its anti-Western logic. Anti-French sentiments are resentment by former French colonies in the Sahel in particular against internal influence in their domestic politics which serves the interest of former. For instance, the infamous Francafrrique policy undergirds the relationship between France and her former colonies to maintain France's dominance in West Africa (Kohnert, 2023b). Under this relationship, major political and economic decisions of the former colonies are determined by France. The upsurge in resentment against this unequal relationship is based on the fact that it violates the independence and sovereignty of African States. In the Sahel, the sentiment is rife as citizens argue that the presence of French troops in the region has not significantly translated into the reduction of violent extremism (Kohnert, 2023b). This has been exploited by coup leaders in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to gain popular support. This brings the Casablanca argument of African unity into focus. This school of thought rejected external influence in the political evolution of Africa. Thus, the emergence of the new regional bloc in the Sahel can be considered an extension of the defense of the Casablanca position.

The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States also calls into question the legitimacy of ECOWAS and its role in fostering regional integration in West Africa in general and the Sahel in particular. The withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS reveals crisis in the regional institution. This withdrawal reflects an interplay of political, economic and security dynamics in the regional bloc (Musa, 2024). Scholars and analyst have pinned this withdrawal on the intervention of ECOWAS in member states during political crisis which though anchored on promoting democracy and stability have sometimes resulted to tensions and perceptions of external interference among member states (Ibid, 39). It is therefore evident that ECOWAS is undergoing a crisis of legitimacy wherein its role in regional stability and fostering unity and integration in West Africa in general and the Sahel in particular is increasingly being questioned and contested.

### *Conclusion*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel has had regional and continental implications with regards to regional integration and African unity. The spates of military juntas in the Sahel particularly in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have necessitated

the interrogation of the concept and practice of regional integration in Africa. The emergence of a new regional bloc by the military juntas known as the Alliance of Sahel States which runs parallel to ECOWAS, the regional institution in West Africa warrants revisiting the fundamental debates which animated the formation of the OAU and more recently, the AU. The Casablanca, Monrovia-Brazzaville debates inspired contemporary discourse on African unity and regional integration. At a time when African unity underpins AU's strategic objective, the emergence of a new regional institution in West Africa, puts a question mark on the role of ECOWAS and the AU broadly construed in fostering regional integration and African unity.

External intervention and complicity in Africa which was rejected by the Casablanca bloc has resurfaced in the argument of the military juntas with regards to ECOWAS. The drastic sanctions and threats of military intervention by ECOWAS to return constitutional order in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger provoked the juntas to accuse the regional bloc of complicity with the western powers to undermine the sovereignty of Africa States. To address this concern, the military juntas have whipped up anti-western sentiments in the Sahel among the citizens. This is demonstrated in the demands for France to vacate the region such as withdrawing their forces stationed to combat violent extremism. However, it has provoked a great power rivalry dimension as western media reports that the spread of anti-western sentiment is a propaganda having Russia as its architect. They posit that the Russian mercenary group, Wagner is the tool used by Russia to spread anti-western sentiments in Africa in general and the Sahel in particular. The political situation in the Sahel including the emergence of a parallel bloc to ECOWAS, the division within ECOWAS, the role of external actors portends high stakes for African unity and regional integration in Africa.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Kibang Cedrick Zuo-Kom is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA) wherein he works with Senior Fellows to conduct research and write policy papers and scholarly works according to the mission of IRPIA. He leads research efforts at the Conflict Lab, a think tank, committed to evidence-based research in peace, security, governance and human rights. He holds an MSc in Political Science from the University of Yaounde 2, Soa, MSc (hons) in International Relations and MSc (hons) in Conflict Resolution both from the University of Buea, Cameroon.

### *Conflict of Interests*

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

## References

- Adetuyi, A. (2022). *Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa: Reassessing the role of the African Union and ECOWAS*. Relevant and Candid Dialogue.
- African Union. (2002). *Constitutive Act of the African Union*. African Union. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf)
- African Union. (n.d.). *African Union, 2013. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. African Union. Retrieved November 20, 2024 from <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>
- AfricaNews. (2024). *Coup-hit nations of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso form Sahel Alliance*. AfricaNews. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://www.africanews.com/2024/07/07/coup-hit-nations-of-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso-form-sahel-alliance/>
- Akinola, A. O., & Makombe, R. (2024). Rethinking the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096231224680. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231224680>
- Al Jazeera. (2023). *Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso establish Sahel security alliance*. Retrieved August 15, 2025 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/16/mali-niger-and-burkina-faso-establish-sahel-security-alliance>
- Aning, K., & Bjarnesen, J. (2024). *Ecowas' dilemma: balancing principles and pragmatism: West Africa's regional bloc faces disintegration after failed sanctions against military regimes*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet website. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-2939>
- Dieng, A. (2021). The Sahel: Challenges and opportunities. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 103(918), 765-779. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383122000339>
- Elischer, S. (2024). Military coups, jihadism and insecurity in the Central Sahel. *West African Papers*(43). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/522f69f1-en>
- Elischer, S., & Lawrance, B. N. (2022). Reassessing Africa's New Post-Coup Landscape. *African Studies Review*, 65(1), 1-7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.33>
- Emile, S., & Francios, N. N. (2024). *Understanding the Drivers of Violent Extremism in the African Sahel: A Historical Perspective*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.12800069>
- Gbadamosi, N. (2024). *Sahel Military Regimes Cement Break from ECOWAS*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved August 12, 2024 from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/10/sahel-mali-burkina-niger-coups-ecowas/>
- Grütjen, K. (2024). *Current developments in West Africa's regional integration: Challenges for the future design of foreign and development policy (Research Report No. 6/2024)*. IDOS Policy Brief.





- Haavik, V., Bøås, M., & Iocchi, A. (2022). The End of Stability – How Burkina Faso Fell Apart. *African Security*, 15(4), 317-339. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2022.2128614>
- Hamdy, A. H. (2020). A new hotbed for extremism? Jihadism and collective insecurity in the sahel. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 8(2), 203–222. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18588/202011.00a120>
- Hartzenberg, T. (2011). *Regional integration in Africa*, in: *Staff Working Paper ERSD-2011-14*. World Trade Organisation.
- Institute for Security Studies. (2023). *Are foreign actors scapegoated in Africa's coups? PSC Report*. ISS Africa. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/are-foreign-actors-scapegoated-in-africas-coups>
- Kayizzi-Mugerwa, S., Anyanwu, J., & Conceição, P. (2014). Regional Integration in Africa: An Introduction. *African Development Review*, Volume 26, 1-6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12102>
- Kohnert, D. (2023a). *ECOWAS, once an assertive power in West Africa, reduced to a paper tiger?* Hamburg.
- Kohnert, D. (2023b). *Will the UEMOA survive the rise of anti-French sentiment in West Africa?* Retrieved August 16, 2024 from <https://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/118357/>
- Melville, A. (2024). *Russia Exploits Western Vacuum in Africa's Sahel Region*. Defense Security Monitor. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2024/04/22/russia-exploits-western-vacuum-in-africas-sahel-region/>
- Mohammed, H. (2020). *The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union*. Retrieved August 14, 2023 from <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/>
- Musa , A. (2024). The departure of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from ECOWAS: Assessing security and geopolitical implications and solutions for Nigeria. *Yamtara-Wala Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (YaJAMSS)*(4), 93-102.
- Muyangwa, M., & Vogt, M. A. (2000). *An Overview of the Creation of the Organization of African Unity, An Assessment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 1993-2000*. International Peace Institute.
- Olubomehin, & Kawonishe. (2004). The African Union and the Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa. In *Annual Conference. The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)* (pp. 1-15). University of Western Australia.
- Oluropo, F. J., Olusesan, I. M., Matthew, A. A., & Christopher, O. M. (2024). The Resurgence of Military Coups in West-Africa States: The Case of Niger Republic and Its Implications on Peace, Security and Transnational Activities in Nigeria.

- Global Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*(3), 26-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55640/gjhss-social-332>
- Oluyemi, O. (2024). Militarization of Democracy and the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 7(6), 92-105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v7i6.2154>
- Organisation of African Unity (OAU). (n.d.). *South African History Online*. Retrieved August 16, 2024 from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/organisation-african-unity-oau>
- Oyejide, T. A. (2000). Policies for regional integration in Africa. In *Economic Research Papers* (Vol. 62): African Development Bank.
- Siegle, J. (2021). *Africa's Coups and the Role of External Actors*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africas-coups-and-the-role-of-external-actors/>
- Tanyanyiwa, V., & Hakuna, C. (2014). Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of Sadc. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19, 103-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19124103115>
- Taruvinga, G. R. (2023). The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa: The Case of West Africa and the Sahel. In A. O. Akinola (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues on Governance, Conflict and Security in Africa* (pp. 147-157). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29635-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29635-2_9)
- Vuksanovic, V. (August 15, 2023). In Africa, Russia seeks to retain its superpower credentials *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2023/08/15/in-africa-russia-seeks-to-retain-its-superpower-credentials>

## Fostering Regional Integration in Africa in the Wake of Military Takeovers in the Sahel: Recasting the Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville Debate?<sup>1</sup>

Kibang Cedrick Zuo-Kom<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region and the crisis surrounding the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has put back the question of regional integration and African unity to intense scholarly scrutiny. The Sahel has emerged as the epicentre of violent extremism in the world according to the Institute for Economic and Peace's 2024 Global Terrorism Index. The resurgence of military coups in the region further adds to the political dynamics of the region. The intervention of ECOWAS and the AU to restore constitutional order and the counteraction of the military juntas have resulted to the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States in the Sahel which has implications for regional integration in Africa in general. This study adopts a qualitative research strategy and case study design to examine the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel. It is based on desk review, particularly data sources such as Google scholar. The findings reveal that the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region has implications for regional integration and the objective of unity of the African Union. Military coups in the Sahel have raised the stakes and challenges for Africa unity via regional integration by complicating the role of the regional institution, ECOWAS and ultimately the African Union. It posits that revisiting the foundational discourse of African unity and integration that is the Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville debates is essential to understanding the current political dynamics in the Sahel region.

### Keywords:

Military coups; regional integration; violent extremism; African unity; Sahel region.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.289>

<sup>2</sup> MSC, Research Fellow at the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA); ORCID: 0009-0004-7881-2313; Kibang.zuokom@yahoo.com

## *Introduction*

The integration of Africa was and has been a major preoccupation of most post-independent African leaders as a solution to the myriad of challenges plaguing the newly independent states. African governments accepted regional integration as an important lever to attaining their development strategies (Hartzenberg, 2011:2, Hakuna & Tanyanyiwa, 2014:104). This quest for development through regional integration resulted in the conclusion of numerous regional integration arrangements (Hartzenberg, 2011). As such, economic motives informed earlier strides for an integrated Africa. In this understanding, the free movement of goods, services, people and capital between national markets has been the aspiration of African governments since independence (Conceicao et al, 2014). Regional integration was conceived to serve as a catalyst for the economic transformation of the Africa such as in its capacity for addressing major constraints to export competitiveness imposed by small national economies, increase competitiveness of local markets and also overcoming geographical challenges such as enclavement (Ibid, 2014:2, Oyejide, 2000).

Several arrangements and agreements have underpinned the efforts of African statesmen towards realising the vision of a united and integrated continent. They range from conferences to institutions-building. The broad consensus in scholarship on regional integration in Africa points to the fact that it has not succeeded in catalysing intra-regional and intra-Africa trade (Oyejide, 2000). The existence of a number of regional blocs initially for economic purposes translates to the commitment to the ideal of regionalism by African leaders as a catalyst to socio-economic and political transformation of the continent. The Lagos Plan of Action in 1980 and the Abuja Treaty in 1991 crystallised into concrete steps to regional economic integration. Still under the aegis of the defunct OAU, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) emerged such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Southern Africa Development Authority (SADC) (Olubomehin & Dayo Kawonishe, 2004) just to name a few. The efforts at regional integration gained emphasis with the advent of the African Union (AU) in 2002 due to the weaknesses of the OAU. The role of the AU in fostering regional integration in Africa is specified in Article 3 (c) of the Constitutive Act which is to “accelerate the political and socio- economic integration of the continent” (African Union, 2002). This put the AU at the centre of all efforts to foster a more integrated and united Africa as underscored by Vision 2063 of a more integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena (African Union, 2013).

Despite strides made at regional integration in Africa, the African Union is still grappling with contentious political crises ranging from armed intra-state and inter-state conflicts with its attendant humanitarian consequences, democratic deficits and more recently a resurgence of military takeovers and putschist attempts. The latter is glaring and very recent in the Sahel region. Empirical literature presents the Sahel as a region with complex security challenges ranging from violent extremism, intra-state conflicts,

climate change related difficulties, external intervention among others. These complexities intermingle to create an image of a region sunk in political instability. Some have described the Sahel as a hot bed for extremism (Hassan, 2020). It has become the most violent zone in the world (Makombe and Akinola, 2022). In this purview, jihadists have taken the Sahel as a safe haven (Ibid, p. 202). The humanitarian condition in the region has been described as fragile, complicated by violent extremism and armed conflicts (Dieng, 2022). The Sahelian countries which have come under intense scholarly consideration on political instability of recent include: Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

The Sahelian States of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso have since 2020 been governed by military juntas. Since independence, these states have experienced military rule in one or more eras of their political history. Despite certain remarkable moments of civilian rule in these states, the armed forces have remained the pre-eminent political actors (Elischer, 2019). The influence of the military in politics has always often provoked condemnation from both domestic and international institutions and actors. They consider military intervention in politics as undemocratic and unconstitutional. Despite the wind of political liberalization that swept across Africa in the 1990s, military coups have continued to pose a threat to the democratisation process in sub-Saharan Africa (Taruvunga, 2023). It has been argued that the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel in particular is correlated to leadership gaps in attenuating the severe socio-economic, political and security crises in the region (Makombe and Akinola, 2022, Oluyemi, 2024). These acts of military intervention in politics have been criticised as a qualitative reversal of democracy (Ibid, p.8). Some historical factors that underpin violent extremism generally in the Sahel include: Tuareg rebellion, the influence of religion, spillover effects of the Algerian civil war, impact of the Libyan crisis and the Fulani crisis (Sunjo & Nyadi, 2024).

Regional organisations have been vocal in condemning the upsurge of military coups in the Sahel. The African Union from a continental level and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the regional body in West Africa have been the leading institutions in this regard. Silencing of guns is one of the strategic focuses of the African Union to eradicate poverty and insecurity in Africa but the resurgence of military coups only helps to make this vision become more elusive and further compound the aforementioned challenges (Makombe and Akinola, 2022:11). The African Union and ECOWAS have responded to the spate of unconstitutional change of governments by imposing economic sanctions on the juntas, suspending their membership in the continental and regional bodies and called for a return to democratic rule (Adetuyi, 2020). The aborted attempt to use force on the military juntas by ECOWAS and counteraction from the juntas have put the regional bloc in a dilemma of balancing principles with pragmatism that puts it on the path to disintegration (Aning and Bjarnesen, 2024). The concerted efforts by ECOWAS to return the military juntas in the Sahel to civilian rule occasioned a coalition of the juntas against any action against one of them. The failure of both hard and diplomatic measures to revert military rule in this region is reflected in the creation of a military alliance by the juntas (Gbadamosi, 2024).



It is therefore evident that abundant scholarship on the Sahel has concentrated on insecurity, political instability, external intervention and peacekeeping but very scanty about the repercussions of these dynamics on regional integration efforts which is a strategic objective of the African Union. Thus, the issue at stake is the fact that while the African Union is focused on achieving the goal of a more integrated Africa, political developments and dynamics in the Sahel calls regional integration into question. The aim of this article is to critically analyse the political situation in the Sahel regarding the withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS regional bloc to form a new alliance of three military juntas called Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES). The objective is to find out how the latter impacts regional integration efforts in West Africa in particular and the African continent in general by invoking the Casablanca versus Monrovia debate which animated earlier discourse on regional integration in Africa. This article is structured into three parts. The first part is the introduction which gives a general background to the political developments in the Sahel region, the second part outlines the research methodology and the third part is the results and discussion on how military takeovers in the Sahel has a bearing on regional integration efforts in Africa.

### *Methodology*

The study utilised a qualitative research strategy and case study design to analyse the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel and how these developments has a bearing on efforts by the continental and regional institutions such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) respectively to foster regional integration and unity in Africa. The study invoked the foundational discourse on regional integration in Africa which is the Casablanca versus Monrovia debates through a historical lens using desk review in order to place the emergent regional bloc of three in the Sahel, the confederation, Alliance of Sahel States (ASS) comprising Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger within current academic discourse on regional integration in Africa. To this end, secondary data sources including published and unpublished works were employed. They include: articles, books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, policy briefs and reports which were valuable sources of the review.

### *Results and Discussion*

#### *1. The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel*

The Sahel has come under intense scrutiny due to the spate of military coups which have rocked the region since 2020. This is not a new phenomenon in the region as it can be said it is just a replay of the political situation of the region in the immediate aftermath of political independence when military dictatorship was the norm (Elischer, 2019). As espoused by Hassan (2020) the Sahel is the hotbed for extremism. This indicates that military coups are just additions to the political complexities of the region and not the sole issue. It is also a pointer to the fact that different conditions inform the different

coups periods. Strong military intervention in politics (praetorianism) in the Sahel in the 1960s and 1970s was enabled by autocratic civilian-led governments, compounded by their inability to live up to their promises made to the people immediately after independence such as economic and political development (Elischer, 2019:10). The above conditions created conducive grounds for the intervention of the military in politics in the Sahel region. Though some differences existed between the Sahel states, the conditions above were pre-eminent and common in most if not all. It is thus imperative to investigate the conditions which inform the resurgence of military coups in this region since 2020 on a country-by-country basis, that is to say: Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as the cases under consideration in this study.

### *The Case of Mali in 2020 and 2021*

Mali has a history of coup d'Etats but the resurgence of this phenomenon in early 2020 and 2021 points to the accumulation of factors conducive for the intervention of the military in politics. The drivers of the coup has been linked to many factors which include: public dissatisfaction with the manipulation of parliamentary elections as the immediate cause and government's inability to restore order and protect the civilian population against constant attacks by violent local armed groups and Islamic extremists as remote factors (Akinola & Makombe, 2024). The veracity of this justification is corroborated by the fact that, the coup was celebrated by majority of Malians (Ibid). It can be deduced that the populace saw it as a window of opportunity to exit the difficulties they faced due to governance deficits. Thus, the actions of Assimi Goita were positively received as liberating. By successfully executing two coups in 2020 and 2021 by deposing President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and Prime Minister Bah Ndaw respectively, Captain Goita reinforced his public perception that through him, order would be restored with an eventual return to civilian rule. However, some people viewed it as "people in power fighting among themselves" (Akinola & Makombe, 2024).

### *The Military Coup in Niger*

The attempted coup in Niger in March 2021 has been hinged on the irregularities owing to the February 2021 presidential elections in the country. The incumbent as at that time is said to have rejected the outcome of the elections despite persuasion that he should accept defeat in order to go down in records as the first seating civilian President to have relinquished power to another (France 24, 2021 as cited by Akinola & Makombe, 2024). It is reported that the opposition candidate, Mohamed Bazoum had 55.75 per cent of the votes while the incumbent, Mohamane Ousamane polled 44.25 per cent of the votes which was contested by the latter (France 24, 2021 cited in Akinola & Makombe, 2024). The opposition candidate contested the outcome in the constitutional court but it was rejected. The incumbent claimed he had won the election by 50.30 per cent (Akinola & Makombe, 2024). This political conflict created the fertile ground for an attempted military on the eve of the presidential inauguration in which

137 people were killed in western Niger due to a clash with jihadists groups (The Defense Post, 2021 cited in Akinola & Makombe, 2024). Thus, it can be inferred that the jihadists exploited the political skirmishes and vulnerabilities between the incumbent and opposition over the helm of the state to exact violence on the population.

### *The Military coup in Burkina Faso*

The forceful intervention of the military in politics in Burkina Faso in 2022 has been explained to be due to the escalation of the security landscape in Burkina Faso and the failure of the government to contain the jihadists' insurgency (Elischer & Lawrance, 2022). Before now, Burkina Faso was considered the "island of stability" in the conflict-prone region (Haavik et al, 2022). However, it has been posited that the relative stability of Burkina Faso during the reign of Blaise Compoare was due to the complex political network he planted which has been described as the "the big man deep state" which disappeared with his departure (Ibid). This led to the fragmentation of the state as it slid into political violence due to the emergence of multiple forces to contest political power. The two successive coups which took place between January and September 2022 under Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba was justified on the inability of the government to contain the jihadist insurgency in the country (Aluyemi, 2024).

From the three cases above, a common denominator can be derived to characterise the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region. Governance deficits underpin all three cases. The military juntas argued that the civilian Presidents failed to maintain order, protect the citizens and provide for basic economic needs. This was evident in the escalation of extreme violence by Non-state actors with the population bearing the brunt of their actions. Consequently, suspending the constitution in order to restore order for an eventual return to civilian rule is the thesis advanced by the juntas. However, the spate of military coups in the Sahel has been condemned by the African Union, the regional institution, ECOWAS and some members of the international community as unconstitutional and anti-democratic. Particularly important in this regard is ECOWAS which has engaged in both diplomatic and hard measures to roll back putchist tendencies in the Sahel. The reactions of the juntas have made it imperative to interrogate the role of ECOWAS in fostering regional integration in Africa on the heels of the re-awakening of the phenomenon of military coups in Africa, focusing on the Sahel region.

## *2. The Role of the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) in rolling back Coup d'Etats in the Sahel.*

The continental institution, the African Union and the regional body, ECOWAS has not been indifferent to the frequency and scope of military coups in West Africa in general and the Sahel region in particular. Their intervention is expendable on account of

fostering democracy, constitutionality and most importantly, African unity via regional integration.

### *The African Union (AU) and resurgent military coups in the Sahel*

The Lome declaration of 2000 provides basic knowledge on the commitment of the AU to democracy and constitutionality in Africa. Initially drawn under the defunct OAU, the Lome declaration was aimed at fostering democracy in Africa on the tenets of regional peace, sustainable democracy and political legitimacy (Mohammed, 2022). This declaration is centrally based on outlawing unconstitutional governments and confers legitimacy to those that come into power through credible and competitive electoral process (Ibid). The AU's commitment to the rule of law and constitutionality is further crystallised by the Constitutive Act of the AU in which article 30 stipulates that “governments that come into power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union” (Phakathi, 2018 cited in Mohammed, 2022). The legal instrument which defines what the AU terms unconstitutional government is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Good Governance (ACDEG) adopted on 30th January, 2007 (Ibid). Having explored the legal and institutional framework of the AU regarding military coups, it is imperative to understand its intervention in the recent spate of coups in the Sahel: Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

In Mali, the AU adopted a tough stance and its decisions were swift against the military junta. It rejected the transitional charter of the junta which extended into 2025 and immediately suspended it from participating in its activities until normal constitutional order has been restored to the country (Mohammed, 2022). The AU furthered its sanctions by imposing tougher measures such as border closures and restrictions on financial transactions (Mohammed, 2022:99). This stance of the AU triggered the second coup as Assimi Goita toppled the interim transitional President, Bah Ndaw and the Prime Minister, Moctar Ouane who were pressurised to resign which derailed the transitional timetable (Ibid). In Niger, the African Union immediately condemned the coup and suspended Niger from the AU until the restoration of the civilian-led transitional process (Oluropo et al, 2024). The AU went further to impose travel restrictions and targeted sanctions against the junta and their family members (Ibid, 34). In the Burkina Faso, similar measures were adopted. This created a contagion effect among the military juntas in the Sahel which will be explored in details subsequently.

### *ECOWAS and the creation of a junta contagion in the Sahel*

The tough stance adopted by the continental body, the African Union against the juntas was amplified by the regional body, ECOWAS. The original mission of ECOWAS was to foster regional integration among West African States. However, the imperative of responding to the multiple threats to peace, development and integration expanded its mandate (Kohnert, 2023). Following the speed and scope of military coups in the Sahel,

principally in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, the regional body, ECOWAS adopted a common stance against coup plotters in terms of condemnation and sanctions. In addition to the sanctions imposed by the African Union, ECOWAS, led by the regional power, Nigeria threatened a military intervention in Niamey, Niger if Bazoum was not released and reinstated within a week (Kohnert, 2023:2). Nigeria even went further to cut electricity supply to its neighbor, Niger which depends on 70% electricity from Nigeria (AFP & Le Monde, 2023 cited in Kohnert, 2023:3). This strategy further created problems for ECOWAS following the reactions of the coup leaders.

### *3. Emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES)*

The coup leaders in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso withdrew their membership from the regional bloc, ECOWAS on the grounds that it is ineffective and influenced by external powers (Africanews, 2024). According to Niger's military ruler, General Abdourahman Tchiani, ECOWAS has become a threat to their states (Ibid). They accuse ECOWAS of complicity with the West which does not serve the interest of the people but the former. General Abdourahman argued: "we are going to create an AES of the people, instead of an ECOWAS whose directives and instructions are dictated to it by powers that are foreign to Africa" (Ibid). The alliance of three countries culminated in an agreement of cooperation to fight armed rebellion and external aggression (Aljazeera, 2023). The eventual charter drawn in Niamey, Niger is known as the Alliance of Sahel States which binds the signatories to assist one another- including militarily in the event of an attack against any one of them (Ibid). The Liptako-Gourma Charter creating the Alliance of Sahel States is stated to have emerged due to the crisis within ECOWAS following the coup in Niger (Grutjen, 2024). This action further divides ECOWAS in a context where regional integration and African unity is a paramount goal of the African Union. It also raises important concerns about foreign intervention in the domestic affairs of the Sahel which requires a critical lens.

### *4. External influence in the political landscape of the Sahel region*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel has provoked concerns of foreign influence in the coup occurrence, scope and dynamics. Among the divided opinions, one school of thought argues that military interests and access to natural resources underpin external intervention in military coups in the Sahel which includes removing leaders who stand in their way (Institute for Security Studies, 2023). This perception is emboldened by the controversial positions some western countries take regarding the resurgent coups. Examples include the fact that the U.S and France endorsed the military coup in Chad in 2021 but condemned the coup and suspended aids in other Sahelian countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. They considered the case of Chad as a counter-insurgency move in the greater Lake Chad Basin but condemned that in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso as unconstitutional (Ibid). However, the perception of western intervention has been strongly rejected by the African Union during its 1772nd Peace and Security Council session following the 26th July Niger coup (Ibid).



The role of the Russian Paramilitary Company, Wagner further crystalises the geopolitical dynamics of external influence in the resurgent military coups in the Sahel. Russia has been touted to heightening the geopolitical dynamics of foreign role in the resurgent coups in the Sahel. According to this account, Russia acts through the Paramilitary Company, Wagner to project Russia's influence in Africa generally (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021). To achieve the above objective, Russia leverages anti-western sentiments in Africa that dates back to European colonialism (Vuksanovic, 2023). France is a frequent target in Francophone Africa (Ibid). In addition, Russia views Africa as an arena to gain foothold on the continent and project its great power status (Ibid). There has been a drastic shift away by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from their traditional allies, U.S and France towards Russia and China (Melville, 2024). The above analysis underscores the controversial role of foreign actors in the evolving political landscape of the Sahel region.

The emergence of a new alliance in the Sahel, the growing division within ECOWAS and the intervention of external powers in the Sahel necessitates an interrogation of integration and African unity by revisiting the foundational discourse of regional integration which is the Monrovia-Casablanca and Brazzaville debates. This debate forms the basis of contemporary study and practice of African unity and integration.

### *5. The Casablanca-Monrovia and Brazzaville debates on African unity and integration*

These were the major schools of thought which emerged, having diverse ideologies for African unity and integration. Despite their differences, they were united by the common sense of a united and integrated Africa. They were made up of different states and consequently, blocs. A careful consideration of the positions of the three schools is imperative to understand how it still informs contemporary discourse and evolution of African unity.

#### *The Casablanca Group*

The Casablanca Group comprised Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Algeria, Mali and Libya. They were preoccupied with the controversial role of external powers in the internal affairs of Africa and so advocated for political and economic unity among African states (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The group was guided by the conviction that Africa states should be independent and feared the intervention of colonial powers in the internal affairs of African states to compromise their independence (Ibid). The Congo crisis which erupted in 1960 was used by the group as a justification for external interference and destabilisation of Africa and so argued strongly for the unity of Africa in order to defeat such tendencies (Ibid). In essence, the Casablanca bloc of African unity stood for immediate independence and unity of African states as a bulwark against external intervention in the political evolution of the continent. Key figures in this radical bloc

of African unity included: Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sekou Toure of Guinea and Gamal Abdel- Nasser of Egypt (South African History Online, 2023).

### *The Monrovia and Brazzaville Group*

On their part, the Monrovia and Brazzaville group held a common position. They advocated for a gradual and piecemeal approach to African unity. Their version of African unity was based on the argument that unity could be better attained when the sovereignty of all independent African states were maintained (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The group comprised of Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Tunisia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Dahomey, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Malagasy, Mauritania, Senegal, Upper Volta and Niger (Burkina Faso), twelve countries comprising the Brazzaville group (Ibid, p.4). The peculiarity with the Brazzaville group is that they did not want to compromise their relationship with their former colonial master, France. This explains why they adopted a cautious approach to the Algerian liberation war of 1954-1956 by sorting mediation in the conflict without alienating France (Ibid). They posited that African unity was paramount but that former French colonies should continue their relationship with France. Their main position is captured in this excerpt from Congo Brazzaville's Foreign Minister "we want to keep our own personality within the framework of African unity" (Ibid).

The foregoing analysis shows that though African had different pathways to the question of unity and integration, the quest for a united and integrated Africa trumped over the ideological divide. While the Casablanca bloc vouched for a radical approach to unity, the Monrovia-Brazzaville group advocated for a gradual and procedural approach to African unity and integration. Also, while the former rejected external interference in Africa through a politically and economically united Africa, the latter argued for unity framework which gave room for the independence and sovereignty of all African states. However, both blocs met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May 1963 and thirty-two countries signed the charter creating of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The organisation had the following objectives: to promote the unity and solidarity of African countries, defend the sovereignty of members, eradicate all forms of colonialism, promote international cooperation, having due regard for the charter of the UN, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and coordinate and harmonise the policies of member states in the educational, health, welfare, scientific and defense sectors (Muyangwa & Vogt, 2000). The weaknesses of the OAU, led the establishment of the African Union in Durban, South Africa in 2002. Regional integration as the stepping stone to a more integrated Africa is among the strategic frameworks of the AU.

With the resurgence of military coups in the Sahel, the fragmentation of the regional body, ECOWAS, the defiance of the coup leaders with the formation of a new regional bloc, the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS/AES), invoking the fundamental discourse on African unity and analysing its implication in contemporary Africa is crucial. Having discussed the founding schools of thought on African unity, the subsequent sections

delve into its relevance, stakes and opportunities in understanding and advancing regional integration and African unity.

### *6. The stakes, challenges and opportunities for regional integration in Africa with the formation of a new political bloc in the Sahel*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel region have called into question the structure of the post-colonial State in Africa following the upsurge of anti-French sentiments across Francophone countries in the region in particular and West Africa in general. This dynamic which is currently gaining traction across the region has geopolitical undertones of great powers. For example, Russia is touted to be the architect in driving anti-French sentiments in West Africa as part of its anti-Western logic. Anti-French sentiments are resentment by former French colonies in the Sahel in particular against internal influence in their domestic politics which serves the interest of former. For instance, the infamous Francafrrique policy undergirds the relationship between France and her former colonies to maintain France's dominance in West Africa (Kohnert, 2023b). Under this relationship, major political and economic decisions of the former colonies are determined by France. The upsurge in resentment against this unequal relationship is based on the fact that it violates the independence and sovereignty of African States. In the Sahel, the sentiment is rife as citizens argue that the presence of French troops in the region has not significantly translated into the reduction of violent extremism (Kohnert, 2023b). This has been exploited by coup leaders in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to gain popular support. This brings the Casablanca argument of African unity into focus. This school of thought rejected external influence in the political evolution of Africa. Thus, the emergence of the new regional bloc in the Sahel can be considered an extension of the defense of the Casablanca position.

The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States also calls into question the legitimacy of ECOWAS and its role in fostering regional integration in West Africa in general and the Sahel in particular. The withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS reveals crisis in the regional institution. This withdrawal reflects an interplay of political, economic and security dynamics in the regional bloc (Musa, 2024). Scholars and analyst have pinned this withdrawal on the intervention of ECOWAS in member states during political crisis which though anchored on promoting democracy and stability have sometimes resulted to tensions and perceptions of external interference among member states (Ibid, 39). It is therefore evident that ECOWAS is undergoing a crisis of legitimacy wherein its role in regional stability and fostering unity and integration in West Africa in general and the Sahel in particular is increasingly being questioned and contested.

### *Conclusion*

The resurgence of military coups in the Sahel has had regional and continental implications with regards to regional integration and African unity. The spates of military juntas in the Sahel particularly in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have necessitated

the interrogation of the concept and practice of regional integration in Africa. The emergence of a new regional bloc by the military juntas known as the Alliance of Sahel States which runs parallel to ECOWAS, the regional institution in West Africa warrants revisiting the fundamental debates which animated the formation of the OAU and more recently, the AU. The Casablanca, Monrovia-Brazzaville debates inspired contemporary discourse on African unity and regional integration. At a time when African unity underpins AU's strategic objective, the emergence of a new regional institution in West Africa, puts a question mark on the role of ECOWAS and the AU broadly construed in fostering regional integration and African unity.

External intervention and complicity in Africa which was rejected by the Casablanca bloc has resurfaced in the argument of the military juntas with regards to ECOWAS. The drastic sanctions and threats of military intervention by ECOWAS to return constitutional order in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger provoked the juntas to accuse the regional bloc of complicity with the western powers to undermine the sovereignty of Africa States. To address this concern, the military juntas have whipped up anti-western sentiments in the Sahel among the citizens. This is demonstrated in the demands for France to vacate the region such as withdrawing their forces stationed to combat violent extremism. However, it has provoked a great power rivalry dimension as western media reports that the spread of anti-western sentiment is a propaganda having Russia as its architect. They posit that the Russian mercenary group, Wagner is the tool used by Russia to spread anti-western sentiments in Africa in general and the Sahel in particular. The political situation in the Sahel including the emergence of a parallel bloc to ECOWAS, the division within ECOWAS, the role of external actors portends high stakes for African unity and regional integration in Africa.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Kibang Cedrick Zuo-Kom is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA) wherein he works with Senior Fellows to conduct research and write policy papers and scholarly works according to the mission of IRPIA. He leads research efforts at the Conflict Lab, a think tank, committed to evidence-based research in peace, security, governance and human rights. He holds an MSc in Political Science from the University of Yaounde 2, Soa, MSc (hons) in International Relations and MSc (hons) in Conflict Resolution both from the University of Buea, Cameroon.

### *Conflict of Interests*

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

## References

- Adetuyi, A. (2022). *Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa: Reassessing the role of the African Union and ECOWAS*. Relevant and Candid Dialogue.
- African Union. (2002). *Constitutive Act of the African Union*. African Union. [https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact\\_en.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf)
- African Union. (n.d.). *African Union, 2013. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. African Union. Retrieved November 20, 2024 from <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>
- AfricaNews. (2024). *Coup-hit nations of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso form Sahel Alliance*. AfricaNews. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://www.africanews.com/2024/07/07/coup-hit-nations-of-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso-form-sahel-alliance/>
- Akinola, A. O., & Makombe, R. (2024). Rethinking the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096231224680. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096231224680>
- Al Jazeera. (2023). *Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso establish Sahel security alliance*. Retrieved August 15, 2025 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/9/16/mali-niger-and-burkina-faso-establish-sahel-security-alliance>
- Aning, K., & Bjarnesen, J. (2024). *Ecows' dilemma: balancing principles and pragmatism: West Africa's regional bloc faces disintegration after failed sanctions against military regimes*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet website. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-2939>
- Dieng, A. (2021). The Sahel: Challenges and opportunities. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 103(918), 765-779. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383122000339>
- Elischer, S. (2024). Military coups, jihadism and insecurity in the Central Sahel. *West African Papers*(43). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/522f69f1-en>
- Elischer, S., & Lawrance, B. N. (2022). Reassessing Africa's New Post-Coup Landscape. *African Studies Review*, 65(1), 1-7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.33>
- Emile, S., & Francios, N. N. (2024). *Understanding the Drivers of Violent Extremism in the African Sahel: A Historical Perspective*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.12800069>
- Gbadamosi, N. (2024). *Sahel Military Regimes Cement Break from ECOWAS*. Foreign Policy. Retrieved August 12, 2024 from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/10/sahel-mali-burkina-niger-coups-ecowas/>
- Grütjen, K. (2024). *Current developments in West Africa's regional integration: Challenges for the future design of foreign and development policy (Research Report No. 6/2024)*. IDOS Policy Brief.





- Haavik, V., Bøås, M., & Iocchi, A. (2022). The End of Stability – How Burkina Faso Fell Apart. *African Security*, 15(4), 317-339. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2022.2128614>
- Hamdy, A. H. (2020). A new hotbed for extremism? Jihadism and collective insecurity in the sahel. *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 8(2), 203–222. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18588/202011.00a120>
- Hartzenberg, T. (2011). *Regional integration in Africa*, in: *Staff Working Paper ERSD-2011-14*. World Trade Organisation.
- Institute for Security Studies. (2023). *Are foreign actors scapegoated in Africa's coups? PSC Report*. ISS Africa. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/are-foreign-actors-scapegoated-in-africas-coups>
- Kayizzi-Mugerwa, S., Anyanwu, J., & Conceição, P. (2014). Regional Integration in Africa: An Introduction. *African Development Review*, Volume 26, 1-6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12102>
- Kohnert, D. (2023a). *ECOWAS, once an assertive power in West Africa, reduced to a paper tiger?* Hamburg.
- Kohnert, D. (2023b). *Will the UEMOA survive the rise of anti-French sentiment in West Africa?* Retrieved August 16, 2024 from <https://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/118357/>
- Melville, A. (2024). *Russia Exploits Western Vacuum in Africa's Sahel Region*. Defense Security Monitor. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2024/04/22/russia-exploits-western-vacuum-in-africas-sahel-region/>
- Mohammed, H. (2020). *The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union*. Retrieved August 14, 2023 from <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/>
- Musa, A. (2024). The departure of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from ECOWAS: Assessing security and geopolitical implications and solutions for Nigeria. *Yamtara-Wala Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (YaJAMSS)*(4), 93-102.
- Muyangwa, M., & Vogt, M. A. (2000). *An Overview of the Creation of the Organization of African Unity, An Assessment of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, 1993-2000*. International Peace Institute.
- Olubomehin, & Kawonishe. (2004). The African Union and the Challenges of Regional Integration in Africa. In *Annual Conference. The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP)* (pp. 1-15). University of Western Australia.
- Oluropo, F. J., Olusesan, I. M., Matthew, A. A., & Christopher, O. M. (2024). The Resurgence of Military Coups in West-Africa States: The Case of Niger Republic and Its Implications on Peace, Security and Transnational Activities in Nigeria.

- Global Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*(3), 26-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.55640/gjhss-social-332>
- Oluyemi, O. (2024). Militarization of Democracy and the Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 7(6), 92-105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v7i6.2154>
- Organisation of African Unity (OAU). (n.d.). *South African History Online*. Retrieved August 16, 2024 from <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/organisation-african-unity-oau>
- Oyejide, T. A. (2000). Policies for regional integration in Africa. In *Economic Research Papers* (Vol. 62): African Development Bank.
- Siegle, J. (2021). *Africa's Coups and the Role of External Actors*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved August 15, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africas-coups-and-the-role-of-external-actors/>
- Tanyanyiwa, V., & Hakuna, C. (2014). Challenges and Opportunities for Regional Integration in Africa: The Case of SADC. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19, 103-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-19124103115>
- Taruvinga, G. R. (2023). The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa: The Case of West Africa and the Sahel. In A. O. Akinola (Ed.), *Contemporary Issues on Governance, Conflict and Security in Africa* (pp. 147-157). Springer Nature Switzerland. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29635-2\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29635-2_9)
- Vuksanovic, V. (August 15, 2023). In Africa, Russia seeks to retain its superpower credentials *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2023/08/15/in-africa-russia-seeks-to-retain-its-superpower-credentials>

## Terrorism as a factor geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel region<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Mady Ibrahim Kante<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

Since the beginning of the new millennium, extremism has emerged as a major challenge facing the African continent. This phenomenon significantly impedes economic and political development, prompting individual states to fight terrorism through various initiatives. Despite these efforts, tangible results have been elusive due to the transfer of extremist ideologies across state borders, leading to external interventions under the guise of the “fight against terrorism in the Sahel.” Although jihadist terrorist groups have long been present in Africa, the Sahel countries and African organizations have not adopted effective strategies to combat violent extremism. Since 2011, terrorist organizations have seized control of areas in the Sahel, with Boko Haram conducting numerous operations that threaten regional security and stability. In response, African organizations such as the African Union and regional bodies have implemented policies and initiatives aimed at curbing the spread of violent extremism through military interventions and economic and social development projects in the Sahel. These efforts include alliances like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and G5 Sahel, comprising five Sahel countries. Given the regional and international ramifications of extremism on Western interests and economically powerful states, African nations and organizations have engaged in serious cooperation with the international community and major powers. This collaboration includes efforts with the United Nations, France, and other entities in peacekeeping missions and initiatives to combat terrorism and extremism.

### Keywords:

Africa; Sahel;  
geopolitics; terrorism;  
war; counterterrorism;  
military intervention;  
security.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.274>

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer-researcher, University of Legal and Political Sciences of Bamako.  
ORCID: 0000-0002-0732-4791; madibiramu@gmail.com.

## *1. Introduction*

The Sahel region faces enormous security and political challenges, ranging from violent extremism to terrorism. Terrorism is a crucial factor reshaping the geopolitical dynamics of this important region of the African continent. The Sahel region is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, but it is increasingly active with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Islamic State in the Sahara. This situation has multiple negative impacts on the security and stability of the entire African continent. Over the past decades, states in this region have been subjected to constant threats to their security, stability, and economic development. Terrorism is a major factor in the geopolitical restructuring of the Sahel region, where extremist organizations manipulate religion and ideology to advance their agendas. The fight against terrorism in this region has become a crucial issue for the countries of the Sahel and the international community, as governments and regional and international organizations seek to ensure security and stability in the region. However, growing security challenges and changing geopolitical dynamics are reinforcing the role of terrorism in restructuring the region's political and economic landscape.

The fight against terrorism in the Sahel requires comprehensive strategies that combine military, security, economic, and social dimensions. Local states should work in cooperation with other African states and regional and international organizations to exchange information, promote military cooperation, encourage sustainable development, and provide young people with economic opportunities to prevent them from joining terrorist groups. There is also a need to strengthen the capacities of security services and provide training and equipment for counterterrorism. Ensuring stability and security in the Sahel region is a major challenge, but it is essential for sustainable development and prosperity in these countries. Addressing the security and geopolitical challenges associated with terrorism in this region is an important step to reshape the political and economic landscape for the benefit of African countries and their future.

It is crucial to understand the role that the fight against terrorism plays in redefining the geopolitical dynamics in the Sahel. This requires a thorough study of the political, security, economic, and social transformations in the region and an analysis of the effects of terrorism on the international system and regional relations. In this context, international cooperation and regional coordination are increasingly important to address security challenges, combat terrorism, and strengthen the capacity of Sahel countries to face current threats. The question is how terrorism and its struggle became a gateway for geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel region of Africa.

The fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel is an arena of competition between the major powers of the region, encouraging each power and state to defend its interests as they seek to redefine their geopolitical objectives in the Sahel and Africa in general. One of the most pressing justifications for the geopolitical restructuring of the Sahel is to study how terrorism has become a key factor since the beginning of the new millennium for geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel.

This research aims to highlight the role of the fight against terrorism in redesigning the geopolitics of the Sahel, analyse the challenges and opportunities arising from this context, and explore strategies and measures that can be taken to enhance security and stability in the region. By understanding the multiple dimensions of this complex issue, we can develop effective strategies to combat terrorism and reduce its negative impacts on the region and Africa. The first axis will focus on African initiatives to combat terrorism, the second on foreign interventions under the name of "war against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region," and the third will focus on new strategies to combat extremism in Lake Chad and the Sahel following the withdrawal of French forces from Mali and Burkina Faso.

## *2. African initiatives to combat terrorism in the Sahel*

Many African state authorities have become unable to control their geographical areas due to endemic conflicts and internal political tensions. This insecurity and instability have led to the emergence of terrorism and violent extremism, particularly those based on religious ideology. The countries of the African Sahel are facing numerous problems, the most significant being a very complex geopolitical situation. The main issue is not merely the problems themselves but the challenge of reaching consensus and acceptance. The difficulty lies in recognizing and accepting differences. Consequently, the challenges faced by many African countries remain invisible and unaddressed even after sixty years of independence, as they have been unable to control their desert and forest territories. Lake Chad, located in north-central Africa, spans regions of north-eastern Nigeria, the far north of Cameroon, western Chad, and south-eastern Niger. It has a unique social and cultural environment that contributes to the region's rich diversity. The peoples bordering Lake Chad have cultural values, traditional beliefs, and practices shaped by their relationship with the natural environment, which affects environmental sustainability. It is one of the poorest regions in the world, with high population growth, extreme weather conditions, and a climatic intersection. The area represents a cultural and geopolitical nexus between West Africa, Central Africa, Dry Africa, and Wet Africa. For many informed observers, the Sahel and Lake Chad are at the centre of the future of global geopolitics, considering their untapped resources and the outbreak of war in the heart of the European continent.

For many observers, Africa is at the centre of future global geopolitics due to its untapped resources and the recent conflicts in Europe. We face the direct consequences of the formation of new geopolitics in the Sahel, which has not been well thought out by African countries or the international community (including the United Nations), which has a role in promoting global peace. Terrorist groups have become influential in the geopolitical changes on the African coast, particularly in terms of controlling regions and territories. The European Union is also aware of the attempts by military or rebel groups to control central governments through coups. The desert areas of the Sahel and Sahara remain the most challenging for central administrations to assert authority.



Despite numerous security responses from countries on the African continent, terrorism and violent extremism remain significant challenges. They threaten security and political stability and hinder all development and economic initiatives. Terrorism in the Sahel and on the African continent in general has evolved; it is no longer localized but has spread from the coast to the Swahili states of West Africa, such as Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

There is no doubt that terrorism and violent extremism are complex and vary from region to region, necessitating specific responses depending on the context. The solution to this dilemma is to change the conditions that fuel violence by actively investing in the process of establishing and maintaining peace. This conviction has been further strengthened since the launch of the Regional Dialogue for the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism (IPI, 2018).

The African Union is tasked with consolidating political and security stability on the continent through regional integration and building an African force capable of countering any threats against African countries. However, the Russian-Ukrainian war has completely changed the world order, including African geopolitics, which is increasingly at the heart of global geopolitical balances.

In response, a space has been created for exchange and an approach to violence prevention in the Saharan coastal region. The International Institute of Peace, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS), the Swiss Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the African Centre for Terrorism Studies and Research of the African Union, supported by the Algerian government, organized the third round of regional dialogues for the prevention of terrorism and extremist violence.

With sporadic security incidents in West Africa, particularly along the Senegal-Mali border and between Burkina Faso, Benin, and Togo, concerns have increased over the potential spread of violent extremist groups into south-eastern Senegal, near the gold-rich Mali border. Extremist groups have also spread to the Gulf of Guinea (Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, and Ghana), countries that have never previously experienced extremism. Consequently, states are compelled to develop new strategies to combat the expansion of extremist groups along the West African coast (Faye, 2021).

The Lake Chad basin region has been particularly troubled for some time by extremist groups. Countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are seeking to coordinate local efforts to counter the threat of extremism. To define an effective approach to rehabilitation, reintegration, and reconciliation, it is essential to understand why individuals become radicalized. To combat violent extremism, countries are trying to establish new pathways for consolidating peace and long-term stability (Akum, 2021).

Despite the presence of several hotspots of violent extremist groups in different regions of the African continent, the southern region has historically remained unaffected by these movements and operations. However, the current situation in Mozambique indicates that this perception is now outdated. The continent has become a vital area and an attractive ground, and even an emerging source, for these extremist movements.

Since October 2017, Mozambique has witnessed increasing attacks targeting both police and civilians. Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, known locally as "Al Shabaab" in Mozambique, launched its first operations on 5 October 2017, targeting a police headquarters and army barracks in the northern town of Mocímboa da Praia (Ero, 2021).

The Islamic State appears to be closely monitoring developments in this African country, particularly following the discovery of oil and the evolution of offshore natural gas volumes since the first exploratory drilling operations in 2007. Mozambique has become the fourth-largest source of natural gas in the world, emerging as an energy superpower. (Idem.)

Since March 2015, both the Sahel and Lake Chad regions have witnessed the emergence of Islamic State - West Africa Province (Rewardsforjustice, 2023) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ECFR.EU, 2023). These groups have carried out terrorist attacks targeting both armed forces and civilians. According to Martin Ewey, the presence and expansion of ISIS on the African continent have exacerbated the crisis. The group has expanded its influence across the continent, affecting all five geopolitical zones defined by the African Union. At least 20 countries in Africa experience direct ISIS activity, while more than 20 other countries serve as logistics hubs for fundraising and other resources (فورونكوف, 2022).

While the continent grapples with security and political instability, it has become a crucial area for the recruitment of young people, particularly in the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel, which are the group's largest areas of operation. ISIS, like other extremist groups, closely monitors regional developments and the discovery of resources. It finances its activities through the extraction of conventional gold, smuggling of weapons, goods and currency, drug trafficking, and other lucrative illegal activities ("Financement Du Terrorisme En Afrique de l'Ouest," n.d.).

The African continent is indeed moving towards a new concept of African geopolitics, particularly in response to terrorism. This threat is deeply rooted on the continent, not only in the Sahel region but also in other areas with weak countries that are unable to control their territories and lack good local governance.

### *3.Foreign interventions under the name of "the war on terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region of Africa*

On the African continent, terrorism has become the main threat to peace. Due to its spread, the United Nations and other powers often justify intervening in the internal affairs of certain African countries under the pretext of combating extremist groups or terrorists. The African continent is currently the region most affected by the spread of extremism and religious violence, making it a vital area for extremists over the last two decades. Consequently, there is growing interest from the international community and major powers in fighting extremism in Africa, leading to increased efforts to combat extremist groups on the continent.

Foreign intervention in Africa is not new. Since the independence of African states, many countries have experienced violence and conflict (civil wars), prompting the deployment of various UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan. In 1960, the first peacekeeping operation in Africa was established in the Republic of the Congo to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian troops, assist the government in restoring law and order, and provide technical assistance.

Since extremist groups began taking control of territories in African countries, new UN missions with expanded mandates have been deployed. For instance, MINUSMA in Mali was established not only to maintain peace but also to help tackle extremism that seeks to alter the country's governance system. Since then, thousands of peacekeepers have been deployed to Africa, with the most recent peace process established in 2014 in the Central African Republic. Violent extremism undoubtedly has political, religious, and economic dimensions. Today's reality shows that the fight against extremism has sometimes been manipulated to achieve purposes and interests that have inadvertently contributed to the growing spread of extremism and religious hegemony.

Since the launch of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, several related programs have been launched around the world to reduce the growing threat of violent extremism. Many programs to prevent and combat violent extremism are implemented, in terms of the involvement of local civil society organizations, and international NGOs, which play an important role on the continent.

Since the launch of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, several related programs have been initiated worldwide to reduce the threat of violent extremism. Many programs to prevent and combat violent extremism have been implemented, involving local civil society organizations and international NGOs, which play a crucial role on the continent (United-Nations, 2023).

Fragile states and weak governments in Africa continue to experience ongoing violence, including the use of extremism to trigger civil wars, political violence, insurgencies, and terrorism. In 2020, 20 of the 46 sub-Saharan countries were engaged in some form of armed conflict resulting from extremism (United-Nations, 2023).

The Sahel, Sahara, and East Africa regions have been prime focuses of U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in Africa, driven by the presence of extremist groups threatening U.S. and Western interests (Schraeder and Crouzel, 2005). American views on counterterrorism in Africa align with those of other Western countries, considering Africa's future wealth and strategic positions. The Sahel countries, located in the Sahara Desert and West Africa, are rich in oil, gas, gold, uranium, and other minerals (United-Nations, 2023).

In response to the military intervention in Mali following the adoption of UN Resolution 2085, France intervened against extremist groups with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This marked the first

cooperation between ECOWAS and France in combating terrorism. The primary objective was to support Mali in fighting terrorist groups advancing southward. However, while the official objective was geographically limited to Mali, the actual goals extended beyond its borders, as extremism is a cross-border phenomenon threatening French interests throughout the Sahel and West Africa. It can be argued that the strategic objective of the intervention in Mali was to protect French security, economic, and political interests in the Sahel and West Africa (Martial, 2013).

France's military intervention in Mali began with Operation Serval, later replaced by the Barkhane force in the Sahel region. France recognized that all Sahelian states were suffering from violent extremism spreading from Mali to the rest of the region, particularly the Sahel and West Africa. According to some security officials in the Sahel states, France decided to establish a sub-regional organization with a military force to help Sahelian states combat violent extremism, which poses a real threat to the region's development and investment. The establishment of the G5 Sahel and the Barkhane Force are key elements of change in the Sahel's geopolitics (Dieng, n.d.). The issue of combating violent extremism remains pertinent to foreign interventions in the region, as evidenced by French President Emmanuel Macron's speech last November, confirming the end of the Barkhane process and the announcement of a new strategy in Africa. The specifics of this new strategy, including its timeline and geographical scope, remain to be detailed (Boy and Rodrigues, 2022).

#### *4. New strategies to combat extremism in the Lake Chad and the Sahel following the withdrawal of French forces from Mali and Burkina Faso*

Since the Malian junta demanded the withdrawal of French military forces from the country, following 10 years of French presence in the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel, relations between Paris and Bamako have deteriorated. On 15 August 2022, the French army completed its withdrawal from the country, and the last contingent of the Barkhane force in Malian territory crossed the border between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso amidst growing hostility towards France from the Transitional Authority and the local population. Despite some criticism of the efforts to combat terrorism by the Malian transitional authorities, they continue to reaffirm their commitment to work alongside all states that wish to fight terrorism and uphold the stability and coexistence of societies in West Africa (ICI.Radio-Canada.ca, 2022).

The French military presence in the region has been reduced by half to about 2,500 soldiers. Niger has agreed to maintain an air base in Niamey and support 250 French soldiers for its military operations on the borders of Mali and Burkina Faso (Liptako-Gourma region). The deterioration in relations between Mali and France has led to the suspension of French public and humanitarian aid to Mali, and French NGOs have relocated their activities to other Sahel countries (Ismail, 2023).

Chad appears to continue hosting a French military base and force in N'Djamena, and France had hoped to keep a Special Forces battalion in Ouagadougou. However, on 18 February 2023, the French Special Forces announced their withdrawal from

Burkina Faso. This withdrawal followed the end of the one-month period granted to France to leave the country after the collapse of the military defence agreement between Paris and Ouagadougou. Since Captain Ibrahim Traoré came to power following a coup in September 2022, ending the presence of the French force "Sabre" was a primary demand of demonstrators, who regularly gathered in Burkina Faso's capital to support the Military Council. This mistrust grew as armed terrorist groups extended their control over the country, now controlling 40% of Burkina Faso's territory. Meanwhile, Paris is looking to other countries in West Africa to support efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism, with the Gulf of Guinea being a particularly sensitive area (Bensimon, Le Cam, and Vincent, 2023).

Most of the 400 French Special Forces have already left Ouagadougou, but the French "Sabre" force has relocated to other West African countries. France maintains reserve bases in the region, notably in Côte d'Ivoire, where it has one of its largest military bases on the African continent. In Niger, much of the French military equipment from the "Barkhane" force, which withdrew from Mali in 2022, is stationed. French President Emmanuel Macron stated on 13 July 2022 that French military interventions would take a different approach. France will not repeat its history in the Sahel (Mali and Burkina Faso) with a strong military presence but will instead assist countries requesting weapons and military training (Bensimon, Le Cam, and Vincent, 2023).

In Burkina Faso today, the political and security situation is dire. The country has been experiencing a growing deterioration for several years, with the effects of successive coups and the control of terrorist groups in various areas, especially in the centre and south near the border with Benin. About 40% of Burkina Faso's territory is controlled by terrorist groups, and there are nearly two million displaced people within Burkina Faso, as well as refugees in neighbouring countries (Gravellini, 2023).

In response to the recent deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso, the transitional authorities have adopted a new strategy by supporting the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP). The authorities have recently recruited many civil society volunteers into the National Defence Corps to help the armed forces fight terrorism, a decision that concerns human rights defenders. President Traoré announced his appointment of a civil society organization leader as the head of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Nation (VDP) (BBC-Afrique, 2023).

Mali and Burkina Faso are currently pursuing strategies to achieve economic stability through the formation of several partnerships, with a preference for domestic mining companies and investments in natural resources, according to official statements by the transitional authorities of both countries.

In terms of military cooperation with external powers, Mali and Burkina Faso are looking to Russia, especially for security and military cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. It is not excluded that the Wagner Group is already supporting the Malian army in combating terrorism. Burkina Faso is now inspired by Mali's model of turning to Russia, involving Wagner's forces to strengthen its army and Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP) (Millecamps and Toulemonde,



2023). However, the President of the transition in Burkina Faso, when asked about the possible presence of Wagner mercenaries, replied that “if they claim we have Wagner, we tell them that the strength of the volunteers is like our Wagner.” (Tiéné, 2023).

The rise of anti-French sentiment in West Africa and the Sahel is striking against the backdrop of the war in Europe (Russia-Ukraine). This tension seems far from temporary, as demonstrations against French military bases are multiplying in Chad and Niger, where French troops are present. This is evidenced by the numerous diplomatic and political mistakes committed by France in the Sahel, and the continued support of the French authorities for the transitional government of Chad, despite its violation of the Transitional Charter, raising questions about the double standards in French politics.

In Niger, the fight against terrorism and reintegration efforts have adopted an approach combining military action and dialogue. This approach has gradually stabilized north-western Niger, allowing economic, agricultural, and pastoral activities to resume, as well as the distribution of food and free medical consultations in some parts of the country. In the Lake Chad basin, Nigerian authorities use dialogue and outreach policies to encourage disengagement among local populations fighting in terrorist groups, as part of a program supporting the surrender of veterans who have contributed to instability in the Diffa region (border with Nigeria), where Boko Haram is active. Niger's combined approach of dialogue and military action makes it an exception in the Central Sahel region, where the trend is toward increasing militarization of the fight against extremist groups (Koné, 2023).

On 10 February 2023, Niger suffered an attack on an army convoy in Banibangou, northeast of the Tillabéri region, bordering Mali and Burkina Faso. The attack resulted in 17 soldiers killed, 13 wounded, and 12 kidnapped, following a few months of calm in the region, which has seen several acts of terrorism over the past two years (Koné, 2023).

In Chad, since the institutional coup of 21 April 2021, the army has declared Mohamed Déby as interim president and head of the Military Council following the announcement of his father's death, Idriss Déby Itno. (“Tchad : le président promet la libération de 12 hommes accusés d’avoir tenté un ‘coup d’État’”, 2023). Demonstrations with slogans like “France, get out!” and “No to colonialism” have been held in N'Djamena against the French presence, accusing it of supporting the junta and inheriting power. Demonstrators have burned the French flag and sabotaged Total gas stations, symbolizing French influence. The Chadian transitional authority, particularly President Mohamed Déby, has been supported by the international community, France, the European Union, and the African Union, given the role of the Chadian army in combating terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad against Boko Haram (Le Figaro, 2022).

Regarding the G5 Sahel, after Mali's departure from the organization, many experts suggest that “a de facto Mali withdrawal indicates the death of the G5 Sahel.” Changes in the region, such as the withdrawal of French forces or differences within the G5 Sahel group, present opportunities for terrorist groups to demonstrate strength and expand. On 13 December 2022, the Sahelian branch of ISIS released a propaganda video

showing a ceremony of loyalty to the new caliph of the jihadist group, demonstrating its military capabilities with several hundred fighters, four months after the departure of the last French soldier from Mali (Hutton, 2022).

In the Sahel, terrorist groups operate openly. Since the French forces left the border area between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, terrorist groups have imposed control over many areas, outmatching local authorities and expanding their geographical reach. On 1 May 2023, northern Benin was hit by two attacks over consecutive days, killing twenty people in Kaoubagou and Kimbagou, likely by jihadists aiming to expand into the Gulf of Guinea (Lepidi, 2023).

The countries of the Gulf of Guinea are developing mechanisms to avoid falling into the same security issues as the Sahel. This includes the French president's visit to Cotonou, Benin, on 27 July 2022, and statements from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in December 2022, recognizing the creation of a "joint anti-terrorism task force" and the Accra Initiative as part of counter-terrorism efforts. France also announced its intention to launch a new military strategy in the coming months. The Gulf of Guinea countries are developing strategies to address societal issues and prevent recruitment by al-Qaeda or ISIS in the region (Guiffard, 2023).

### *5. Conclusion*

The international scene is marked by current events, particularly the Russo-Ukrainian war, which concentrates global geopolitical changes and power relations. These events have a major impact on the African continent, which has been combating violent extremism for decades. Observers note strong competition between forces in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and Central Africa. In this context, Russia is striving to strengthen its presence on the African continent, aiming to replace the long-standing Western influence that has yielded disastrous results. Countries affected by violent extremism and terrorism remain underdeveloped and lack sufficient armed forces to combat extremist organizations.

Terrorism poses a serious threat to the security and stability of African states, exploiting domestic conditions and international coordination for proliferation and expansion. Terrorism combines extremist ideology with the execution of terrorist operations, representing a real challenge for the African continent and its societies. Addressing this issue requires a security strategy that considers the new changes in the global geopolitical context.

Since the onset of terrorism in the region, it has been a significant factor in restructuring the geopolitical situation in the Sahel. The international community has developed counter-terrorism strategies. Terrorist groups and extremist organizations in the Sahel, such as ISIL in the Sahara, JN, Boko Haram, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, are critical elements affecting security and stability in the region and across the African continent. The extremist religious ideology propagated by these groups enhances their ability to transcend national borders and mobilize militant organizations

in different regions. These groups exploit political, economic, and social crises in the Sahel to gain popular support and affiliation.

The violence and terrorism perpetrated by these groups undermine local governments and threaten state sovereignty and legal systems. Terrorist acts can interfere with the strategic interests of foreign states and major powers, prompting them to intervene in the region, including military missions to protect their interests. One of the challenges in combating terrorism is international and regional cooperation. Regional organizations such as the African Union and alliances like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the G-5 Sahel (G5 Sahel) coordinate efforts to combat terrorism and promote security and development in the region. Strong states and international partners support these efforts in various ways, including training local security forces, sharing information and intelligence, and providing humanitarian assistance and development aid. Consequently, in the name of fighting terrorism in the Sahel, major powers have seized the opportunity to intervene militarily and build new cooperative relations with the countries of the region.

In general, combating terrorism and achieving geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel requires joint and coordinated efforts by African states and the international community (UN). These efforts should encompass military, security, economic, and political dimensions, focusing on addressing the root causes of ideological extremism and promoting stability and sustainable development in the region.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Mady Ibrahim Kante, PhD in Political Science, is a teacher-researcher committed to the promotion of peace and security and respect for human rights, particularly those of women, in Africa. With recognized expertise in issues of governance, security and conflict prevention, gender, etc., he has held various academic and advisory positions across the continent. His work has covered a wide range of fields, from academic research to practical training in peacekeeping and counterterrorism, women peace, and security. He is an active contributor to academic literature on security challenges in Africa and has received awards for his ground-breaking work. Dr. Kanté is fluent in Soninke, Bambara, French, Arabic and English.

### *Conflict of Interests*

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

### References

- Akum, F. (2021). *Sortir Des Groupes Extrémistes Violents Dans Le Bassin Du Lac Tchad*. ISS Africa. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/recherches/rapport-sur-lafrique-de-louest/sortir-des-groupes-extrémistes-violents-dans-le-bassin-du-lac-tchad>

- BBC-Afrique. 2023. "VDP - Burkina Faso : Pourquoi des activistes sont-ils enrôlés de force comme auxiliaires de l'armée ?" BBC News Afrique. March 30. (March 30, 2023). VDP - Burkina Faso : Pourquoi des activistes sont-ils enrôlés de force comme auxiliaires de l'armée ? *BBC News Afrique*. <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/cx73387p510o>
- Boy, L., & Rachel, R. (2022). Emmanuel Macron Confirme La Fin de l'opération Barkhane, et Annonce Une Nouvelle Stratégie En Afrique 'd'ici Six Mois. [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/direct-defense-suivez-le-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-nouvelle-revue-strategique-de-la-france\\_5466550.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/direct-defense-suivez-le-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-nouvelle-revue-strategique-de-la-france_5466550.html)
- Cyril, M., Le Cam, M., & Vincent, E. (February 21, 2023). Opération « Sabre » au Burkina Faso : d'une arrivée discrète à une fin amère. *Le Monde*. [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/21/operation-sabre-au-burkina-faso-d-une-arrivee-discrete-a-une-fin-amere\\_6162704\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/21/operation-sabre-au-burkina-faso-d-une-arrivee-discrete-a-une-fin-amere_6162704_3212.html)
- Dieng, M. (n.d.). *The G5 Joint Force for the Sahel Was Set up Four Years Ago: Why Progress Is Slow*. Retrieved July 25, 2024 from
- Ero, C. (July 20, 2021). *Mozambique's Insurgency Requires a Multi-Pronged Response*. Crisis Group. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/mozambiques-insurgency-requires-multi-pronged-response>
- European Council on Foreign Relations. (2023). *The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) - Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel*. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from [https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel\\_mapping/isgs](https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/isgs)
- Faye, A. K. (December 16, 2021). *Prévenir l'extrémisme Violent Au Sénégal: Les Menaces Liées à l'exploitation Aurifère*. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/recherches/rapport-sur-lafrique-de-louest/prevenir-lextremisme-violent-au-senegal-les-menaces-liees-a-lexploitation-aurifere>
- Financement Du Terrorisme En Afrique de l'Ouest*. (January 20, 2023). Le Groupe d'action financière (GAFI). Retrieved November 13, 2024 from <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/fr/publications/methodesettendances/documents/ft-en-afrique-de-louest.html>
- Guiffard, J. (2023). *Golfe de Guinée : comment ne pas retomber dans les pièges du Sahel ?* Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/expressions/golfe-de-guinee-comment-ne-pas-retomber-dans-les-pieges-du-sahel>
- Hutton, M. (2022). *Démonstration de force de l'État islamique : où en est la situation sécuritaire depuis le départ de Barkhane du Mali ?* TV5MONDE - Informations. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/demonstration-de-force-de-letat-islamique-ou-en-est-la-situation-securitaire-depuis-le>



- ICI Radio-Canada. (2022). *L'armée française quitte le Mali dans l'opprobre*. Radio-Canada. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1905646/france-mali-armee-depart>
- Ismail, M. (2023). *Niger: Dix Militaires Tués Dans Une Attaque Près de La Frontière Malienne*. Retrieved November 20, 2024 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/niger-dix-militaires-tu%C3%A9s-dans-une-attaque-pr%C3%A8s-de-la-fronti%C3%A8re-malienne/2816514>
- Jean-Marc, G. (2023). *Retrait des forces armées françaises au Burkina Faso : quelles conséquences sur la stratégie française au Sahel ?* Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.iris-france.org/173426-retrait-des-forces-armees-francaises-au-burkina-faso-quelles-consequences-sur-la-strategie-francaise-au-sahel/>
- Koné, F. R. (March 31, 2023). *Y-a-Til Une Exception Nigérienne Dans La Lutte Contre Le Terrorisme?* ISS Africa. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/iss-today/y-a-til-une-exception-nigerienne-dans-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme>
- Le Figaro. (2022). *Tchad: manifestation contre la présence française*. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/tchad-manifestation-contre-la-presence-francaise-20220514>
- Lepidi, P. (May 4, 2023). *Le nord du Bénin touché par deux nouvelles attaques meurtrières en deux jours*. Le Monde. Retrieved November 23, 2024 from [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/05/04/le-nord-du-benin-touche-par-deux-nouvelles-attaques-meurtrieres-en-deux-jours\\_6172074\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/05/04/le-nord-du-benin-touche-par-deux-nouvelles-attaques-meurtrieres-en-deux-jours_6172074_3212.html)
- Martial, P. (2023). *Sur l'intervention de la France au Mali*. Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA). Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://nouveau-parti-anticapitaliste.org/index.php/actualite/international/sur-lintervention-de-la-france-au-mali>
- Millecamps, M., & Toulemonde, M. (February 10, 2023). *Départ des Français, arrivée de Wagner... Au Mali, la donne a-t-elle vraiment changé ?* Retrieved November 13, 2024 from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1416934/politique/depart-des-francais-arrivee-de-wagner-au-mali-la-donne-a-t-elle-vraiment-change/>
- Rewards for Justice. (2023). *Islamic State West Africa Province*. Rewards For Justice. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://rewardsforjustice.net/rewards/islamic-state-west-africa-province-isis-wa/>
- Schraeder, P. J., & Crouzel, I. (2005). La guerre contre le terrorisme et la politique américaine en Afrique. *Politique Africaine*, 98(2), 42-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/polaf.098.004>
- Tchad: le président promet la libération de 12 hommes accusés d'avoir tenté un 'coup d'État*. (2023). Retrieved November 14, 2024 from <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/tchad-le-president-promet-la-liberation-de-12-hommes-accuses-davoir-tente-un-coup-detat>



- Tiéné. (2023). *Le Burkina Faso se tourne vers la Russie*. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://www.dw.com/fr/le-burkina-faso-se-tourne-vers-la-russie/a-64629100>
- United Nations. (2023). *Conseil de Sécurité: La Lutte Antiterroriste Examinée Comme Un Défi Commun Devant Donner La Priorité Aux Initiatives Régionales et Sous-Régionales*. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/fr/2023/cs15245.doc.htm>
- (2022). *أفريقيا فورونكوف: داعش لديه أهداف وتطلعات طويلة المدى، ويتوسع في وسط وجنوب وغرب أفريقيا*. أخبار الأمم المتحدة Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/08/1108682>

## Terrorism as a factor geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel region<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Mady Ibrahim Kante<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

Since the beginning of the new millennium, extremism has emerged as a major challenge facing the African continent. This phenomenon significantly impedes economic and political development, prompting individual states to fight terrorism through various initiatives. Despite these efforts, tangible results have been elusive due to the transfer of extremist ideologies across state borders, leading to external interventions under the guise of the “fight against terrorism in the Sahel.” Although jihadist terrorist groups have long been present in Africa, the Sahel countries and African organizations have not adopted effective strategies to combat violent extremism. Since 2011, terrorist organizations have seized control of areas in the Sahel, with Boko Haram conducting numerous operations that threaten regional security and stability. In response, African organizations such as the African Union and regional bodies have implemented policies and initiatives aimed at curbing the spread of violent extremism through military interventions and economic and social development projects in the Sahel. These efforts include alliances like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and G5 Sahel, comprising five Sahel countries. Given the regional and international ramifications of extremism on Western interests and economically powerful states, African nations and organizations have engaged in serious cooperation with the international community and major powers. This collaboration includes efforts with the United Nations, France, and other entities in peacekeeping missions and initiatives to combat terrorism and extremism.

### Keywords:

Africa; Sahel;  
geopolitics; terrorism;  
war; counterterrorism;  
military intervention;  
security.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.274>

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer-researcher, University of Legal and Political Sciences of Bamako.  
ORCID: 0000-0002-0732-4791; madibiramu@gmail.com.

## *1. Introduction*

The Sahel region faces enormous security and political challenges, ranging from violent extremism to terrorism. Terrorism is a crucial factor reshaping the geopolitical dynamics of this important region of the African continent. The Sahel region is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse, but it is increasingly active with terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and the Islamic State in the Sahara. This situation has multiple negative impacts on the security and stability of the entire African continent. Over the past decades, states in this region have been subjected to constant threats to their security, stability, and economic development. Terrorism is a major factor in the geopolitical restructuring of the Sahel region, where extremist organizations manipulate religion and ideology to advance their agendas. The fight against terrorism in this region has become a crucial issue for the countries of the Sahel and the international community, as governments and regional and international organizations seek to ensure security and stability in the region. However, growing security challenges and changing geopolitical dynamics are reinforcing the role of terrorism in restructuring the region's political and economic landscape.

The fight against terrorism in the Sahel requires comprehensive strategies that combine military, security, economic, and social dimensions. Local states should work in cooperation with other African states and regional and international organizations to exchange information, promote military cooperation, encourage sustainable development, and provide young people with economic opportunities to prevent them from joining terrorist groups. There is also a need to strengthen the capacities of security services and provide training and equipment for counterterrorism. Ensuring stability and security in the Sahel region is a major challenge, but it is essential for sustainable development and prosperity in these countries. Addressing the security and geopolitical challenges associated with terrorism in this region is an important step to reshape the political and economic landscape for the benefit of African countries and their future.

It is crucial to understand the role that the fight against terrorism plays in redefining the geopolitical dynamics in the Sahel. This requires a thorough study of the political, security, economic, and social transformations in the region and an analysis of the effects of terrorism on the international system and regional relations. In this context, international cooperation and regional coordination are increasingly important to address security challenges, combat terrorism, and strengthen the capacity of Sahel countries to face current threats. The question is how terrorism and its struggle became a gateway for geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel region of Africa.

The fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel is an arena of competition between the major powers of the region, encouraging each power and state to defend its interests as they seek to redefine their geopolitical objectives in the Sahel and Africa in general. One of the most pressing justifications for the geopolitical restructuring of the Sahel is to study how terrorism has become a key factor since the beginning of the new millennium for geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel.

This research aims to highlight the role of the fight against terrorism in redesigning the geopolitics of the Sahel, analyse the challenges and opportunities arising from this context, and explore strategies and measures that can be taken to enhance security and stability in the region. By understanding the multiple dimensions of this complex issue, we can develop effective strategies to combat terrorism and reduce its negative impacts on the region and Africa. The first axis will focus on African initiatives to combat terrorism, the second on foreign interventions under the name of "war against terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region," and the third will focus on new strategies to combat extremism in Lake Chad and the Sahel following the withdrawal of French forces from Mali and Burkina Faso.

## *2. African initiatives to combat terrorism in the Sahel*

Many African state authorities have become unable to control their geographical areas due to endemic conflicts and internal political tensions. This insecurity and instability have led to the emergence of terrorism and violent extremism, particularly those based on religious ideology. The countries of the African Sahel are facing numerous problems, the most significant being a very complex geopolitical situation. The main issue is not merely the problems themselves but the challenge of reaching consensus and acceptance. The difficulty lies in recognizing and accepting differences. Consequently, the challenges faced by many African countries remain invisible and unaddressed even after sixty years of independence, as they have been unable to control their desert and forest territories. Lake Chad, located in north-central Africa, spans regions of north-eastern Nigeria, the far north of Cameroon, western Chad, and south-eastern Niger. It has a unique social and cultural environment that contributes to the region's rich diversity. The peoples bordering Lake Chad have cultural values, traditional beliefs, and practices shaped by their relationship with the natural environment, which affects environmental sustainability. It is one of the poorest regions in the world, with high population growth, extreme weather conditions, and a climatic intersection. The area represents a cultural and geopolitical nexus between West Africa, Central Africa, Dry Africa, and Wet Africa. For many informed observers, the Sahel and Lake Chad are at the centre of the future of global geopolitics, considering their untapped resources and the outbreak of war in the heart of the European continent.

For many observers, Africa is at the centre of future global geopolitics due to its untapped resources and the recent conflicts in Europe. We face the direct consequences of the formation of new geopolitics in the Sahel, which has not been well thought out by African countries or the international community (including the United Nations), which has a role in promoting global peace. Terrorist groups have become influential in the geopolitical changes on the African coast, particularly in terms of controlling regions and territories. The European Union is also aware of the attempts by military or rebel groups to control central governments through coups. The desert areas of the Sahel and Sahara remain the most challenging for central administrations to assert authority.

Despite numerous security responses from countries on the African continent, terrorism and violent extremism remain significant challenges. They threaten security and political stability and hinder all development and economic initiatives. Terrorism in the Sahel and on the African continent in general has evolved; it is no longer localized but has spread from the coast to the Swahili states of West Africa, such as Ivory Coast, Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

There is no doubt that terrorism and violent extremism are complex and vary from region to region, necessitating specific responses depending on the context. The solution to this dilemma is to change the conditions that fuel violence by actively investing in the process of establishing and maintaining peace. This conviction has been further strengthened since the launch of the Regional Dialogue for the Prevention of Terrorism and Violent Extremism (IPI, 2018).

The African Union is tasked with consolidating political and security stability on the continent through regional integration and building an African force capable of countering any threats against African countries. However, the Russian-Ukrainian war has completely changed the world order, including African geopolitics, which is increasingly at the heart of global geopolitical balances.

In response, a space has been created for exchange and an approach to violence prevention in the Saharan coastal region. The International Institute of Peace, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWAS), the Swiss Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the African Centre for Terrorism Studies and Research of the African Union, supported by the Algerian government, organized the third round of regional dialogues for the prevention of terrorism and extremist violence.

With sporadic security incidents in West Africa, particularly along the Senegal-Mali border and between Burkina Faso, Benin, and Togo, concerns have increased over the potential spread of violent extremist groups into south-eastern Senegal, near the gold-rich Mali border. Extremist groups have also spread to the Gulf of Guinea (Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Togo, and Ghana), countries that have never previously experienced extremism. Consequently, states are compelled to develop new strategies to combat the expansion of extremist groups along the West African coast (Faye, 2021).

The Lake Chad basin region has been particularly troubled for some time by extremist groups. Countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are seeking to coordinate local efforts to counter the threat of extremism. To define an effective approach to rehabilitation, reintegration, and reconciliation, it is essential to understand why individuals become radicalized. To combat violent extremism, countries are trying to establish new pathways for consolidating peace and long-term stability (Akum, 2021).

Despite the presence of several hotspots of violent extremist groups in different regions of the African continent, the southern region has historically remained unaffected by these movements and operations. However, the current situation in Mozambique indicates that this perception is now outdated. The continent has become a vital area and an attractive ground, and even an emerging source, for these extremist movements.



Since October 2017, Mozambique has witnessed increasing attacks targeting both police and civilians. Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, known locally as "Al Shabaab" in Mozambique, launched its first operations on 5 October 2017, targeting a police headquarters and army barracks in the northern town of Mocímboa da Praia (Ero, 2021).

The Islamic State appears to be closely monitoring developments in this African country, particularly following the discovery of oil and the evolution of offshore natural gas volumes since the first exploratory drilling operations in 2007. Mozambique has become the fourth-largest source of natural gas in the world, emerging as an energy superpower. (Idem.)

Since March 2015, both the Sahel and Lake Chad regions have witnessed the emergence of Islamic State - West Africa Province (Rewardsforjustice, 2023) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ECFR.EU, 2023). These groups have carried out terrorist attacks targeting both armed forces and civilians. According to Martin Ewey, the presence and expansion of ISIS on the African continent have exacerbated the crisis. The group has expanded its influence across the continent, affecting all five geopolitical zones defined by the African Union. At least 20 countries in Africa experience direct ISIS activity, while more than 20 other countries serve as logistics hubs for fundraising and other resources (فورونكوف, 2022).

While the continent grapples with security and political instability, it has become a crucial area for the recruitment of young people, particularly in the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel, which are the group's largest areas of operation. ISIS, like other extremist groups, closely monitors regional developments and the discovery of resources. It finances its activities through the extraction of conventional gold, smuggling of weapons, goods and currency, drug trafficking, and other lucrative illegal activities ("Financement Du Terrorisme En Afrique de l'Ouest," n.d.).

The African continent is indeed moving towards a new concept of African geopolitics, particularly in response to terrorism. This threat is deeply rooted on the continent, not only in the Sahel region but also in other areas with weak countries that are unable to control their territories and lack good local governance.

### *3. Foreign interventions under the name of "the war on terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region of Africa"*

On the African continent, terrorism has become the main threat to peace. Due to its spread, the United Nations and other powers often justify intervening in the internal affairs of certain African countries under the pretext of combating extremist groups or terrorists. The African continent is currently the region most affected by the spread of extremism and religious violence, making it a vital area for extremists over the last two decades. Consequently, there is growing interest from the international community and major powers in fighting extremism in Africa, leading to increased efforts to combat extremist groups on the continent.

Foreign intervention in Africa is not new. Since the independence of African states, many countries have experienced violence and conflict (civil wars), prompting the deployment of various UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan. In 1960, the first peacekeeping operation in Africa was established in the Republic of the Congo to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian troops, assist the government in restoring law and order, and provide technical assistance.

Since extremist groups began taking control of territories in African countries, new UN missions with expanded mandates have been deployed. For instance, MINUSMA in Mali was established not only to maintain peace but also to help tackle extremism that seeks to alter the country's governance system. Since then, thousands of peacekeepers have been deployed to Africa, with the most recent peace process established in 2014 in the Central African Republic. Violent extremism undoubtedly has political, religious, and economic dimensions. Today's reality shows that the fight against extremism has sometimes been manipulated to achieve purposes and interests that have inadvertently contributed to the growing spread of extremism and religious hegemony.

Since the launch of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, several related programs have been launched around the world to reduce the growing threat of violent extremism. Many programs to prevent and combat violent extremism are implemented, in terms of the involvement of local civil society organizations, and international NGOs, which play an important role on the continent.

Since the launch of the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, several related programs have been initiated worldwide to reduce the threat of violent extremism. Many programs to prevent and combat violent extremism have been implemented, involving local civil society organizations and international NGOs, which play a crucial role on the continent (United-Nations, 2023).

Fragile states and weak governments in Africa continue to experience ongoing violence, including the use of extremism to trigger civil wars, political violence, insurgencies, and terrorism. In 2020, 20 of the 46 sub-Saharan countries were engaged in some form of armed conflict resulting from extremism (United-Nations, 2023).

The Sahel, Sahara, and East Africa regions have been prime focuses of U.S. efforts to combat terrorism in Africa, driven by the presence of extremist groups threatening U.S. and Western interests (Schraeder and Crouzel, 2005). American views on counterterrorism in Africa align with those of other Western countries, considering Africa's future wealth and strategic positions. The Sahel countries, located in the Sahara Desert and West Africa, are rich in oil, gas, gold, uranium, and other minerals (United-Nations, 2023).

In response to the military intervention in Mali following the adoption of UN Resolution 2085, France intervened against extremist groups with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This marked the first

cooperation between ECOWAS and France in combating terrorism. The primary objective was to support Mali in fighting terrorist groups advancing southward. However, while the official objective was geographically limited to Mali, the actual goals extended beyond its borders, as extremism is a cross-border phenomenon threatening French interests throughout the Sahel and West Africa. It can be argued that the strategic objective of the intervention in Mali was to protect French security, economic, and political interests in the Sahel and West Africa (Martial, 2013).

France's military intervention in Mali began with Operation Serval, later replaced by the Barkhane force in the Sahel region. France recognized that all Sahelian states were suffering from violent extremism spreading from Mali to the rest of the region, particularly the Sahel and West Africa. According to some security officials in the Sahel states, France decided to establish a sub-regional organization with a military force to help Sahelian states combat violent extremism, which poses a real threat to the region's development and investment. The establishment of the G5 Sahel and the Barkhane Force are key elements of change in the Sahel's geopolitics (Dieng, n.d.). The issue of combating violent extremism remains pertinent to foreign interventions in the region, as evidenced by French President Emmanuel Macron's speech last November, confirming the end of the Barkhane process and the announcement of a new strategy in Africa. The specifics of this new strategy, including its timeline and geographical scope, remain to be detailed (Boy and Rodrigues, 2022).

#### *4. New strategies to combat extremism in the Lake Chad and the Sahel following the withdrawal of French forces from Mali and Burkina Faso*

Since the Malian junta demanded the withdrawal of French military forces from the country, following 10 years of French presence in the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel, relations between Paris and Bamako have deteriorated. On 15 August 2022, the French army completed its withdrawal from the country, and the last contingent of the Barkhane force in Malian territory crossed the border between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso amidst growing hostility towards France from the Transitional Authority and the local population. Despite some criticism of the efforts to combat terrorism by the Malian transitional authorities, they continue to reaffirm their commitment to work alongside all states that wish to fight terrorism and uphold the stability and coexistence of societies in West Africa (ICI.Radio-Canada.ca, 2022).

The French military presence in the region has been reduced by half to about 2,500 soldiers. Niger has agreed to maintain an air base in Niamey and support 250 French soldiers for its military operations on the borders of Mali and Burkina Faso (Liptako-Gourma region). The deterioration in relations between Mali and France has led to the suspension of French public and humanitarian aid to Mali, and French NGOs have relocated their activities to other Sahel countries (Ismail, 2023).

Chad appears to continue hosting a French military base and force in N'Djamena, and France had hoped to keep a Special Forces battalion in Ouagadougou. However, on 18 February 2023, the French Special Forces announced their withdrawal from

Burkina Faso. This withdrawal followed the end of the one-month period granted to France to leave the country after the collapse of the military defence agreement between Paris and Ouagadougou. Since Captain Ibrahim Traoré came to power following a coup in September 2022, ending the presence of the French force "Sabre" was a primary demand of demonstrators, who regularly gathered in Burkina Faso's capital to support the Military Council. This mistrust grew as armed terrorist groups extended their control over the country, now controlling 40% of Burkina Faso's territory. Meanwhile, Paris is looking to other countries in West Africa to support efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism, with the Gulf of Guinea being a particularly sensitive area (Bensimon, Le Cam, and Vincent, 2023).

Most of the 400 French Special Forces have already left Ouagadougou, but the French "Sabre" force has relocated to other West African countries. France maintains reserve bases in the region, notably in Côte d'Ivoire, where it has one of its largest military bases on the African continent. In Niger, much of the French military equipment from the "Barkhane" force, which withdrew from Mali in 2022, is stationed. French President Emmanuel Macron stated on 13 July 2022 that French military interventions would take a different approach. France will not repeat its history in the Sahel (Mali and Burkina Faso) with a strong military presence but will instead assist countries requesting weapons and military training (Bensimon, Le Cam, and Vincent, 2023).

In Burkina Faso today, the political and security situation is dire. The country has been experiencing a growing deterioration for several years, with the effects of successive coups and the control of terrorist groups in various areas, especially in the centre and south near the border with Benin. About 40% of Burkina Faso's territory is controlled by terrorist groups, and there are nearly two million displaced people within Burkina Faso, as well as refugees in neighbouring countries (Gravellini, 2023).

In response to the recent deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso, the transitional authorities have adopted a new strategy by supporting the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP). The authorities have recently recruited many civil society volunteers into the National Defence Corps to help the armed forces fight terrorism, a decision that concerns human rights defenders. President Traoré announced his appointment of a civil society organization leader as the head of the Volunteers for the Defence of the Nation (VDP) (BBC-Afrique, 2023).

Mali and Burkina Faso are currently pursuing strategies to achieve economic stability through the formation of several partnerships, with a preference for domestic mining companies and investments in natural resources, according to official statements by the transitional authorities of both countries.

In terms of military cooperation with external powers, Mali and Burkina Faso are looking to Russia, especially for security and military cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. It is not excluded that the Wagner Group is already supporting the Malian army in combating terrorism. Burkina Faso is now inspired by Mali's model of turning to Russia, involving Wagner's forces to strengthen its army and Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP) (Millecamps and Toulemonde,

2023). However, the President of the transition in Burkina Faso, when asked about the possible presence of Wagner mercenaries, replied that “if they claim we have Wagner, we tell them that the strength of the volunteers is like our Wagner.” (Tiéné, 2023).

The rise of anti-French sentiment in West Africa and the Sahel is striking against the backdrop of the war in Europe (Russia-Ukraine). This tension seems far from temporary, as demonstrations against French military bases are multiplying in Chad and Niger, where French troops are present. This is evidenced by the numerous diplomatic and political mistakes committed by France in the Sahel, and the continued support of the French authorities for the transitional government of Chad, despite its violation of the Transitional Charter, raising questions about the double standards in French politics.

In Niger, the fight against terrorism and reintegration efforts have adopted an approach combining military action and dialogue. This approach has gradually stabilized north-western Niger, allowing economic, agricultural, and pastoral activities to resume, as well as the distribution of food and free medical consultations in some parts of the country. In the Lake Chad basin, Nigerian authorities use dialogue and outreach policies to encourage disengagement among local populations fighting in terrorist groups, as part of a program supporting the surrender of veterans who have contributed to instability in the Diffa region (border with Nigeria), where Boko Haram is active. Niger's combined approach of dialogue and military action makes it an exception in the Central Sahel region, where the trend is toward increasing militarization of the fight against extremist groups (Koné, 2023).

On 10 February 2023, Niger suffered an attack on an army convoy in Banibangou, northeast of the Tillabéri region, bordering Mali and Burkina Faso. The attack resulted in 17 soldiers killed, 13 wounded, and 12 kidnapped, following a few months of calm in the region, which has seen several acts of terrorism over the past two years (Koné, 2023).

In Chad, since the institutional coup of 21 April 2021, the army has declared Mohamed Déby as interim president and head of the Military Council following the announcement of his father's death, Idriss Déby Itno. (“Tchad : le président promet la libération de 12 hommes accusés d’avoir tenté un ‘coup d’État’”, 2023). Demonstrations with slogans like “France, get out!” and “No to colonialism” have been held in N'Djamena against the French presence, accusing it of supporting the junta and inheriting power. Demonstrators have burned the French flag and sabotaged Total gas stations, symbolizing French influence. The Chadian transitional authority, particularly President Mohamed Déby, has been supported by the international community, France, the European Union, and the African Union, given the role of the Chadian army in combating terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad against Boko Haram (Le Figaro, 2022).

Regarding the G5 Sahel, after Mali's departure from the organization, many experts suggest that “a de facto Mali withdrawal indicates the death of the G5 Sahel.” Changes in the region, such as the withdrawal of French forces or differences within the G5 Sahel group, present opportunities for terrorist groups to demonstrate strength and expand. On 13 December 2022, the Sahelian branch of ISIS released a propaganda video



showing a ceremony of loyalty to the new caliph of the jihadist group, demonstrating its military capabilities with several hundred fighters, four months after the departure of the last French soldier from Mali (Hutton, 2022).

In the Sahel, terrorist groups operate openly. Since the French forces left the border area between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, terrorist groups have imposed control over many areas, outmatching local authorities and expanding their geographical reach. On 1 May 2023, northern Benin was hit by two attacks over consecutive days, killing twenty people in Kaoubagou and Kimbagou, likely by jihadists aiming to expand into the Gulf of Guinea (Lepidi, 2023).

The countries of the Gulf of Guinea are developing mechanisms to avoid falling into the same security issues as the Sahel. This includes the French president's visit to Cotonou, Benin, on 27 July 2022, and statements from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in December 2022, recognizing the creation of a "joint anti-terrorism task force" and the Accra Initiative as part of counter-terrorism efforts. France also announced its intention to launch a new military strategy in the coming months. The Gulf of Guinea countries are developing strategies to address societal issues and prevent recruitment by al-Qaeda or ISIS in the region (Guiffard, 2023).

### *5. Conclusion*

The international scene is marked by current events, particularly the Russo-Ukrainian war, which concentrates global geopolitical changes and power relations. These events have a major impact on the African continent, which has been combating violent extremism for decades. Observers note strong competition between forces in Africa, particularly in the Sahel and Central Africa. In this context, Russia is striving to strengthen its presence on the African continent, aiming to replace the long-standing Western influence that has yielded disastrous results. Countries affected by violent extremism and terrorism remain underdeveloped and lack sufficient armed forces to combat extremist organizations.

Terrorism poses a serious threat to the security and stability of African states, exploiting domestic conditions and international coordination for proliferation and expansion. Terrorism combines extremist ideology with the execution of terrorist operations, representing a real challenge for the African continent and its societies. Addressing this issue requires a security strategy that considers the new changes in the global geopolitical context.

Since the onset of terrorism in the region, it has been a significant factor in restructuring the geopolitical situation in the Sahel. The international community has developed counter-terrorism strategies. Terrorist groups and extremist organizations in the Sahel, such as ISIL in the Sahara, JN, Boko Haram, and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, are critical elements affecting security and stability in the region and across the African continent. The extremist religious ideology propagated by these groups enhances their ability to transcend national borders and mobilize militant organizations

in different regions. These groups exploit political, economic, and social crises in the Sahel to gain popular support and affiliation.

The violence and terrorism perpetrated by these groups undermine local governments and threaten state sovereignty and legal systems. Terrorist acts can interfere with the strategic interests of foreign states and major powers, prompting them to intervene in the region, including military missions to protect their interests. One of the challenges in combating terrorism is international and regional cooperation. Regional organizations such as the African Union and alliances like the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the G-5 Sahel (G5 Sahel) coordinate efforts to combat terrorism and promote security and development in the region. Strong states and international partners support these efforts in various ways, including training local security forces, sharing information and intelligence, and providing humanitarian assistance and development aid. Consequently, in the name of fighting terrorism in the Sahel, major powers have seized the opportunity to intervene militarily and build new cooperative relations with the countries of the region.

In general, combating terrorism and achieving geopolitical restructuring in the Sahel requires joint and coordinated efforts by African states and the international community (UN). These efforts should encompass military, security, economic, and political dimensions, focusing on addressing the root causes of ideological extremism and promoting stability and sustainable development in the region.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Mady Ibrahim Kante, PhD in Political Science, is a teacher-researcher committed to the promotion of peace and security and respect for human rights, particularly those of women, in Africa. With recognized expertise in issues of governance, security and conflict prevention, gender, etc., he has held various academic and advisory positions across the continent. His work has covered a wide range of fields, from academic research to practical training in peacekeeping and counterterrorism, women peace, and security. He is an active contributor to academic literature on security challenges in Africa and has received awards for his ground-breaking work. Dr. Kanté is fluent in Soninke, Bambara, French, Arabic and English.

### *Conflict of Interests*

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

### References

- Akum, F. (2021). *Sortir Des Groupes Extrémistes Violents Dans Le Bassin Du Lac Tchad*. ISS Africa. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/recherches/rapport-sur-lafrique-de-louest/sortir-des-groupes-extremistes-violents-dans-le-bassin-du-lac-tchad>

- BBC-Afrique. 2023. "VDP - Burkina Faso : Pourquoi des activistes sont-ils enrôlés de force comme auxiliaires de l'armée ?" BBC News Afrique. March 30. (March 30, 2023). VDP - Burkina Faso : Pourquoi des activistes sont-ils enrôlés de force comme auxiliaires de l'armée ? *BBC News Afrique*. <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/articles/cx73387p510o>
- Boy, L., & Rachel, R. (2022). Emmanuel Macron Confirme La Fin de l'opération Barkhane, et Annonce Une Nouvelle Stratégie En Afrique 'd'ici Six Mois. [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/direct-defense-suivez-le-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-nouvelle-revue-strategique-de-la-france\\_5466550.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/direct-defense-suivez-le-discours-d-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-nouvelle-revue-strategique-de-la-france_5466550.html)
- Cyril, M., Le Cam, M., & Vincent, E. (February 21, 2023). Opération « Sabre » au Burkina Faso : d'une arrivée discrète à une fin amère. *Le Monde*. [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/21/operation-sabre-au-burkina-faso-d-une-arrivee-discrete-a-une-fin-amere\\_6162704\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/21/operation-sabre-au-burkina-faso-d-une-arrivee-discrete-a-une-fin-amere_6162704_3212.html)
- Dieng, M. (n.d.). *The G5 Joint Force for the Sahel Was Set up Four Years Ago: Why Progress Is Slow*. Retrieved July 25, 2024 from
- Ero, C. (July 20, 2021). *Mozambique's Insurgency Requires a Multi-Pronged Response*. Crisis Group. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/mozambiques-insurgency-requires-multi-pronged-response>
- European Council on Foreign Relations. (2023). *The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) - Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel*. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from [https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel\\_mapping/isgs](https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/isgs)
- Faye, A. K. (December 16, 2021). *Prévenir l'extrémisme Violent Au Sénégal: Les Menaces Liées à l'exploitation Aurifère*. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/recherches/rapport-sur-lafrique-de-louest/prevenir-lextremisme-violent-au-senegal-les-menaces-liees-a-lexploitation-aurifere>
- Financement Du Terrorisme En Afrique de l'Ouest*. (January 20, 2023). Le Groupe d'action financière (GAFI). Retrieved November 13, 2024 from <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/fr/publications/methodesettendances/documents/ft-en-afrique-de-louest.html>
- Guiffard, J. (2023). *Golfe de Guinée : comment ne pas retomber dans les pièges du Sahel ?* Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/expressions/golfe-de-guinee-comment-ne-pas-retomber-dans-les-pieges-du-sahel>
- Hutton, M. (2022). *Démonstration de force de l'État islamique : où en est la situation sécuritaire depuis le départ de Barkhane du Mali ?* TV5MONDE - Informations. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/demonstration-de-force-de-letat-islamique-ou-en-est-la-situation-securitaire-depuis-le>



- ICI Radio-Canada. (2022). *L'armée française quitte le Mali dans l'opprobre*. Radio-Canada. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1905646/france-mali-armee-depart>
- Ismail, M. (2023). *Niger: Dix Militaires Tués Dans Une Attaque Près de La Frontière Malienne*. Retrieved November 20, 2024 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/niger-dix-militaires-tu%C3%A9s-dans-une-attaque-pr%C3%A8s-de-la-fronti%C3%A8re-malienne/2816514>
- Jean-Marc, G. (2023). *Retrait des forces armées françaises au Burkina Faso : quelles conséquences sur la stratégie française au Sahel ?* Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.iris-france.org/173426-retrait-des-forces-armees-francaises-au-burkina-faso-queelles-consequences-sur-la-strategie-francaise-au-sahel/>
- Koné, F. R. (March 31, 2023). *Y-a-Til Une Exception Nigérienne Dans La Lutte Contre Le Terrorisme ?* ISS Africa. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://issafrica.org/fr/iss-today/y-a-til-une-exception-nigerienne-dans-la-lutte-contre-le-terrorisme>
- Le Figaro. (2022). *Tchad: manifestation contre la présence française*. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/tchad-manifestation-contre-la-presence-francaise-20220514>
- Lepidi, P. (May 4, 2023). *Le nord du Bénin touché par deux nouvelles attaques meurtrières en deux jours*. Le Monde. Retrieved November 23, 2024 from [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/05/04/le-nord-du-benin-touche-par-deux-nouvelles-attaques-meurtrieres-en-deux-jours\\_6172074\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/05/04/le-nord-du-benin-touche-par-deux-nouvelles-attaques-meurtrieres-en-deux-jours_6172074_3212.html)
- Martial, P. (2023). *Sur l'intervention de la France au Mali*. Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA). Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://nouveau-parti-anticapitaliste.org/index.php/actualite/international/sur-lintervention-de-la-france-au-mali>
- Millecamps, M., & Toulemonde, M. (February 10, 2023). *Départ des Français, arrivée de Wagner... Au Mali, la donne a-t-elle vraiment changé ?* Retrieved November 13, 2024 from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1416934/politique/depart-des-francais-arrivee-de-wagner-au-mali-la-donne-a-t-elle-vraiment-change/>
- Rewards for Justice. (2023). *Islamic State West Africa Province*. Rewards For Justice. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://rewardsforjustice.net/rewards/islamic-state-west-africa-province-isis-wa/>
- Schraeder, P. J., & Crouzel, I. (2005). La guerre contre le terrorisme et la politique américaine en Afrique. *Politique Africaine*, 98(2), 42-62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/polaf.098.004>
- Tchad: le président promet la libération de 12 hommes accusés d'avoir tenté un 'coup d'État*. (2023). Retrieved November 14, 2024 from <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/tchad-le-president-promet-la-liberation-de-12-hommes-accuses-davoir-tente-un-coup-detat>

- Tiéné. (2023). *Le Burkina Faso se tourne vers la Russie*. Retrieved November 11, 2024 from <https://www.dw.com/fr/le-burkina-faso-se-tourne-vers-la-russie/a-64629100>
- United Nations. (2023). *Conseil de Sécurité: La Lutte Antiterroriste Examinée Comme Un Défi Commun Devant Donner La Priorité Aux Initiatives Régionales et Sous-Régionales*. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/fr/2023/cs15245.doc.htm>
- (2022). *أفريقيا فورونكوف: داعش لديه أهداف وتطلعات طويلة المدى، ويتوسع في وسط وجنوب وغرب أفريقيا*. أخبار الأمم المتحدة Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/08/1108682>





## Coordinated U.S. Foreign Assistance and Effective Counterterrorism in Africa: Considering the Efficacy of U.S. and Partner Engagement against Al Qaeda's Civilian Engagement Strategy in West Africa<sup>1</sup>

Tammy Lynn Palacios<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The international community can better partner with African countries and more effectively counter and prevent terrorism in Africa by implementing two changes to U.S. strategy. First, by crafting strategies that counter the kinetic and non-kinetic operations of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups that allow for their territorial expansion and control. Second, by better coordinating U.S. foreign aid/development with security assistance and security cooperation efforts and conducting them with the partner country in a way that supports partner civilian and military institutions. At current, U.S. security assistance efforts better connect to and strengthen the military/security apparatus than U.S. development assistance efforts do - this is due to risk averse bureaucracy that ultimately erodes democratic structures and processes rather than strengthening them. Additionally, U.S. tendencies to work directly with civil society organizations may not strengthen civil society pathways to ministries or the relevant offices at the district or national levels. U.S. and other international partners should work through and support a hub where local civil society and local level authorities can engage with and work with the district and national level governments. This strategy will strengthen good governance and democratic institutions. Additionally, terrorism prevention and counterterrorism strategies that directly address and are formed in response to both active kinetic and non-kinetic operations of (al Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated) terrorist groups will better protect civilians as well as implementers of development and security assistance.

### Keywords:

Al-Qaeda; terrorism prevention; counterterrorism; West Africa; foreign assistance; security assistance; democratic backsliding.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.294>

<sup>2</sup>Senior Analyst, Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism, New Lines Institute; ORCID: 0009-0007-5827-8012; [tpalacios@newlinesinstitute.org](mailto:tpalacios@newlinesinstitute.org).

## *Introduction*

West Africa has become one of the most active terrorist hot zones in the world. Though, Africa is no stranger to al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated terrorist groups - al Shabaab has long taken root in Somalia, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram have been staple terrorist groups in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin for almost 15-years. The dominant terrorist actor in West Africa for the past few years, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) was borne from (and has ultimately surpassed in activity) al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in North Africa. The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) has also peppered across Africa, with affiliates operating in conflict and terrorist group ecosystems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Yemen, Nigeria, the Sahel, and in East Africa and South Africa.

Security and governance in West Africa have been topics of concern and international attention for the past few years. The Sahel has risen as one of the most active terrorist zones in the world and West Africa has seen repeated coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and most recently - Niger. The Global Terrorism Index published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace reported that the Sahel was responsible for 43% of global terrorism deaths in 2023, a 7% increase from the year previous and surpassing terrorism deaths in the MENA region (Pandit, 2023). The world watched as France withdrew its troops from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger after nearly a decade of leading counterterrorism operations and an international coalition with the objectives of eradicating the growing terrorist threat and stabilizing the region. The United Nations also recently withdrew its peace and stabilization mission in Mali (UN News, 2023). And the United States completed its withdrawal from Niger almost four months early, initially charted for December of 2024 (Reuters, 2024).

The United States (U.S.) withdrew from Niger, following Niger being the location of the latest coup in West Africa. The U.S. must follow laws, including Section 7008 which prohibits U.S. foreign assistance be provided to militarily overthrown governments (SMM). It should be noted that the U.S. has actively supported African countries diplomatically and economically for years, and that real impact and progress has been seen over the course of this foreign assistance. The United States Department of State (DoS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and United States Department of Defence (DoD) have and continue to deploy foreign assistance and aid/development programs as well as security assistance and security cooperation in the region and across the continent. U.S. military basing lost in Niger is charted to move into Côte d'Ivoire (also known as the Ivory Coast) and possibly Benin (Jeune Afrique, 2024). These two countries bookend Ghana, the United States' primary partner in Coastal West Africa (CWA). Ghana has become an increasingly important partner to the United States. Also in West Africa, the United States has also experienced significant connection and long-standing relations with Nigeria, warmly referred to as 'Big Brother' to many African countries.

If the United States has been actively working to support civil society with the like of United States Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives



(USAID-OTI) programming, including in the northern regions of CWA, and delivering security assistance and training across West Africa – why is West Africa home to one of the most active terrorist hot zones in the world? And why has the region experienced further democratic backsliding?

This paper will explore why U.S. foreign aid/development and security assistance, and security cooperation has not effectively countered al Qaeda and ISIS in West Africa and why the region continues to experience coup d'états as recently as last year. Additionally, how U.S. foreign aid/development and security assistance and security cooperation may be adjusted to more effectively prevent and counter al Qaeda and ISIS in the region, support democratic values and governance, and increase the stability and growth of the Sahel and West Africa as a whole – and U.S. partnerships with our African partners.

### *U.S. Foreign Assistance in West Africa*

Over the past two years, Africa has experienced a steady stream of visits from U.S. Representatives; notably, General Langley of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee. Assistant Secretary Phee spoke of this deepened collaboration with Coastal West Africa and Nigeria in her remarks to Congress in the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing “FY 2025 Budget Request for Africa” in May of 2024. This and recent adjustments in additional foreign aid and humanitarian assistance to sub-Saharan Africa indicate increased U.S. interest in reaffirming U.S. commitment with our African partners (USAID, The United States Announces Nearly \$176 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for West Africa, 2024; USAID, United States Announces More Than \$64 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2024; USAID, United States Announces Nearly \$536 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa, 2024).

A message that has been impressed multiple times to Congress, including by General Langley, Commander of AFRICOM in his testimony and statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee March 21, 2024. Gen. Langley framed the threat and outlined the whole-of-government approach necessary to address the threats and challenges in Africa, “Threats from within the continent are transforming into threats to America's interests and allies. Terrorism, poverty, food and water insecurity, protracted conflict, climate change, and mass human migration disproportionately shatter African lives. Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared burden, with African nations at the helm of concerted international efforts and a U.S. whole of nation contribution that produces sustainable outcomes.” (Langley, 2024). Steps must be taken to allow for whole-of-government approaches to be implemented.

This increase in political participation and representation follows the publication of the inter-agency implementation plans for the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) this Spring (Department of State, United States Agency of International Development, Department of Defence, Department of Treasury, U.S.

Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, 2024). SPCPS is intimately connected to and supports the Global Fragility Act (GFA) a bipartisan policy passed in 2019 that focuses on soft power and prevention. The GFA is being piloted in Haiti, Libya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, and the sub-region of Coastal West Africa, which includes Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo. In considering these policy and political moves, in addition to relevant hearings on the Hill during this period of time, represents Washington D.C.'s acknowledgement of the seriousness of stability in West Africa, supporting democratic institutions and values, and countering of terrorist groups affiliated with al Qaeda and ISIS.

The U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) is especially well suited and situated to support stability and to help strengthen West African states and communities to be less susceptible to engaging in violent extremism and with terrorist groups in West Africa. The inter-agency Secretariat is a formal mechanism that has been created to not just support and encourage inter-agency collaboration and communication – but serves as a platform that demands it. This Secretariat is comprised of DoS, USAID, and DoD and is staffed by experienced and hard-working representatives from each agency eager to affect positive change and who are motivated by outcomes. While well situated, the GFA Secretariat needs to be better supported at the highest levels as the inter-agency mechanism does still face bureaucratic hurdles and red tape. This bureaucracy and incomplete commitment to supporting this mechanism frustrates timeliness and detracts from the support needed for SPCPS to reach its full potential and to be fully effective in preventing conflict and promoting stability in West Africa. The GFA Secretariat should be emulated and greatly supported in recognition of its representation of the re-structuring necessary to see greater inter-agency and whole-of-government support.

The United States has enjoyed decades of relationships and support or assistance programming and missions to West Africa. This connection is represented in over two decades of State Partnership Programs (SPP) featuring the United States National Guard units, joint exercises such as Flintlock, civilian affairs and special forces DoD missions, and millions in aid implemented by USAID and DoS as well as international non-governmental organization implementers and infrastructure compacts implemented by U.S.-associated entities such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Flintlock 24 saw over 1,300 participants from 15 NATO Allies and partners and international forces – a huge success for AFRICOM partnership efforts in North and West Africa (NATO, 2024).

## *The Terrorism Threat*

### *Method*

The author re-collated the ACLED data from the “notes” column to represent “who”, “where”, and “tags”. Author parsed out any and all qualitative and descriptive notes

on who was the target or victim of the attack for each row, such as gender, age, title or position, and/or association. An example of “who” is “employee of the mayor’s office” and “girl” or “pastor”. The author added column “where” re-collated the descriptive markers of where in the town or village or road that an attack took place, parsed from the ACLED “notes” column. Common markers of “where” include “market”, “road”, and “home”. The author added “tags” column represents author trends analysis and represented a row-by-row calculated research method and approach to analysing the activity of the actors over time, allowing for more specific and data supported analysis. The author re-collating allowed for unique analysis to be formulated on who was being targeted, at what times of day and where in the town or village they were being targeted (who was often targeted in night raids, for example – key person abductions and off-duty soldiers and volunteer fighters at their homes) – with the intent of parsing the possible trends and reasons why the perpetrator group was acting in these ways. The author reviewed their re-collating and row-by-row analysis ten times to ensure accuracy, due to the large nature of the dataset.

### *Al Qaeda and ISIS – the Global Terrorism Landscape*

Al Qaeda and ISIS as global networks are now better described as movements, following the great decapitation and unravelling of al Qaeda Central and ISIS-Central – due to the success and leadership of the United States’ counterterrorism efforts since 9/11. The productivity and growth of al Qaeda and ISIS as global movements, and thus the success of their respective associated groups, has been affected by the perceived strength and sustainability of each respective movement. The movement (al Qaeda or ISIS) that postures to be more capable and more likely to succeed receives a greater amount of support in recruits, donors (state and individual), and likely greater supportive readership of propaganda.

Al Qaeda is predictable in its unpredictability. Al Qaeda’s current capabilities and structures are not what make it dangerous; history has shown it is more dangerous to underestimate the future implications of al Qaeda’s current actions. Though, in the case of the Sahel sub-region of West Africa – JNIM has proven that its capabilities and strategies do make it dangerous as it has been dangerous and successful in its territorial expansion since late 2019. So, in the case of assessing the threat of al Qaeda globally and/or the threat of JNIM – both are slated to be of concern in the future, and JNIM has proven to be of concern (threat) today. In the case of prioritization, the United States for example has prioritized other geopolitical events and conflicts over the rise of al Qaeda in the Sahel, and over countering terrorism in general. Unfortunately, the emergence of a more dominant threat does not dissipate the long-term threat of al Qaeda’s re-emergence – and rather, it can be expected for that threat to increase in danger the longer it is ignored or de-prioritized.

While it may not be conducive for the U.S. to physically implement themselves, better understanding the implications of al Qaeda’s local operations is integral for sustainable counterterrorism policy. Al Qaeda must be examined as a network and movement, as



well as by its parts. Sustainable counterterrorism solutions lie in a reconceptualised understanding of al Qaeda's motivational drivers for its operational strategies, and their implications. As militant jihadist terrorist groups co-opt local conflicts and root themselves into local communities, they extend the life of the jihadist movement. Al Qaeda's local efforts will root and spread as the future of the Salafi-jihadi movement - unless the international counterterrorism community better understand al Qaeda's local strategies and work to more intentionally mitigate and counteract them.

The relevance of al Qaeda-affiliate JNIM's continued growth and expansion, and the vibrant activity and nature of the al Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated landscape in West Africa, especially the Sahel sub-region – is in its relevance to the global terrorism landscape.

JNIM has implemented guidance received from a veteran member of al Qaeda leadership to refrain from conducting extreme attacks against civilians in Mali (Lister, What has happened to al-Qaeda?, 2016). JNIM's following of this guidance is indicative of the local-cognition and local operational strategies common to al Qaeda affiliates, especially those closer connected or who have received guidance from al Qaeda veteran era members.

### *The Strength of One Supports the Strength of Any*

Many of al Qaeda and ISIS's affiliated groups pursue local agendas and objectives and their membership is native to the locale in which they operate. While this is true, a number of affiliated groups were borne from veteran era strong groups and have received guidance and leadership (whether long-standing or visits here and there) from al Qaeda or ISIS individuals respectively who are key members of each global network/movement. While the global movements/networks are no longer as hierarchical as one global network/organization, and that hierarchy and organizational structure is now more localized – the key members of the international networks/movements still exert great influence and guide the strategies and operations of the individual groups. The effect this veteran connection and guidance has on the local group differs depending on their parent global network (whether they are affiliated with al Qaeda or ISIS).

While neither JNIM nor ISGS groups or fighters currently hold external targets, even the perceived success and growth of these groups against any national or international people and governmental or security entities, including Wagner (rebranded as Africa Corps) allows for growth of the global terrorism landscape. The success and strength of any increases the strength of both, and thus either al Qaeda or ISIS respectively.

### *Al Qaeda-affiliate JNIM's Operations*

JNIM is currently one of the fastest growing terrorist groups around the world and is responsible for about 80% of the terrorist activity in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa, according to author analysis of author re-collated data exported from ACLED in 2023 and 2024 of conflict data collected on al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated group perpetrated

activity from January 1, 2022, to July 20, 2024 (ACLED, 2022-2024). Author analysis was done with a focus on violence perpetrated by these groups unto civilians. Violence against civilians does not include activity perpetrated by civilians, activity perpetrated by al Qaeda or ISIS-affiliated groups unto fighters while they were off-duty, or activity of these groups amongst or to each other nor against or between these groups and local militias or groups, state, international or volunteer fighters' forces.

Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa have updated their strategies and modus operandi faster than the U.S. and the broader terrorism analysis community have tracked it. Counterterrorism operations have not adjusted or updated at the rate that the groups have adjusted and updated their strategy.

There are three reasons that contribute to the overall ineffectiveness of counterterrorism operations up until this point. First, the sheer broadness of the geography, when coupled with disparate state and national security presence in entire regions of Sahelian countries, has allowed for al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates to be swept around rather than fully impacted or pressured by counterterrorism operations.

Second, not involving all actors who provide governance, justice, law, security and other services. The farther one gets from the capital cities – the more these actors look like institutions, entities or individuals who are not connected to or sent down from the national government. Many analysts refer to a power vacuum formed by instability and lack of national government and security presence, but there are additional reasons that there is disconnect between the actions of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups in the Sahel and the counterterrorism strategies and operations as they have been enacted over the past decade.

Third, the terrorist groups' operations that have allowed for their growth in capabilities and territorial expansion. The al Qaeda-affiliate, JNIM, has pursued an intentionally low-kinetic "abduction & release strategy" (Palacios, 2024) that encourages civilians from communicating with and supporting counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies of any kind. JNIM's civilian engagement strategy further ostracizes civilians, especially in the rural parts of the countries already disconnected from the capital cities and national institutions.

The complexity of the landscape and lack of a comprehensive counterterrorism approach when met with a terrorist group's operational strategy that is nuanced and is being updated – results in ineffective counterterrorism.

### *JNIM vs ISGS Civilian Engagement*

The al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in the Sahel have distinct operational strategies. Overall, JNIM works with and leverages civilian direction and influence, while ISGS pursues a stereotypically brash ISIS-style civilian engagement strategy. JNIM, in their territorial expansion and population control efforts – had offered a less kinetic opportunity to civilians (especially key individuals of influence, such as pastors, imams, mayors, and chiefs) if they were to comply with their demands and pay ransom to be released. This less kinetic opportunity is becoming more lethal as the terrorism landscape is shifting,

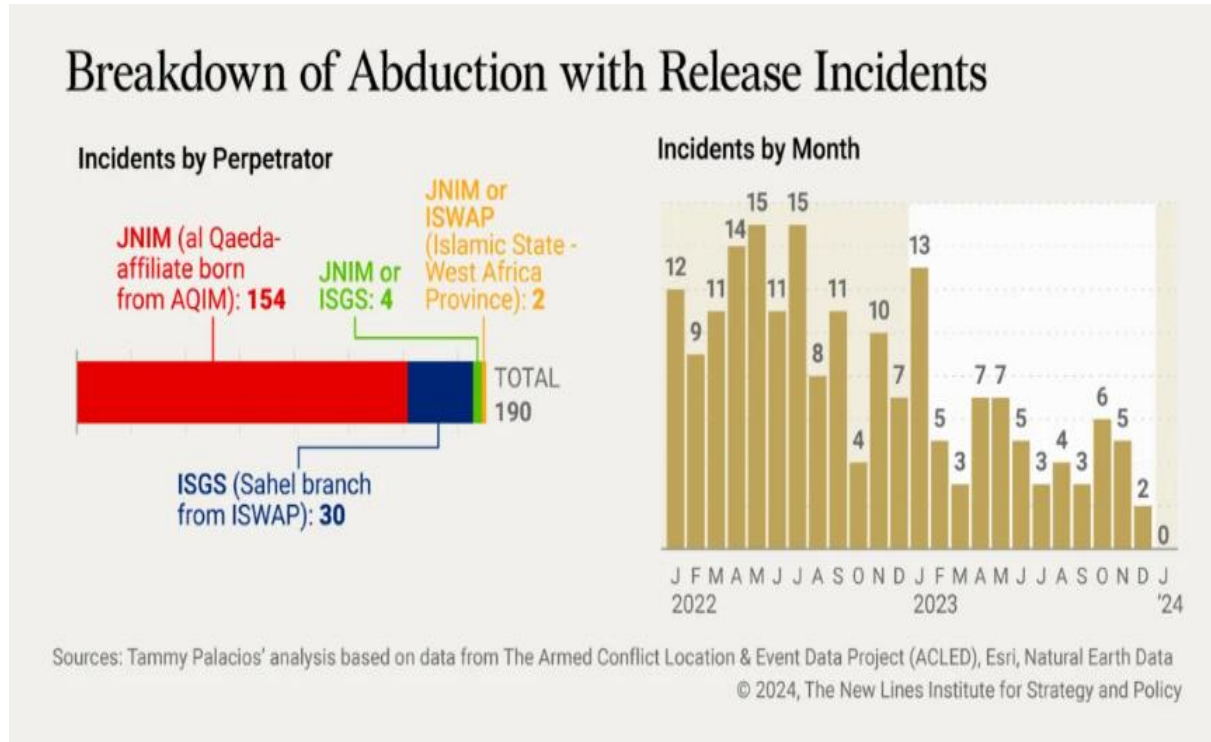
and in reaction to the counterterrorism strategies of Burkina Faso leadership in particular, which includes Russian mercenaries. Formerly known as Wagner, the group has rebranded as Africa Corps and now officially and legally falls beneath the Russian Ministry of Defence.

As the author shared in her remarks at the Wilson Center as a complement to Ansoumane Samassy Souare, Program Officer at West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) – ‘just as we understand PMCs and state actors and juntas to be multi-dimensional, there is a need to consider the terrorist groups as multi-dimensional as well’ (Palacios, *The Changing Nature of Security Threats in the Central Sahel Region: The Rise of Self-Defense Groups*, 2024). The author encourages other academics and researchers to further explore this multi-dimensionality and publish information to the information space that supports conflict and terrorism prevention strategies that engage terrorist actors in their non-kinetic operations, past no-fly-lists and finance blocking.

As mentioned, JNIM and ISGS pursue unique civilian engagement strategies. ISGS has been far more lethal and their operations less intentional and systematic in non-kinetic activity and restricting of access and movement, as JNIM was in 2022 and 2023 especially. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) perpetrated 20-35% of the attacks against civilians in 2022-2023 but was exceptionally more lethal in their activity against civilians at this time than JNIM was, according to author analysis of author re-collated data publicly available and exported from ACLED that represented ACLED-collected data that occurred between January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023. Author terrorism analysis on JNIM and ISGS activity in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and Coastal West Africa revealed this difference in preferred lethality against civilians. While ISIS affiliates have been responsible for most of the attacks against civilians, JNIM has also attacked civilians – their engagement with civilians is representative of an operational strategy.

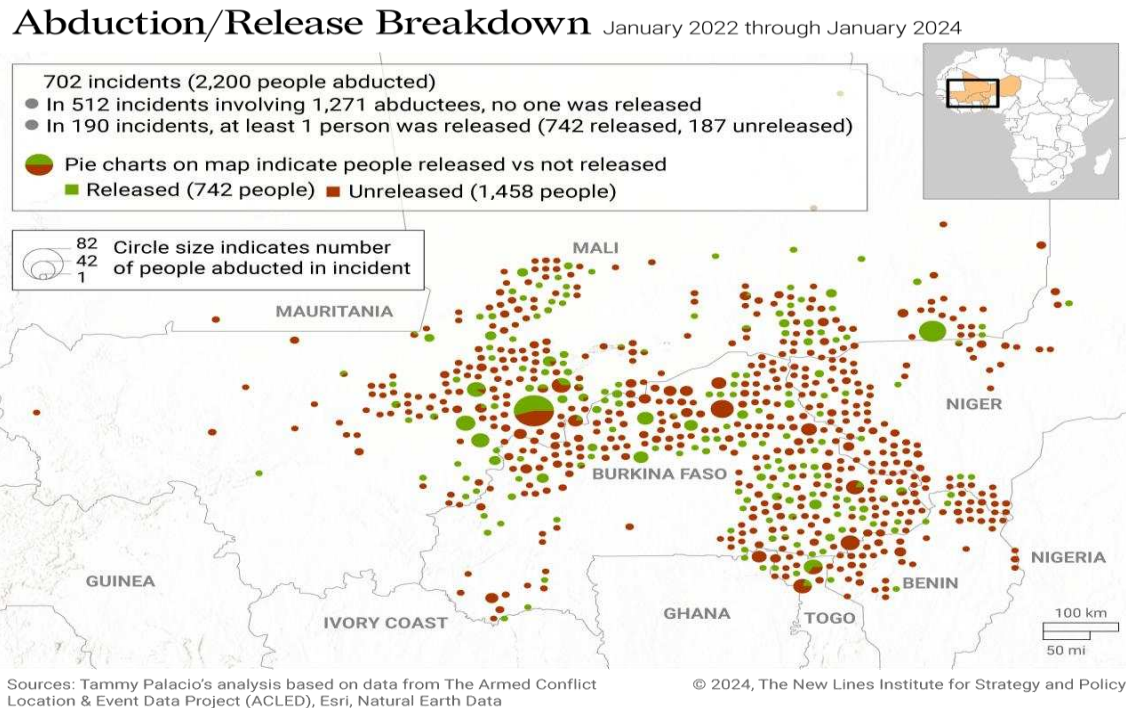
JNIM’s civilian engagement strategy is best explained by their “abduction & release” of key civilians – persons of influence. This strategy is unique to JNIM as it is intimately connected to and largely explains the success of the groups’ territorial expansion (Palacios, 2024). West Africa is familiar to kidnapping, banditry, and the concept of kidnapping or abducting an individual or group of individuals for ransom is unfortunately quite common. This strategy is known to be signature to Boko Haram and is utilized by even criminal entities and individuals seeking profit by illicit means – it has become popular by terrorist groups and criminals across West Africa. JNIM’s “abduction & release” strategy is unique in its intention and selection as the al Qaeda-affiliate targets persons for reasons of information, message delivery and demands to control the movements of a town or village (in addition to being a form of profit). The figure below breaks down the total “abduction & release” events perpetrated by all al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated actors in the Sahel and Coastal West Africa by actor. JNIM dramatically leads in “abduction & release” events the group is analyzed to have perpetrated. There is of course the possibility that some of these events were perpetrated by other actors, as is the risk of human information collection – but the slide

is rather significant that the author is comfortable saying this is a JNIM strategy. In addition, the number of “abduction & release events” seen in the right of Figure 1 match the timeline of JNIM’s territorial expansion, and the geographic overlay is depicted in Figure 2.



*Figure 1: Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM’s Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024. Source: Author’s resources.*

Aspects of this analysis from data representing JNIM and ISGS activity between 2022 and 2023 was presented by the author at the United States Military Academy at West Point in the Security Seminar this February 7th and 8th as a panellist of the Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism working group. The author has updated this analysis of JNIM and ISGS activity from January 1, 2024 until July 20, 2024 – and notes that the main update is that the data shows increased lethality against civilians (compared to the same activity for the two years previous). This analysis was updated using the same download parameters from the ACLED export tool, which is free for public download.



*Figure 2: Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024. Source: Author's resources.*

It is the author's concern that the window of opportunity to mitigate this low-kinetic civilian engagement strategy is rapidly closing, as JNIM's lethality against civilians appears to be rising in 2024. Analysis of the operations of terrorist groups must be quickly and steadfastly matched with counterstrategy or the analysis is no good to countering the future activity or threat of the terrorist groups. At this rate and considering the rapid deterioration of U.S. counterterrorism policy – al Qaeda and ISIS can be expected to grow in threat faster than that threat is mitigated. There is still a window of opportunity, albeit it shrinking – to better support civilian government structures of our African host nations and connect these state services and institutions with local institutions (including civil society and traditional authorities).

## Recommendations

### Geopolitics and African Partnership

International relations expert Ted Dagne published on the state of U.S. foreign assistance to Africa in a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report almost two decades ago. Right at the top of the report Dagne reflects on the peak of U.S. aid to Africa at that point as 1985 and how “[a]s the Cold War eased, security assistance levels for Africa began to drop” (Dagne, 2006).

Perhaps the inconsistencies that the U.S. sees in results or efficacy of U.S. foreign assistance are partially explained by the political rubber-banding that has happened,



when conflict prevention, localization, and stabilization missions are made synonymous with, or only important when framed with their connection to greater geopolitics with Russia and China. U.S. development and security assistance are meant to be direct support and partnership with African countries. In definition these missions have not to do with U.S.-Russia-China relations.

U.S. foreign assistance of course supports American influence and interests, but our African partners will not trust the United States is acting as a well-intentioned partner if American politics and interactions with Africa continue to be referred to in the same sentence as great power competition or U.S.-Russia or U.S.-China relations. This is due to the reason that the African nations and diplomats will not feel prioritized; but also, because many African nations experience and are privy to relations with Russia and China that are not tainted or negative in their eyes.

In fact, China and Russia may even appear to be more willing and consistent partners than the United States in a number of areas, including military equipment and military training assistance and trade relations or foreign assistance. It is known that Russian and Chinese support and engagement meddles not with the style of governance of the African nation, while U.S. support comes laden with guarantees of abiding by international human rights and humanitarian law and refraining from hard security to control civilian unrest and/or government control of the information space.

### *Foreign Assistance – Development/Aid vs Security*

As noted in this paper, there have been noted opportunities where U.S. development/foreign assistance and security assistance/cooperation could have built upon successful moments in programming and missions, such as building on positive moments in communication, building upon established relationships, or presenting a more supportive and well-intentioned front to our partners. A more coordinated front may come across as more supportive. Where the U.S. presents a more comprehensive strategy.

Due to restrictions and lower policy priority, intermittent engagement or engagement with restrictions may appear incomplete or appear as if the U.S. is not prepared to engage fully – as shared by our partners in Niger. Having the ability to call other missions and programs to answer to and build upon those openings and opportunities is one way this could be accomplished. Lack of communication and/or collaboration have also contradicted each other at other points, as seen in West Africa.

Foreign assistance requires a more nuanced understanding and application. U.S. Air Force Duty Officer and Assistant Professor of Military and Strategic Studies at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Jahara “Franky” Matisek analysed civil-military relations and security assistance in Africa. Matisek shared that security force assistance “[is] often overly technical and rarely address the political and institutional problems that create insecurity and the fragmented security organizations of that state (e.g. police, military, intelligence, etc.).” (p. 103, Matisek, 2020). This sentiment was shared by others in discussion and interviews on foreign assistance in West Africa.



### *Mechanisms that Support Whole-of-Government Implementation*

Numerous high-level U.S. doctrine and instruction speak to the priority of importance of multinational cooperation, inter-organisational cooperation, and whole-of-government in security cooperation and planning and delivery of foreign assistance (Joint Publication 3-08; FM 3-22; Joint Publication 3-16; DoD Instruction 5111.20). The reality is that the structure and process of that foreign assistance and security cooperation is not as friendly to the implementation of that written instruction and guidance, and these missed opportunities are clear in the delivery of assistance in West Africa (according to author unstructured interviews with USAID, State Department and DoD mission participants).

U.S. civilian affairs missions and security assistance missions in West Africa have built positive relationships and have seen intermittent successes that were not then built on – meaning lack of inter-agency coordination on the ground got in the way of U.S. foreign assistance living up to its fullest potential. Positive moments and connections could have been better built out with stronger coordination across U.S. foreign assistance programs and missions. Not building out on positive moments and lack of intelligence sharing is responsible for the like of losing the U.S. relationship with Niger and may have allowed for the conditions that surmounted in the coup d'état in Niger.

Failure to coalesce U.S. efforts and foreign assistance and security cooperation in West Africa will have drastic consequences for the decline of U.S. influence and democracy in the region and across the African continent. Additionally, continued low inter-agency coordination and collaboration across agency missions and programming in Coastal West Africa especially will likely result in the successful spread and growth of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated terrorist groups and activity further into the Coastal West African states. This would have global ramifications as the continued growth and success of JNIM especially can be expected to reinvigorate the global terrorist landscape and increase the threat of other al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups from experiencing increased recruitment and support. This would in turn raise the threat level and likelihood of lone wolf terrorist attacks which could target the United States and Europe.

### *Intentionally Connecting Agency Missions*

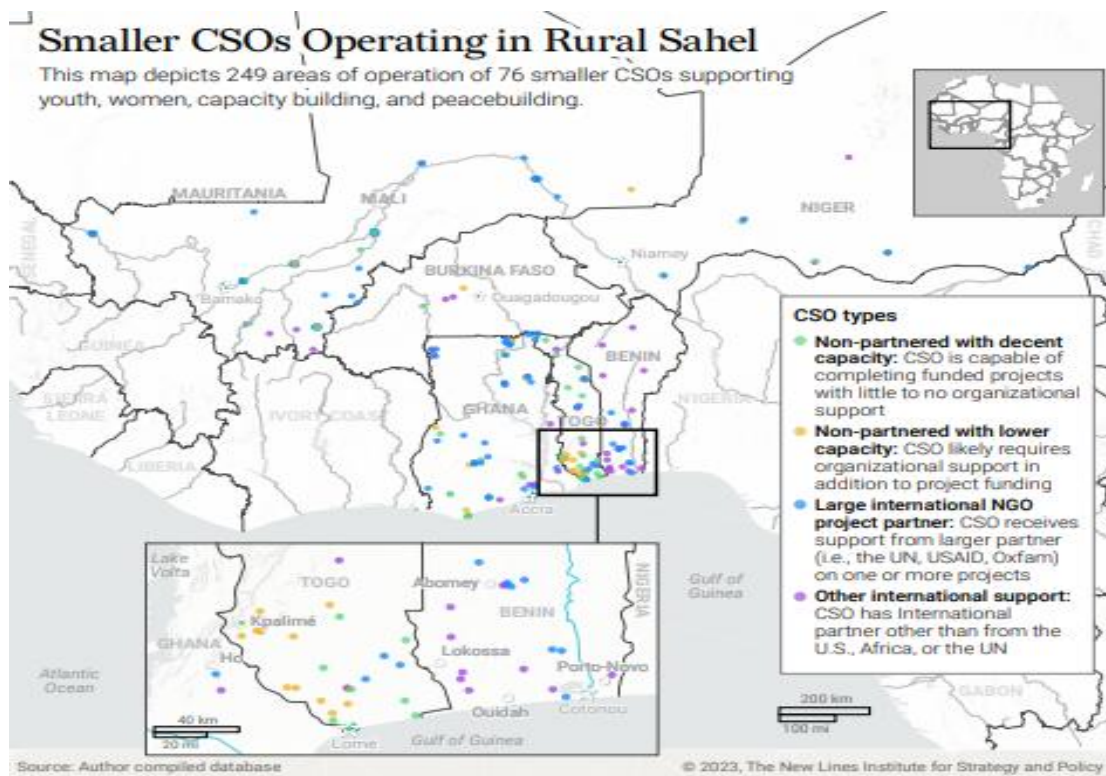
U.S. programs and missions should be closer coordinated so that their individual successes may contribute to broader U.S. foreign assistance impact in West Africa. USAID-OTI quick response initiatives should intentionally ramp into longer response foreign assistance efforts. Foreign assistance is defined in this paper as all U.S. development, stabilization and security assistance efforts implemented by all U.S. agencies and funded by U.S. grants. This recommendation refers to all U.S. foreign assistance geographically located in the vicinity of said USAID-OTI initiative.

USG connection efforts should be led by DoS and DoD missions and according to proximity in a locale. USG connection efforts should not exacerbate or add to the

responsibilities of USAID-OTI or other offices leading conflict or terrorism prevention efforts but should be a top-down assignment that brings in more USG personnel and priority from higher levels. OTI, and similar offices are already fulfilling a significant task in a shorter time period, often with limited resources, and in areas near conflict and far from national service provision and security. DoS and DoD missions should review synergies and opportunities to better coordinate, and necessary mechanisms and adjustments to processes and logistics and labour prioritized by the necessary legal authorities.

### *Inter-agency Coordination – Possible with CSOs*

This effort to further inter-agency coordination is likely to face capacity restraints at the local level. These capacity restraints can be mitigated by further working with civil society organizations (CSOs) at the local level. This working with CSOs must be connected to top-down USG efforts with the civilian government. Up until this point, U.S. foreign security assistance has better connected with higher level authorities with a host nation's military and security apparatus than the civilian government. More intentionally connecting with and supporting relevant Ministries to civil society will support U.S. objectives. Working to encourage and support the relevant Ministries, that according to the host nation's policies are meant to work with civil society - to more intentionally and better work with civil society (without restricting or threatening civil society), will further conflict prevention and support democratic institutions.



*Figure 3: Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel, 2023.*

*Source: Author's resources.*

As seen in Figure 3, there are numerous CSOs working in areas relevant to strengthening communities against susceptibility to engaging with terrorist groups. Figure 3 is only a representation, a spattering of over 300 CSOs the author has collected data on in an extensive dataset since March of 2022. USAID, DoS and numerous international implementers work with hundreds of CSOs across West Africa, but there are still hundreds who are under-supported and under-connected to their district or state authorities, Ministries, and national governments. Those CSOs are also under-supported and under-connected to U.S. and United Nations support opportunities. Author's report "Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel" published through the New Lines Institute and briefed to USG and United Nations offices outlines the opportunities to better support CSOs, especially those physically located and operating in remote areas.

### *Reconceptualising Counterterrorism*

Terrorism prevention and counterterrorism must be reconceptualised in order to effectively prevent and counter terrorism in Africa and around the world. Terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts have not disrupted the territorial expansion of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), the dominant terrorist actor in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa. Leaving JNIM to become one of the fastest growing terrorist groups around the world, even after a decade of French-led counterterrorism efforts and a United Nations stabilization mission. Efforts have also failed to stem the capabilities and organizational growth of JNIM, ISIS affiliated groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in West Africa, or al Shabaab in East Africa at any significant rate. Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates remain indignant, postured for growth and continue to utilize harrowing terrorist tactics to achieve their goals, including public beheadings, threat of violence unto an individual and their associates or loved ones, and lethal violence.

At this rate and reaction to terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts, al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates can be expected to continue their ascent in numbers of civilians that they kill and successful insurgencies attacking state and international security forces. Author analysis of JNIM's operations from January 1, 2022, through July 24, 2024 revealed a clear civilian engagement strategy. If allowed to continue unabated, this strategy will likely result in the al Qaeda-affiliate rooting themselves in the Sahel as al Shabaab has in Somalia (Palacios, Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024). JNIM has been benefiting from the lack of coordination and collaboration – this paper argues that JNIM's civilian engagement strategy that this author identified in a report published in April at the New Lines Institute and that was presented at the third annual International Security Seminar at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point.

### *Effective Terrorism Prevention and Counterterrorism*

Preventing and countering al Qaeda and ISIS in the Sahel and West Africa will lower the threat level of al Qaeda and ISIS, and thus the threat of terrorism globally, as well as address migration to Europe exacerbated by increased and continued conflict and instability or lack of opportunity in West Africa. Effective counterstrategy requires a more nuanced and updated understanding of the threat actor at the operational level and must come from an honest understanding of United States engagement in form and extent.

The sheer growth of terrorist activity in the Sahel since 2019 is reason for concern. There have been “11,200 deaths in the Sahel” thus far in 2024 - a number that has tripled since 2021 (The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Africa’s Constantly Evolving Militant Islamist Threat*, 2024). Indeed, this concerning number follows a 70% increase in violent attacks by both al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in 2021 (The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Surge in Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel Dominates Africa’s Fight Against Extremists*, 2024). Activity and territorial spread into Coastal West Africa can mostly be attributed to the success and evolution of JNIM’s strategy (and the extent of activity may be explained by the disconnect of prevention and counterterrorism strategies to core components of that strategy). According to author analysis of JNIM and ISGS activity in the Sahel from January 1, 2022 to January 1, 2024 re-collated from the ACLED export tool – JNIM has leveraged an intentionally low-kinetic civilian engagement strategy that hinges upon abduction & release of key persons of influence in the towns and villages the group is next expanding and moving into (Palacios, *Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM’s Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel*, 2024).

### *Connecting Counterterrorism Strategy to Terrorism Operations*

Counterterrorism will be more effective in the Sahel when it more firmly addresses the operations of the al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates, namely in geographic focus and in actively counteracting JNIM’s civilian engagement strategy, which can be counteracted with more intentionally coordinating and collaborating U.S. State Department, USAID, and DoD civilian affairs and special forces efforts. If U.S. engagement in the Sahel were to be coordinated geographically in respect to the cycle of localization/development, support of civil society, prevention, and non-kinetic and kinetic counterterrorism and conflict stabilization efforts – existing U.S. monies and programming would be more effective in achieving its objectives. U.S., international and national counterterrorism efforts so as not to ‘sweep’ the groups around the Sahel as this is not an effective use of force, when it is used to kinetically counter these groups). This is largely due to the lower levels of priority placed on policy and research on counterterrorism and West Africa as a region.



## *Conclusion*

There is great potential for the United States to be a better partner in supporting our African partners' terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts by leading in intelligence, terrorism analysis, and strategy guidance for a whole-of-government counterterrorism strategy. This strategy must be crafted through greater inter-agency coordination on the U.S. side that expounds on existing foreign aid and security assistance in the region and by coordinating and implementing such a strategy with both the partner nation's civilian government and security apparatus for whole-of-government application and implementation. This will be possible with a more nuanced understanding of the operations of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in a sub-region down to the town and village level, and with authorities from the national to the local levels.

## *Acknowledgements*

This work is possible due to the time and careful responses of tens of West African civil society organizations, security and development experts and academics across Africa and West Africa, and non-structured interviews with U.S. personnel who have participated in U.S. State Department, USAID, USAID-OTI, and DoD civilian affairs and special forces missions.

Data assistance was supported by William Brundage who joined the Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism portfolio as a Project Assistant Spring of 2024 and helped collate ACLED data from January 1, 2024 to July 20, 2024 as he himself was being trained – contributing and learning simultaneously. Will is just one of the bright young minds who I consider part of the Priority Sustainable team around the world – my hope is that upcoming conflict prevention and terrorism experts will be inspired to think 'how can I add value to the information space in a way that supports sustainable solutions'.

## *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## *Notes on Contributors*

Tammy Palacios is a Senior Analyst leading the Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism initiative at the New Lines Institute and 2023-2024 Research Fellow with the Modern War Institute at West Point. Palacios previously served as Program Head for the Non-state Actors program at the institute, where she worked in the field of violent and nonviolent non-state actors. Palacios earned a master's degree in security and terrorism studies from the University of Maryland Graduate School. She previously earned a graduate certificate in terrorism analysis from the National Consortium for the Study of



Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in international studies and politics and government from the University of Hartford.

## References

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024a). *Africa's Constantly Evolving Militant Islamist Threat*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Africa Center. Retrieved December 02, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig-2024-africa-constantly-evolving-militant-islamist-threat/>.
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024b). *Surge in Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel Dominates Africa's Fight Against Extremists*. Africa Center. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2022-01-surge-militant-islamist-violence-sahel-dominates-africa-fight-extremists/>.
- Center for Preventative Action. (2024). *Violent Extremism in the Sahel, Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>
- Congressional Research Service. (2023). *Coup-Related Restrictions in U.S. Foreign Aid Appropriations*. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11267.pdf>
- Dagne, T. (2006). *RL33591 edn, Africa: U.S.* Congressional Research Service.
- Duhamel, J., & Nsaibia, H. (2021). *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>
- Eizenga, D., & Williams, W. (2023). *The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/publication/puzzle-jnim-militant-islamist-groups-sahel/>
- Foreign Military Sales Program General Information*. (n.d.). Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-4>
- Humanitarian Snapshot*. (2023). United States Agency for International Development Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/USAID-BHA\\_West\\_Africa\\_Humanitarian\\_Snapshot-FY\\_2023.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/USAID-BHA_West_Africa_Humanitarian_Snapshot-FY_2023.pdf)
- Jeune Afrique. (2024). *How the US is lobbying for new military bases in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin*. Retrieved November 21, 2024 from <https://www.theafricareport.com/351759/how-the-us-is-lobbying-for-new-military-bases-in-cote-divoire-and-benin/>



- Langley, M. E. (2023). *Statement Of General Michael E. Langley, United States Marine Corps Commander, United States Africa Command Before The Senate Armed Services Committee*. Africa Command. Retrieved December 02, 2024 from <https://www.africom.mil/document/35173/africom-cleared-fy24-sasc-posture-hearing-16-mar-2023pdf>
- Last UN peacekeepers poised for complete withdrawal from Mali*. (2023). United Nations News. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1145207>
- Matisek, J. (2020). International competition to provide security force assistance in Africa: Civil-military relations matter. *PRISM*, 9(1), 102-113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26940162?refreqid=fastly-default>
- NATO. (2024). *Strengthening Partnerships and Enhancing Security in Africa*. NATO Special Operations News. Retrieved December 04, 2024 from [https://www.nshq.nato.int/contents/article/flintlock\\_2024\\_strengthening\\_partnerships\\_and\\_enhancing\\_security\\_in\\_africa](https://www.nshq.nato.int/contents/article/flintlock_2024_strengthening_partnerships_and_enhancing_security_in_africa)
- Office of the Spokesperson. (2024a). *United States Announces More Than \$64 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa*. United States Department of State. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-more-than-64-million-in-additional-humanitarian-assistance-in-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Office of the Spokesperson. (2024b). *United States Announces Nearly \$536 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa*. United States Department of State. Retrieved December 04, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-nearly-536-million-in-additional-humanitarian-assistance-for-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Palacios, T. (2023). *Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism: Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel*. New Lines Institute. Retrieved December 13, 2024 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/nonstate-actors/priority-sustainable-counterterrorism-supporting-csos-to-migrate-the-spread-of-terrorism-in-the-sahel/>
- Palacios, T. (2024). *Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel*. New Lines Institute. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/nonstate-actors/preventing-another-al-qaeda-affiliated-quasi-state-countering-jnim-strategic-civilian-engagement-in-the-sahel/>
- Pandit, P. (2022). *Global Terrorism Index 2022: Key findings*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/global-terrorism-index-2023-key-findings-in-5-charts/>
- Phee, M. (2024). *Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee U.S. Department of State House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing 'FY 2025 Budget Request for Africa*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from



- <https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/117303/witnesses/HHRG-118-FA16-Wstate-PheeM-20240515.pdf>
- Raleigh, C., Kishi, R., & Linke, A. (2023). Political instability patterns are obscured by conflict dataset scope conditions, sources, and coding choices. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01559-4>
- Reuters. (August 5, 2024). U.S. military completes withdrawal from key drone base in Niger. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-military-completes-withdrawal-key-drone-base-niger-2024-08-05/>
- Samassy Souare, A., & Palacios, T. (2024, June 10). *The Changing Nature of Security Threats in the Central Sahel Region: The Rise of Self-Defense Groups* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h60JKz6les&list=PLIQCER0zBbmbd1rZXk1MoKgVx1eHSWz0o&index=14>
- United States Africa Command. (2024). *Gen. Langley engages in Africa*. Retrieved December 03, 2024 from <https://www.africom.mil/spotlight/gen-langley-engages-in-africa>
- United States Agency for International Development. (2024). *The United States Announces Nearly \$176 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for West Africa*. USAID from the American People. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-28-2024-united-states-announces-nearly-176-million-additional-humanitarian-assistance-west-africa>.
- United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS). (2023). *Annual report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2023. USAID Transition Initiatives Account*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/OTI>
- United States Department of Defense. (2016). *State Partnership Program*. Retrieved December 11, 2023 from <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives>
- United States Department of State. *U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/SPCPS-Factsheet-CWA-3.6.2024.pdf-reading-order.pdf>
- United States Department of the Army. (2023). *Army Support to Security Cooperation. (FM 3-22)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.armypubs.army.mil>
- United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2017). *Interorganizational Cooperation. (Joint Publication 3-08)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_08.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_08.pdf)
- United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2021). *Multinational Operations. (Joint Publication 3-16)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_16.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_16.pdf)



## Coordinated U.S. Foreign Assistance and Effective Counterterrorism in Africa: Considering the Efficacy of U.S. and Partner Engagement against Al Qaeda's Civilian Engagement Strategy in West Africa<sup>1</sup>

Tammy Lynn Palacios<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The international community can better partner with African countries and more effectively counter and prevent terrorism in Africa by implementing two changes to U.S. strategy. First, by crafting strategies that counter the kinetic and non-kinetic operations of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups that allow for their territorial expansion and control. Second, by better coordinating U.S. foreign aid/development with security assistance and security cooperation efforts and conducting them with the partner country in a way that supports partner civilian and military institutions. At current, U.S. security assistance efforts better connect to and strengthen the military/security apparatus than U.S. development assistance efforts do - this is due to risk averse bureaucracy that ultimately erodes democratic structures and processes rather than strengthening them. Additionally, U.S. tendencies to work directly with civil society organizations may not strengthen civil society pathways to ministries or the relevant offices at the district or national levels. U.S. and other international partners should work through and support a hub where local civil society and local level authorities can engage with and work with the district and national level governments. This strategy will strengthen good governance and democratic institutions. Additionally, terrorism prevention and counterterrorism strategies that directly address and are formed in response to both active kinetic and non-kinetic operations of (al Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated) terrorist groups will better protect civilians as well as implementers of development and security assistance.

### Keywords:

Al-Qaeda; terrorism prevention; counterterrorism; West Africa; foreign assistance; security assistance; democratic backsliding.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.294>

<sup>2</sup>Senior Analyst, Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism, New Lines Institute; ORCID: 0009-0007-5827-8012; [tpalacios@newlinesinstitute.org](mailto:tpalacios@newlinesinstitute.org).

## *Introduction*

West Africa has become one of the most active terrorist hot zones in the world. Though, Africa is no stranger to al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated terrorist groups - al Shabaab has long taken root in Somalia, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram have been staple terrorist groups in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin for almost 15-years. The dominant terrorist actor in West Africa for the past few years, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) was borne from (and has ultimately surpassed in activity) al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in North Africa. The Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) has also peppered across Africa, with affiliates operating in conflict and terrorist group ecosystems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Yemen, Nigeria, the Sahel, and in East Africa and South Africa.

Security and governance in West Africa have been topics of concern and international attention for the past few years. The Sahel has risen as one of the most active terrorist zones in the world and West Africa has seen repeated coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and most recently - Niger. The Global Terrorism Index published annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace reported that the Sahel was responsible for 43% of global terrorism deaths in 2023, a 7% increase from the year previous and surpassing terrorism deaths in the MENA region (Pandit, 2023). The world watched as France withdrew its troops from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger after nearly a decade of leading counterterrorism operations and an international coalition with the objectives of eradicating the growing terrorist threat and stabilizing the region. The United Nations also recently withdrew its peace and stabilization mission in Mali (UN News, 2023). And the United States completed its withdrawal from Niger almost four months early, initially charted for December of 2024 (Reuters, 2024).

The United States (U.S.) withdrew from Niger, following Niger being the location of the latest coup in West Africa. The U.S. must follow laws, including Section 7008 which prohibits U.S. foreign assistance be provided to militarily overthrown governments (SMM). It should be noted that the U.S. has actively supported African countries diplomatically and economically for years, and that real impact and progress has been seen over the course of this foreign assistance. The United States Department of State (DoS), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and United States Department of Defence (DoD) have and continue to deploy foreign assistance and aid/development programs as well as security assistance and security cooperation in the region and across the continent. U.S. military basing lost in Niger is charted to move into Côte d'Ivoire (also known as the Ivory Coast) and possibly Benin (Jeune Afrique, 2024). These two countries bookend Ghana, the United States' primary partner in Coastal West Africa (CWA). Ghana has become an increasingly important partner to the United States. Also in West Africa, the United States has also experienced significant connection and long-standing relations with Nigeria, warmly referred to as 'Big Brother' to many African countries.

If the United States has been actively working to support civil society with the like of United States Agency for International Development Office of Transition Initiatives



(USAID-OTI) programming, including in the northern regions of CWA, and delivering security assistance and training across West Africa – why is West Africa home to one of the most active terrorist hot zones in the world? And why has the region experienced further democratic backsliding?

This paper will explore why U.S. foreign aid/development and security assistance, and security cooperation has not effectively countered al Qaeda and ISIS in West Africa and why the region continues to experience coup d'états as recently as last year. Additionally, how U.S. foreign aid/development and security assistance and security cooperation may be adjusted to more effectively prevent and counter al Qaeda and ISIS in the region, support democratic values and governance, and increase the stability and growth of the Sahel and West Africa as a whole – and U.S. partnerships with our African partners.

### *U.S. Foreign Assistance in West Africa*

Over the past two years, Africa has experienced a steady stream of visits from U.S. Representatives; notably, General Langley of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee. Assistant Secretary Phee spoke of this deepened collaboration with Coastal West Africa and Nigeria in her remarks to Congress in the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing “FY 2025 Budget Request for Africa” in May of 2024. This and recent adjustments in additional foreign aid and humanitarian assistance to sub-Saharan Africa indicate increased U.S. interest in reaffirming U.S. commitment with our African partners (USAID, The United States Announces Nearly \$176 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for West Africa, 2024; USAID, United States Announces More Than \$64 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2024; USAID, United States Announces Nearly \$536 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa, 2024).

A message that has been impressed multiple times to Congress, including by General Langley, Commander of AFRICOM in his testimony and statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee March 21, 2024. Gen. Langley framed the threat and outlined the whole-of-government approach necessary to address the threats and challenges in Africa, “Threats from within the continent are transforming into threats to America's interests and allies. Terrorism, poverty, food and water insecurity, protracted conflict, climate change, and mass human migration disproportionately shatter African lives. Solutions to these colossal problems must be a shared burden, with African nations at the helm of concerted international efforts and a U.S. whole of nation contribution that produces sustainable outcomes.” (Langley, 2024). Steps must be taken to allow for whole-of-government approaches to be implemented.

This increase in political participation and representation follows the publication of the inter-agency implementation plans for the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) this Spring (Department of State, United States Agency of International Development, Department of Defence, Department of Treasury, U.S.



Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, 2024). SPCPS is intimately connected to and supports the Global Fragility Act (GFA) a bipartisan policy passed in 2019 that focuses on soft power and prevention. The GFA is being piloted in Haiti, Libya, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, and the sub-region of Coastal West Africa, which includes Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Togo. In considering these policy and political moves, in addition to relevant hearings on the Hill during this period of time, represents Washington D.C.'s acknowledgement of the seriousness of stability in West Africa, supporting democratic institutions and values, and countering of terrorist groups affiliated with al Qaeda and ISIS.

The U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) is especially well suited and situated to support stability and to help strengthen West African states and communities to be less susceptible to engaging in violent extremism and with terrorist groups in West Africa. The inter-agency Secretariat is a formal mechanism that has been created to not just support and encourage inter-agency collaboration and communication – but serves as a platform that demands it. This Secretariat is comprised of DoS, USAID, and DoD and is staffed by experienced and hard-working representatives from each agency eager to affect positive change and who are motivated by outcomes. While well situated, the GFA Secretariat needs to be better supported at the highest levels as the inter-agency mechanism does still face bureaucratic hurdles and red tape. This bureaucracy and incomplete commitment to supporting this mechanism frustrates timeliness and detracts from the support needed for SPCPS to reach its full potential and to be fully effective in preventing conflict and promoting stability in West Africa. The GFA Secretariat should be emulated and greatly supported in recognition of its representation of the re-structuring necessary to see greater inter-agency and whole-of-government support.

The United States has enjoyed decades of relationships and support or assistance programming and missions to West Africa. This connection is represented in over two decades of State Partnership Programs (SPP) featuring the United States National Guard units, joint exercises such as Flintlock, civilian affairs and special forces DoD missions, and millions in aid implemented by USAID and DoS as well as international non-governmental organization implementers and infrastructure compacts implemented by U.S.-associated entities such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). Flintlock 24 saw over 1,300 participants from 15 NATO Allies and partners and international forces – a huge success for AFRICOM partnership efforts in North and West Africa (NATO, 2024).

## *The Terrorism Threat*

### *Method*

The author re-collated the ACLED data from the “notes” column to represent “who”, “where”, and “tags”. Author parsed out any and all qualitative and descriptive notes



on who was the target or victim of the attack for each row, such as gender, age, title or position, and/or association. An example of “who” is “employee of the mayor’s office” and “girl” or “pastor”. The author added column “where” re-collated the descriptive markers of where in the town or village or road that an attack took place, parsed from the ACLED “notes” column. Common markers of “where” include “market”, “road”, and “home”. The author added “tags” column represents author trends analysis and represented a row-by-row calculated research method and approach to analysing the activity of the actors over time, allowing for more specific and data supported analysis. The author re-collating allowed for unique analysis to be formulated on who was being targeted, at what times of day and where in the town or village they were being targeted (who was often targeted in night raids, for example – key person abductions and off-duty soldiers and volunteer fighters at their homes) – with the intent of parsing the possible trends and reasons why the perpetrator group was acting in these ways. The author reviewed their re-collating and row-by-row analysis ten times to ensure accuracy, due to the large nature of the dataset.

### *Al Qaeda and ISIS – the Global Terrorism Landscape*

Al Qaeda and ISIS as global networks are now better described as movements, following the great decapitation and unravelling of al Qaeda Central and ISIS-Central – due to the success and leadership of the United States’ counterterrorism efforts since 9/11. The productivity and growth of al Qaeda and ISIS as global movements, and thus the success of their respective associated groups, has been affected by the perceived strength and sustainability of each respective movement. The movement (al Qaeda or ISIS) that postures to be more capable and more likely to succeed receives a greater amount of support in recruits, donors (state and individual), and likely greater supportive readership of propaganda.

Al Qaeda is predictable in its unpredictability. Al Qaeda’s current capabilities and structures are not what make it dangerous; history has shown it is more dangerous to underestimate the future implications of al Qaeda’s current actions. Though, in the case of the Sahel sub-region of West Africa – JNIM has proven that its capabilities and strategies do make it dangerous as it has been dangerous and successful in its territorial expansion since late 2019. So, in the case of assessing the threat of al Qaeda globally and/or the threat of JNIM – both are slated to be of concern in the future, and JNIM has proven to be of concern (threat) today. In the case of prioritization, the United States for example has prioritized other geopolitical events and conflicts over the rise of al Qaeda in the Sahel, and over countering terrorism in general. Unfortunately, the emergence of a more dominant threat does not dissipate the long-term threat of al Qaeda’s re-emergence – and rather, it can be expected for that threat to increase in danger the longer it is ignored or de-prioritized.

While it may not be conducive for the U.S. to physically implement themselves, better understanding the implications of al Qaeda’s local operations is integral for sustainable counterterrorism policy. Al Qaeda must be examined as a network and movement, as

well as by its parts. Sustainable counterterrorism solutions lie in a reconceptualised understanding of al Qaeda's motivational drivers for its operational strategies, and their implications. As militant jihadist terrorist groups co-opt local conflicts and root themselves into local communities, they extend the life of the jihadist movement. Al Qaeda's local efforts will root and spread as the future of the Salafi-jihadi movement - unless the international counterterrorism community better understand al Qaeda's local strategies and work to more intentionally mitigate and counteract them.

The relevance of al Qaeda-affiliate JNIM's continued growth and expansion, and the vibrant activity and nature of the al Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated landscape in West Africa, especially the Sahel sub-region – is in its relevance to the global terrorism landscape.

JNIM has implemented guidance received from a veteran member of al Qaeda leadership to refrain from conducting extreme attacks against civilians in Mali (Lister, What has happened to al-Qaeda?, 2016). JNIM's following of this guidance is indicative of the local-cognition and local operational strategies common to al Qaeda affiliates, especially those closer connected or who have received guidance from al Qaeda veteran era members.

### *The Strength of One Supports the Strength of Any*

Many of al Qaeda and ISIS's affiliated groups pursue local agendas and objectives and their membership is native to the locale in which they operate. While this is true, a number of affiliated groups were borne from veteran era strong groups and have received guidance and leadership (whether long-standing or visits here and there) from al Qaeda or ISIS individuals respectively who are key members of each global network/movement. While the global movements/networks are no longer as hierarchical as one global network/organization, and that hierarchy and organizational structure is now more localized – the key members of the international networks/movements still exert great influence and guide the strategies and operations of the individual groups. The effect this veteran connection and guidance has on the local group differs depending on their parent global network (whether they are affiliated with al Qaeda or ISIS).

While neither JNIM nor ISGS groups or fighters currently hold external targets, even the perceived success and growth of these groups against any national or international people and governmental or security entities, including Wagner (rebranded as Africa Corps) allows for growth of the global terrorism landscape. The success and strength of any increases the strength of both, and thus either al Qaeda or ISIS respectively.

### *Al Qaeda-affiliate JNIM's Operations*

JNIM is currently one of the fastest growing terrorist groups around the world and is responsible for about 80% of the terrorist activity in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa, according to author analysis of author re-collated data exported from ACLED in 2023 and 2024 of conflict data collected on al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated group perpetrated

activity from January 1, 2022, to July 20, 2024 (ACLED, 2022-2024). Author analysis was done with a focus on violence perpetrated by these groups unto civilians. Violence against civilians does not include activity perpetrated by civilians, activity perpetrated by al Qaeda or ISIS-affiliated groups unto fighters while they were off-duty, or activity of these groups amongst or to each other nor against or between these groups and local militias or groups, state, international or volunteer fighters' forces.

Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa have updated their strategies and modus operandi faster than the U.S. and the broader terrorism analysis community have tracked it. Counterterrorism operations have not adjusted or updated at the rate that the groups have adjusted and updated their strategy.

There are three reasons that contribute to the overall ineffectiveness of counterterrorism operations up until this point. First, the sheer broadness of the geography, when coupled with disparate state and national security presence in entire regions of Sahelian countries, has allowed for al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates to be swept around rather than fully impacted or pressured by counterterrorism operations.

Second, not involving all actors who provide governance, justice, law, security and other services. The farther one gets from the capital cities – the more these actors look like institutions, entities or individuals who are not connected to or sent down from the national government. Many analysts refer to a power vacuum formed by instability and lack of national government and security presence, but there are additional reasons that there is disconnect between the actions of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups in the Sahel and the counterterrorism strategies and operations as they have been enacted over the past decade.

Third, the terrorist groups' operations that have allowed for their growth in capabilities and territorial expansion. The al Qaeda-affiliate, JNIM, has pursued an intentionally low-kinetic "abduction & release strategy" (Palacios, 2024) that encourages civilians from communicating with and supporting counterinsurgency and counterterrorism strategies of any kind. JNIM's civilian engagement strategy further ostracizes civilians, especially in the rural parts of the countries already disconnected from the capital cities and national institutions.

The complexity of the landscape and lack of a comprehensive counterterrorism approach when met with a terrorist group's operational strategy that is nuanced and is being updated – results in ineffective counterterrorism.

### *JNIM vs ISGS Civilian Engagement*

The al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in the Sahel have distinct operational strategies. Overall, JNIM works with and leverages civilian direction and influence, while ISGS pursues a stereotypically brash ISIS-style civilian engagement strategy. JNIM, in their territorial expansion and population control efforts – had offered a less kinetic opportunity to civilians (especially key individuals of influence, such as pastors, imams, mayors, and chiefs) if they were to comply with their demands and pay ransom to be released. This less kinetic opportunity is becoming more lethal as the terrorism landscape is shifting,

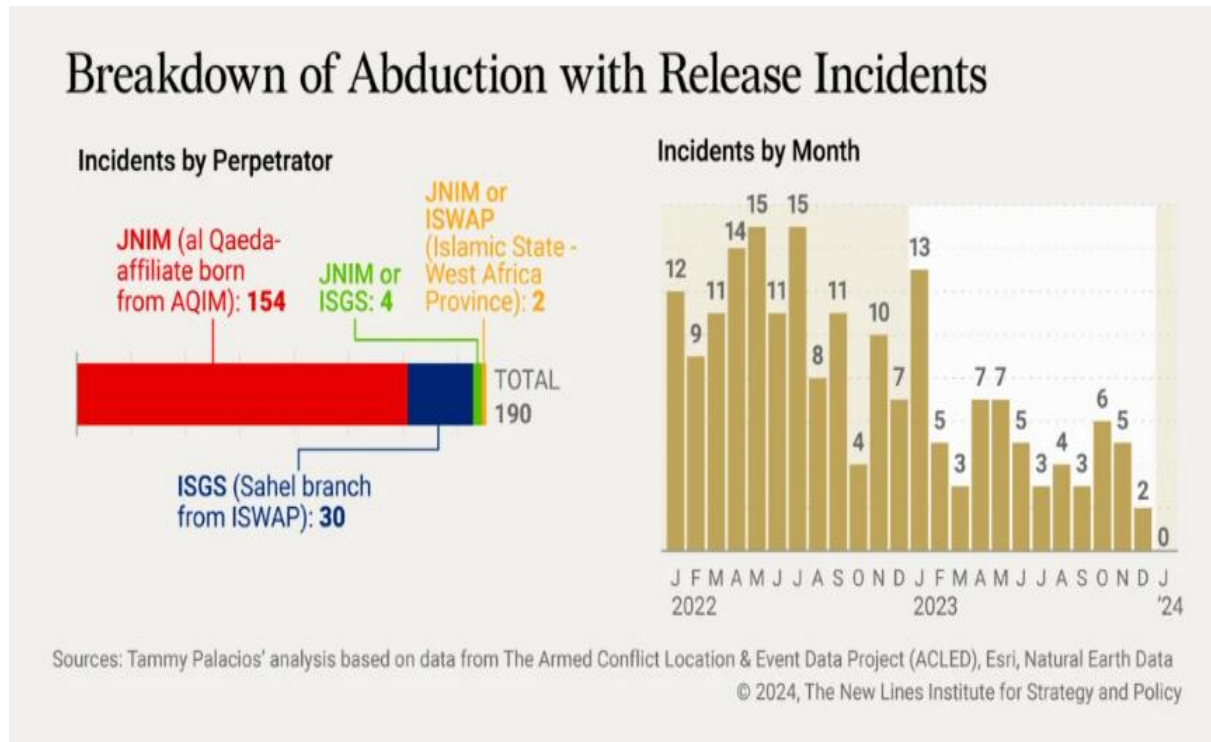
and in reaction to the counterterrorism strategies of Burkina Faso leadership in particular, which includes Russian mercenaries. Formerly known as Wagner, the group has rebranded as Africa Corps and now officially and legally falls beneath the Russian Ministry of Defence.

As the author shared in her remarks at the Wilson Center as a complement to Ansoumane Samassy Souare, Program Officer at West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) – ‘just as we understand PMCs and state actors and juntas to be multi-dimensional, there is a need to consider the terrorist groups as multi-dimensional as well’ (Palacios, *The Changing Nature of Security Threats in the Central Sahel Region: The Rise of Self-Defense Groups*, 2024). The author encourages other academics and researchers to further explore this multi-dimensionality and publish information to the information space that supports conflict and terrorism prevention strategies that engage terrorist actors in their non-kinetic operations, past no-fly-lists and finance blocking.

As mentioned, JNIM and ISGS pursue unique civilian engagement strategies. ISGS has been far more lethal and their operations less intentional and systematic in non-kinetic activity and restricting of access and movement, as JNIM was in 2022 and 2023 especially. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) perpetrated 20-35% of the attacks against civilians in 2022-2023 but was exceptionally more lethal in their activity against civilians at this time than JNIM was, according to author analysis of author re-collated data publicly available and exported from ACLED that represented ACLED-collected data that occurred between January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023. Author terrorism analysis on JNIM and ISGS activity in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and Coastal West Africa revealed this difference in preferred lethality against civilians. While ISIS affiliates have been responsible for most of the attacks against civilians, JNIM has also attacked civilians – their engagement with civilians is representative of an operational strategy.

JNIM’s civilian engagement strategy is best explained by their “abduction & release” of key civilians – persons of influence. This strategy is unique to JNIM as it is intimately connected to and largely explains the success of the groups’ territorial expansion (Palacios, 2024). West Africa is familiar to kidnapping, banditry, and the concept of kidnapping or abducting an individual or group of individuals for ransom is unfortunately quite common. This strategy is known to be signature to Boko Haram and is utilized by even criminal entities and individuals seeking profit by illicit means – it has become popular by terrorist groups and criminals across West Africa. JNIM’s “abduction & release” strategy is unique in its intention and selection as the al Qaeda-affiliate targets persons for reasons of information, message delivery and demands to control the movements of a town or village (in addition to being a form of profit). The figure below breaks down the total “abduction & release” events perpetrated by all al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated actors in the Sahel and Coastal West Africa by actor. JNIM dramatically leads in “abduction & release” events the group is analyzed to have perpetrated. There is of course the possibility that some of these events were perpetrated by other actors, as is the risk of human information collection – but the slide

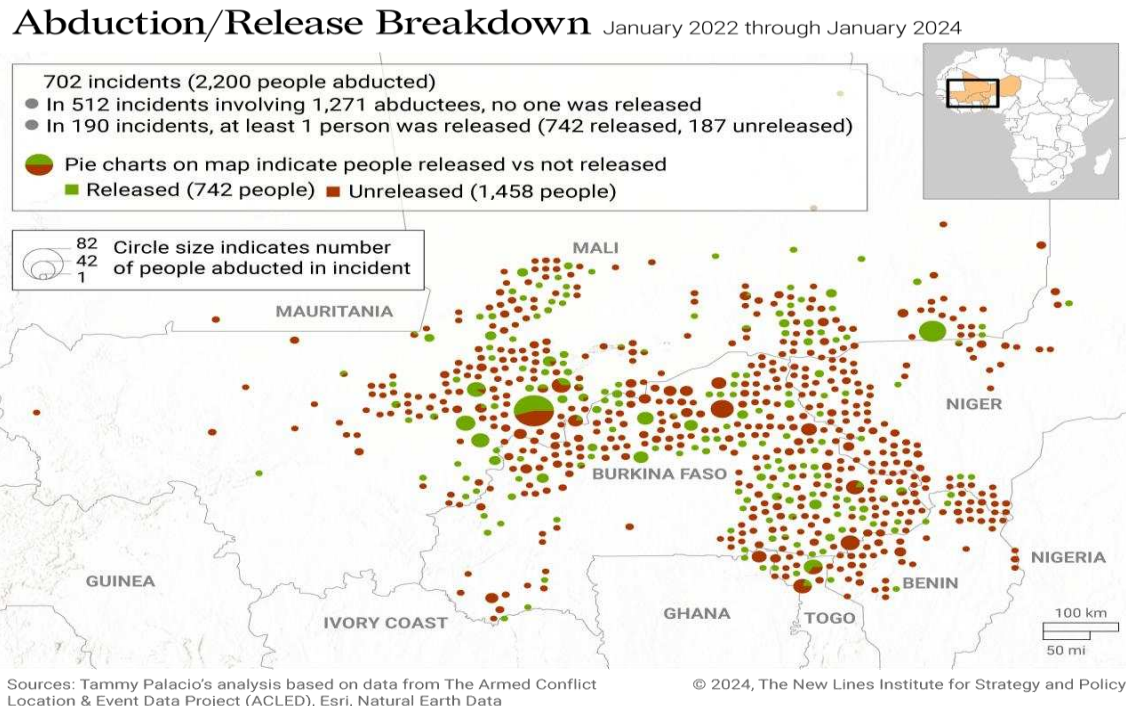
is rather significant that the author is comfortable saying this is a JNIM strategy. In addition, the number of “abduction & release events” seen in the right of Figure 1 match the timeline of JNIM’s territorial expansion, and the geographic overlay is depicted in Figure 2.



*Figure 1: Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM’s Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024. Source: Author’s resources.*

Aspects of this analysis from data representing JNIM and ISGS activity between 2022 and 2023 was presented by the author at the United States Military Academy at West Point in the Security Seminar this February 7th and 8th as a panellist of the Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism working group. The author has updated this analysis of JNIM and ISGS activity from January 1, 2024 until July 20, 2024 – and notes that the main update is that the data shows increased lethality against civilians (compared to the same activity for the two years previous). This analysis was updated using the same download parameters from the ACLED export tool, which is free for public download.





*Figure 2: Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024. Source: Author's resources.*

It is the author's concern that the window of opportunity to mitigate this low-kinetic civilian engagement strategy is rapidly closing, as JNIM's lethality against civilians appears to be rising in 2024. Analysis of the operations of terrorist groups must be quickly and steadfastly matched with counterstrategy or the analysis is no good to countering the future activity or threat of the terrorist groups. At this rate and considering the rapid deterioration of U.S. counterterrorism policy – al Qaeda and ISIS can be expected to grow in threat faster than that threat is mitigated. There is still a window of opportunity, albeit it shrinking – to better support civilian government structures of our African host nations and connect these state services and institutions with local institutions (including civil society and traditional authorities).

## Recommendations

### Geopolitics and African Partnership

International relations expert Ted Dagne published on the state of U.S. foreign assistance to Africa in a Congressional Research Service (CRS) report almost two decades ago. Right at the top of the report Dagne reflects on the peak of U.S. aid to Africa at that point as 1985 and how “[a]s the Cold War eased, security assistance levels for Africa began to drop” (Dagne, 2006).

Perhaps the inconsistencies that the U.S. sees in results or efficacy of U.S. foreign assistance are partially explained by the political rubber-banding that has happened,



when conflict prevention, localization, and stabilization missions are made synonymous with, or only important when framed with their connection to greater geopolitics with Russia and China. U.S. development and security assistance are meant to be direct support and partnership with African countries. In definition these missions have not to do with U.S.-Russia-China relations.

U.S. foreign assistance of course supports American influence and interests, but our African partners will not trust the United States is acting as a well-intentioned partner if American politics and interactions with Africa continue to be referred to in the same sentence as great power competition or U.S.-Russia or U.S.-China relations. This is due to the reason that the African nations and diplomats will not feel prioritized; but also, because many African nations experience and are privy to relations with Russia and China that are not tainted or negative in their eyes.

In fact, China and Russia may even appear to be more willing and consistent partners than the United States in a number of areas, including military equipment and military training assistance and trade relations or foreign assistance. It is known that Russian and Chinese support and engagement meddles not with the style of governance of the African nation, while U.S. support comes laden with guarantees of abiding by international human rights and humanitarian law and refraining from hard security to control civilian unrest and/or government control of the information space.

### *Foreign Assistance – Development/Aid vs Security*

As noted in this paper, there have been noted opportunities where U.S. development/foreign assistance and security assistance/cooperation could have built upon successful moments in programming and missions, such as building on positive moments in communication, building upon established relationships, or presenting a more supportive and well-intentioned front to our partners. A more coordinated front may come across as more supportive. Where the U.S. presents a more comprehensive strategy.

Due to restrictions and lower policy priority, intermittent engagement or engagement with restrictions may appear incomplete or appear as if the U.S. is not prepared to engage fully – as shared by our partners in Niger. Having the ability to call other missions and programs to answer to and build upon those openings and opportunities is one way this could be accomplished. Lack of communication and/or collaboration have also contradicted each other at other points, as seen in West Africa.

Foreign assistance requires a more nuanced understanding and application. U.S. Air Force Duty Officer and Assistant Professor of Military and Strategic Studies at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Jahara “Franky” Matissek analysed civil-military relations and security assistance in Africa. Matissek shared that security force assistance “[is] often overly technical and rarely address the political and institutional problems that create insecurity and the fragmented security organizations of that state (e.g. police, military, intelligence, etc.).” (p. 103, Matissek, 2020). This sentiment was shared by others in discussion and interviews on foreign assistance in West Africa.

### *Mechanisms that Support Whole-of-Government Implementation*

Numerous high-level U.S. doctrine and instruction speak to the priority of importance of multinational cooperation, inter-organisational cooperation, and whole-of-government in security cooperation and planning and delivery of foreign assistance (Joint Publication 3-08; FM 3-22; Joint Publication 3-16; DoD Instruction 5111.20). The reality is that the structure and process of that foreign assistance and security cooperation is not as friendly to the implementation of that written instruction and guidance, and these missed opportunities are clear in the delivery of assistance in West Africa (according to author unstructured interviews with USAID, State Department and DoD mission participants).

U.S. civilian affairs missions and security assistance missions in West Africa have built positive relationships and have seen intermittent successes that were not then built on – meaning lack of inter-agency coordination on the ground got in the way of U.S. foreign assistance living up to its fullest potential. Positive moments and connections could have been better built out with stronger coordination across U.S. foreign assistance programs and missions. Not building out on positive moments and lack of intelligence sharing is responsible for the like of losing the U.S. relationship with Niger and may have allowed for the conditions that surmounted in the coup d'état in Niger.

Failure to coalesce U.S. efforts and foreign assistance and security cooperation in West Africa will have drastic consequences for the decline of U.S. influence and democracy in the region and across the African continent. Additionally, continued low inter-agency coordination and collaboration across agency missions and programming in Coastal West Africa especially will likely result in the successful spread and growth of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated terrorist groups and activity further into the Coastal West African states. This would have global ramifications as the continued growth and success of JNIM especially can be expected to reinvigorate the global terrorist landscape and increase the threat of other al Qaeda and ISIS affiliated groups from experiencing increased recruitment and support. This would in turn raise the threat level and likelihood of lone wolf terrorist attacks which could target the United States and Europe.

### *Intentionally Connecting Agency Missions*

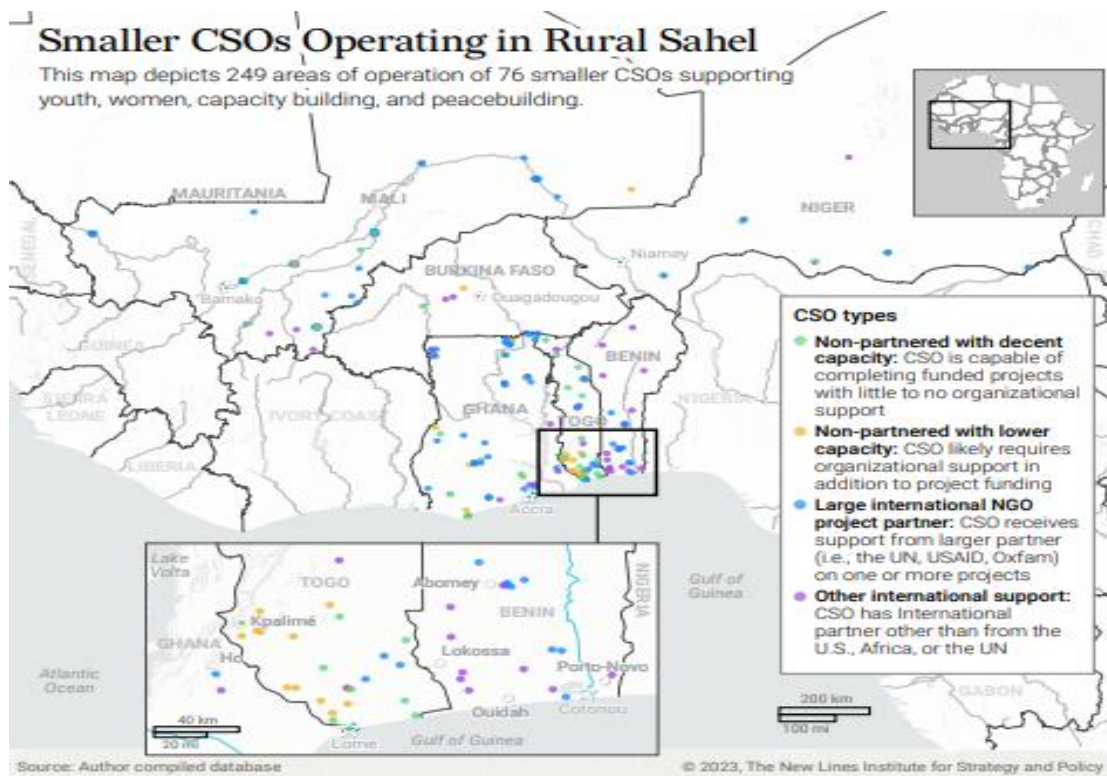
U.S. programs and missions should be closer coordinated so that their individual successes may contribute to broader U.S. foreign assistance impact in West Africa. USAID-OTI quick response initiatives should intentionally ramp into longer response foreign assistance efforts. Foreign assistance is defined in this paper as all U.S. development, stabilization and security assistance efforts implemented by all U.S. agencies and funded by U.S. grants. This recommendation refers to all U.S. foreign assistance geographically located in the vicinity of said USAID-OTI initiative.

USG connection efforts should be led by DoS and DoD missions and according to proximity in a locale. USG connection efforts should not exacerbate or add to the

responsibilities of USAID-OTI or other offices leading conflict or terrorism prevention efforts but should be a top-down assignment that brings in more USG personnel and priority from higher levels. OTI, and similar offices are already fulfilling a significant task in a shorter time period, often with limited resources, and in areas near conflict and far from national service provision and security. DoS and DoD missions should review synergies and opportunities to better coordinate, and necessary mechanisms and adjustments to processes and logistics and labour prioritized by the necessary legal authorities.

### *Inter-agency Coordination – Possible with CSOs*

This effort to further inter-agency coordination is likely to face capacity restraints at the local level. These capacity restraints can be mitigated by further working with civil society organizations (CSOs) at the local level. This working with CSOs must be connected to top-down USG efforts with the civilian government. Up until this point, U.S. foreign security assistance has better connected with higher level authorities with a host nation's military and security apparatus than the civilian government. More intentionally connecting with and supporting relevant Ministries to civil society will support U.S. objectives. Working to encourage and support the relevant Ministries, that according to the host nation's policies are meant to work with civil society - to more intentionally and better work with civil society (without restricting or threatening civil society), will further conflict prevention and support democratic institutions.



*Figure 3: Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel, 2023.*

*Source: Author's resources.*

As seen in Figure 3, there are numerous CSOs working in areas relevant to strengthening communities against susceptibility to engaging with terrorist groups. Figure 3 is only a representation, a spattering of over 300 CSOs the author has collected data on in an extensive dataset since March of 2022. USAID, DoS and numerous international implementers work with hundreds of CSOs across West Africa, but there are still hundreds who are under-supported and under-connected to their district or state authorities, Ministries, and national governments. Those CSOs are also under-supported and under-connected to U.S. and United Nations support opportunities. Author's report "Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel" published through the New Lines Institute and briefed to USG and United Nations offices outlines the opportunities to better support CSOs, especially those physically located and operating in remote areas.

### *Reconceptualising Counterterrorism*

Terrorism prevention and counterterrorism must be reconceptualised in order to effectively prevent and counter terrorism in Africa and around the world. Terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts have not disrupted the territorial expansion of Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), the dominant terrorist actor in the Sahel sub-region of West Africa. Leaving JNIM to become one of the fastest growing terrorist groups around the world, even after a decade of French-led counterterrorism efforts and a United Nations stabilization mission. Efforts have also failed to stem the capabilities and organizational growth of JNIM, ISIS affiliated groups such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in West Africa, or al Shabaab in East Africa at any significant rate. Al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates remain indignant, postured for growth and continue to utilize harrowing terrorist tactics to achieve their goals, including public beheadings, threat of violence unto an individual and their associates or loved ones, and lethal violence.

At this rate and reaction to terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts, al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates can be expected to continue their ascent in numbers of civilians that they kill and successful insurgencies attacking state and international security forces. Author analysis of JNIM's operations from January 1, 2022, through July 24, 2024 revealed a clear civilian engagement strategy. If allowed to continue unabated, this strategy will likely result in the al Qaeda-affiliate rooting themselves in the Sahel as al Shabaab has in Somalia (Palacios, Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel, 2024). JNIM has been benefiting from the lack of coordination and collaboration – this paper argues that JNIM's civilian engagement strategy that this author identified in a report published in April at the New Lines Institute and that was presented at the third annual International Security Seminar at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point.



### *Effective Terrorism Prevention and Counterterrorism*

Preventing and countering al Qaeda and ISIS in the Sahel and West Africa will lower the threat level of al Qaeda and ISIS, and thus the threat of terrorism globally, as well as address migration to Europe exacerbated by increased and continued conflict and instability or lack of opportunity in West Africa. Effective counterstrategy requires a more nuanced and updated understanding of the threat actor at the operational level and must come from an honest understanding of United States engagement in form and extent.

The sheer growth of terrorist activity in the Sahel since 2019 is reason for concern. There have been “11,200 deaths in the Sahel” thus far in 2024 - a number that has tripled since 2021 (The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Africa’s Constantly Evolving Militant Islamist Threat*, 2024). Indeed, this concerning number follows a 70% increase in violent attacks by both al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in 2021 (The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Surge in Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel Dominates Africa’s Fight Against Extremists*, 2024). Activity and territorial spread into Coastal West Africa can mostly be attributed to the success and evolution of JNIM’s strategy (and the extent of activity may be explained by the disconnect of prevention and counterterrorism strategies to core components of that strategy). According to author analysis of JNIM and ISGS activity in the Sahel from January 1, 2022 to January 1, 2024 re-collated from the ACLED export tool – JNIM has leveraged an intentionally low-kinetic civilian engagement strategy that hinges upon abduction & release of key persons of influence in the towns and villages the group is next expanding and moving into (Palacios, *Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM’s Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel*, 2024).

### *Connecting Counterterrorism Strategy to Terrorism Operations*

Counterterrorism will be more effective in the Sahel when it more firmly addresses the operations of the al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates, namely in geographic focus and in actively counteracting JNIM’s civilian engagement strategy, which can be counteracted with more intentionally coordinating and collaborating U.S. State Department, USAID, and DoD civilian affairs and special forces efforts. If U.S. engagement in the Sahel were to be coordinated geographically in respect to the cycle of localization/development, support of civil society, prevention, and non-kinetic and kinetic counterterrorism and conflict stabilization efforts – existing U.S. monies and programming would be more effective in achieving its objectives. U.S., international and national counterterrorism efforts so as not to ‘sweep’ the groups around the Sahel as this is not an effective use of force, when it is used to kinetically counter these groups). This is largely due to the lower levels of priority placed on policy and research on counterterrorism and West Africa as a region.

## *Conclusion*

There is great potential for the United States to be a better partner in supporting our African partners' terrorism prevention and counterterrorism efforts by leading in intelligence, terrorism analysis, and strategy guidance for a whole-of-government counterterrorism strategy. This strategy must be crafted through greater inter-agency coordination on the U.S. side that expounds on existing foreign aid and security assistance in the region and by coordinating and implementing such a strategy with both the partner nation's civilian government and security apparatus for whole-of-government application and implementation. This will be possible with a more nuanced understanding of the operations of al Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in a sub-region down to the town and village level, and with authorities from the national to the local levels.

## *Acknowledgements*

This work is possible due to the time and careful responses of tens of West African civil society organizations, security and development experts and academics across Africa and West Africa, and non-structured interviews with U.S. personnel who have participated in U.S. State Department, USAID, USAID-OTI, and DoD civilian affairs and special forces missions.

Data assistance was supported by William Brundage who joined the Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism portfolio as a Project Assistant Spring of 2024 and helped collate ACLED data from January 1, 2024 to July 20, 2024 as he himself was being trained – contributing and learning simultaneously. Will is just one of the bright young minds who I consider part of the Priority Sustainable team around the world – my hope is that upcoming conflict prevention and terrorism experts will be inspired to think 'how can I add value to the information space in a way that supports sustainable solutions'.

## *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## *Notes on Contributors*

Tammy Palacios is a Senior Analyst leading the Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism initiative at the New Lines Institute and 2023-2024 Research Fellow with the Modern War Institute at West Point. Palacios previously served as Program Head for the Non-state Actors program at the institute, where she worked in the field of violent and nonviolent non-state actors. Palacios earned a master's degree in security and terrorism studies from the University of Maryland Graduate School. She previously earned a graduate certificate in terrorism analysis from the National Consortium for the Study of





Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland and a bachelor's degree in international studies and politics and government from the University of Hartford.

## References

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024a). *Africa's Constantly Evolving Militant Islamist Threat*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Africa Center. Retrieved December 02, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig-2024-africa-constantly-evolving-militant-islamist-threat/>.
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (2024b). *Surge in Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel Dominates Africa's Fight Against Extremists*. Africa Center. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2022-01-surge-militant-islamist-violence-sahel-dominates-africa-fight-extremists/>.
- Center for Preventative Action. (2024). *Violent Extremism in the Sahel, Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel>
- Congressional Research Service. (2023). *Coup-Related Restrictions in U.S. Foreign Aid Appropriations*. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11267.pdf>
- Dagne, T. (2006). *RL33591 edn, Africa: U.S.* Congressional Research Service.
- Duhamel, J., & Nsaibia, H. (2021). *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>
- Eizenga, D., & Williams, W. (2023). *The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/publication/puzzle-jnim-militant-islamist-groups-sahel/>
- Foreign Military Sales Program General Information*. (n.d.). Defense Security Cooperation Agency. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://samm.dsca.mil/chapter/chapter-4>
- Humanitarian Snapshot*. (2023). United States Agency for International Development Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/USAID-BHA\\_West\\_Africa\\_Humanitarian\\_Snapshot-FY\\_2023.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/USAID-BHA_West_Africa_Humanitarian_Snapshot-FY_2023.pdf)
- Jeune Afrique. (2024). *How the US is lobbying for new military bases in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin*. Retrieved November 21, 2024 from <https://www.theafricareport.com/351759/how-the-us-is-lobbying-for-new-military-bases-in-cote-divoire-and-benin/>

- Langley, M. E. (2023). *Statement Of General Michael E. Langley, United States Marine Corps Commander, United States Africa Command Before The Senate Armed Services Committee*. Africa Command. Retrieved December 02, 2024 from <https://www.africom.mil/document/35173/africom-cleared-fy24-sasc-posture-hearing-16-mar-2023pdf>
- Last UN peacekeepers poised for complete withdrawal from Mali*. (2023). United Nations News. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1145207>
- Matisek, J. (2020). International competition to provide security force assistance in Africa: Civil-military relations matter. *PRISM*, 9(1), 102-113. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26940162?refreqid=fastly-default>
- NATO. (2024). *Strengthening Partnerships and Enhancing Security in Africa*. NATO Special Operations News. Retrieved December 04, 2024 from [https://www.nshq.nato.int/contents/article/flintlock\\_2024\\_strengthening\\_partnerships\\_and\\_enhancing\\_security\\_in\\_africa](https://www.nshq.nato.int/contents/article/flintlock_2024_strengthening_partnerships_and_enhancing_security_in_africa)
- Office of the Spokesperson. (2024a). *United States Announces More Than \$64 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa*. United States Department of State. Retrieved December 01, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-more-than-64-million-in-additional-humanitarian-assistance-in-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Office of the Spokesperson. (2024b). *United States Announces Nearly \$536 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for Sub-Saharan Africa*. United States Department of State. Retrieved December 04, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/united-states-announces-nearly-536-million-in-additional-humanitarian-assistance-for-sub-saharan-africa/>
- Palacios, T. (2023). *Priority Sustainable Counterterrorism: Supporting CSOs to Mitigate the Spread of Terrorism in the Sahel*. New Lines Institute. Retrieved December 13, 2024 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/nonstate-actors/priority-sustainable-counterterrorism-supporting-csos-to-migrate-the-spread-of-terrorism-in-the-sahel/>.
- Palacios, T. (2024). *Preventing Another al Qaeda-Affiliated Quasi-State: Countering JNIM's Strategic Civilian Engagement in the Sahel*. New Lines Institute. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://newlinesinstitute.org/nonstate-actors/preventing-another-al-qaeda-affiliated-quasi-state-countering-jnim-strategic-civilian-engagement-in-the-sahel/>
- Pandit, P. (2022). *Global Terrorism Index 2022: Key findings*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/global-terrorism-index-2023-key-findings-in-5-charts/>
- Phee, M. (2024). *Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee U.S. Department of State House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing 'FY 2025 Budget Request for Africa*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from



- <https://www.congress.gov/118/meeting/house/117303/witnesses/HHRG-118-FA16-Wstate-PheeM-20240515.pdf>
- Raleigh, C., Kishi, R., & Linke, A. (2023). Political instability patterns are obscured by conflict dataset scope conditions, sources, and coding choices. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 74. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01559-4>
- Reuters. (August 5, 2024). U.S. military completes withdrawal from key drone base in Niger. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-military-completes-withdrawal-key-drone-base-niger-2024-08-05/>
- Samassy Souare, A., & Palacios, T. (2024, June 10). *The Changing Nature of Security Threats in the Central Sahel Region: The Rise of Self-Defense Groups* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h60JKz6les&list=PLIQCER0zBbmbd1rZXk1MoKgVx1eHSWz0o&index=14>
- United States Africa Command. (2024). *Gen. Langley engages in Africa*. Retrieved December 03, 2024 from <https://www.africom.mil/spotlight/gen-langley-engages-in-africa>
- United States Agency for International Development. (2024). *The United States Announces Nearly \$176 Million in Additional Humanitarian Assistance for West Africa*. USAID from the American People. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-28-2024-united-states-announces-nearly-176-million-additional-humanitarian-assistance-west-africa>.
- United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS). (2023). *Annual report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2023. USAID Transition Initiatives Account*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/OTI>
- United States Department of Defense. (2016). *State Partnership Program*. Retrieved December 11, 2023 from <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives>
- United States Department of State. *U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/SPCPS-Factsheet-CWA-3.6.2024.pdf-reading-order.pdf>
- United States Department of the Army. (2023). *Army Support to Security Cooperation. (FM 3-22)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.armypubs.army.mil>
- United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2017). *Interorganizational Cooperation. (Joint Publication 3-08)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_08.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_08.pdf)
- United States Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2021). *Multinational Operations. (Joint Publication 3-16)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_16.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_16.pdf)

## Coup d'état in West Africa: A Resurgence of Military Rule in the 21st- Century?<sup>1</sup>

Babayo Sule<sup>2</sup>, Noah Echa Attah<sup>3</sup>, Usman Sambo<sup>4</sup>, Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane<sup>5</sup>, Bala Lummo Kachalla<sup>6</sup>,

### Abstract:

Recent developments in some West African countries are a classic case of reversal of democratic rule and have raised doubts about the feasibility of democracy in Africa. This study examines the factors that have led to the resurgence of coups d'état and the possibility of constructing a new typology of coups d'état and military rule in 21st century Africa. Documented data sources were used for the study and the method of analysis was content analysis. The study compared the nature and characteristics of recent coups with those of the past and the predominant causes. The study made an attempt to identify the gap in the theories by examining the various theories on military interventions, postulating an alternative theory that can better explain the current phenomenon different from those of the 1980s. The study is an early warning that military rule could re-emerge in West Africa and Africa.

### Keywords:

Coup d'état; France; Military Rule; Resurgence; West Africa.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.298>

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere in Gombe State, Nigeria; ORCID: 000-0002-3879-4884; babayosule@gmail.com b.sule@nul.ls.

<sup>3</sup> Professor in the Department of African Historical Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma; ORCID: 0009-0009-8052-3330; neattah@gmail.com.

<sup>4</sup> Professor in the Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University Damaturu; ORCID 0000-0002-4529-3850; ussambo2@gmail.com.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Political and Administrative Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma ; ORCID: 0000-0003-2310-9319, sr.tsoeu@nul.ls

<sup>6</sup> Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere; ORCID: 0000-0002-1997-0432; balalummo@gmail.com.



## *Introduction*

The military is a professional organisation with a highly structured hierarchy of officers and commands and coordinated tactical and strategic actions. States consciously build their militaries with security objectives in mind (Singh, 2014). The history of all great societies, mighty warriors, prominent leaders and world powers is incomplete without their ability to build military strength. It is assumed that the military limits its professionalism to providing nation states with internal and external security. However, this notion has been demystified by the actions of the military, particularly in the developing world in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and in the case of Africa in the 2020s (Luckham, 1990). Through coups d'état in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, the military has overstepped the boundaries of state security and interfered directly in political affairs. In this way, the infantile democratic experiment in the developing world has been halted, reversed and ended by the military's constant interference in politics (Wang, 1998).

Africa is one of the continents with the most successful coups, failed coups and attempted coups in the world (Decalo, 1973). Between the 1960s and the 1990s, more than 100 coups were documented in Africa. Although the phenomenon was thought to have ended forever, it has resurfaced in West Africa in the twenty-first century. Coups are either bloodless palace uprisings, violent civil wars or factional conflicts. Africa, which was rightly thought to be lagging behind other continents in the institutionalisation of democracy, is facing a governance crisis and increasing political instability. The recurring and seemingly unstoppable coups and counter-coups across Africa have multiple causes, such as socio-economic factors and poor governance (Albrecht & Eibl, 2018). Although Africa is rich in natural resources, it is economically underdeveloped, dependent on an asymmetric, carefully planned and Western-driven global political economy and impoverished (Kposowa & Jenkins, 1992). The situation was complicated by the ideological struggle between the US and the USSR during the Cold War, which created political instability in Africa through sponsored coups. In addition, the unstable political environment provided a breeding ground for uprisings or mutinies by military officers in Africa (Jenkins & Kposowa, 1990). Between 1956 and 1986, there were 60 coups in Africa (McGowan & Johnson, 1986).

Although coups and military rule are two different concepts, they are also closely linked, as coups often lead to military rule (Zimmermann, 1989). This study focuses primarily on coups in 21st century Africa, including their nature, causes, manifestations and changing dimensions. However, it is important to note that the link between coups and military rule remains relevant to the study. Although the focus is on coups, the relationship between coups and military rule is not ignored. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s brought with it a "third wave of democratisation" in which authoritarian states in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean began to institutionalise democratic values such as multi-party systems, civil societies, the protection of human rights and greater media freedom. Fukuyama (1996) passionately declared that Western liberal democracy had become sacrosanct as a result of this

development. However, recent developments in Africa and military takeovers have shown that democratisation is far from being achieved.

In the African context, the advocates of democracy have failed to recognise an important point: Coups are a clear sign that democracy has either failed or is failing. Therefore, military coups are seen as a solution or response to the mismanagement that results from democratic governance. This view and the theoretical postulates of military intervention in Africa are therefore analysed beyond the traditional debates. It is therefore argued that the recent coups in West Africa are the result of irresponsible governance and the mismanagement of African resources by puppet leaders supported by Western powers. Moreover, these coups are part of a movement against France's overbearing neo-colonialist intervention in Francophone countries, which has become a feature of Africa's history since independence (Attah, 2013). Although the coups mainly affected the former French colonies, they are discussed in the context of faltering democratic governance and the risks of a return to military rule in Africa. The following discussion will focus on the historical context of military rule in Africa to provide an overview of this phenomenon. We will examine the reasons for the resurgence of coups d'état in West Africa in light of the challenges facing democratic governance on the continent. We will also explore the question of whether these coups are the result of a failure of democracy or a response to neo-colonialism. Our study will aim to place the resurgence of coups d'état in West Africa in its historical context.

### *Historical Overview of Military Coups and Rule in Africa*

The political history of Africa cannot be complete without discussing military coups and military rule. The military as a professional organisation developed successively in Africa. Pre-colonial Africa had a robust military organisation with a strong army in various political organisations with sublime strategies and sophisticated warfare techniques (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). The colonial administrations established military organisations modelled on their own, such as the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in British West Africa (Ejiogu, 2007). The military played an enormous role in the political, social and economic development of the new states in many ways, which characterised the military's psychological orientation towards political intervention in various circumstances, as can be observed in most new states (Janowitz, 1964a; Janowitz, 1964b; Brömmelhörster & Wolf-Christian). This phenomenon is not unique to emerging or African powers. Even established democracies have given the military the appearance of an unstoppable power player because they believe that military power is an indicator of national strength (Luard, 1988).

Military intervention is not the violent removal of a democratically elected government as most people perceive it. Once the military takes power, it integrates the civilian elites and forms a diarchy. The powers of their civilian counterparts seem invisible, but they play a major role in military rule (Finer, 2002). Under different circumstances, coups do not equal a military uprising. It can emerge from revolutionary





movements and a long-term interface between the ruling class and factions within a state (Kandil, 2016). Military coups continue to be popular in Africa because the soldier is not democratic. A democratic soldier is an army that is structured as an institution that is professional, independent and law-abiding within its legal framework (Barany, 2012). Military coups have become a threat to democratisation in Africa because the army has not retreated to the barracks and can return anytime the opportunity presents itself (Onwumechili, 1998). Most military coups in Africa are rarely resisted, giving the impression that they are accepted (Feit, 1968). This scenario has implications for the process of political development in African states.

Between 1945 and 1960, there were more than 50 successful military takeovers in Africa, Asia, South America, the Caribbean and the Middle East (Huntington, 1975). In addition, there was political unrest, violence and chaos in numerous other countries. These coups were associated with several elements such as weak political institutions, highly politicised military organisations, traditional political systems, tyranny and fragile social cohesion – with this tragic development. In Africa, military coups occurred in various phases. In Egypt, there were two successful coups in the 1950s, which marked the beginning of the first wave. During the second wave, which began in the 1960s and included 23 successful coups, the West African region was the worst affected with 13 coups (Kieh & Kalu, 2021). In the third phase, there were around 20 successful coups, while the fourth wave recorded over 30. In the 1980s, there were a total of 67 successful military coups in Africa (Kieh & Kalu, 2021).

As early as the 1960s, all African sub-regions were affected by coups, with the exception of southern Africa. Due to the constant coups and counter-coups, military power had established itself as the "legitimate" standard in African administration by the 1970s and 1980s (Kieh & Kalu, 2021). There were 88 successful military coups in Africa between 1952 and 2012 (Souaré, 2014). In 48 sub-Saharan African countries between 1956 and 2003, there were 139 known coup plots, 108 unsuccessful coup attempts and 80 successful military coups, according to a database on African military coups (McGowan, 2005). According to McGowan (2006), 16 West African countries experienced 44 successful military coups, 43 violent failed coups, 82 attempted coups, 7 civil wars and about 20 other types of political violence between their independence and 2004. In less than 50 years, there have been 196 violent coups in West Africa. Since the 1950s, there have been 200 successful and unsuccessful coups in Africa, according to a study by Mwai (2023). Furthermore, Cheeseman (2021) hypothesised that there could be more coups in Africa before the end of the century, as some of them are seen as successful protests against bad administration by the so-called democratic movement.

Ngoma (2014) has proposed four models to explain military coups in Africa. The first model posits that the top military hierarchy plans, coordinates and executes coups, which was common in the 1960s and 1970s. The second model assumes co-operation between the military and civilians in the planning and execution of coups, as was common during the Cold War in the 1980s. The third model is externally orientated and involves foreign mercenaries or troops, as seen in Libya in 2013. The last model

states that middle-ranking military officers orchestrate and carry out coups against other military regimes or civilian regimes. In Africa, military coups are triggered by various factors such as economic, social and political factors. Economic failure is one reason cited by the coup plotters as justification their intervention, as can be seen in General Ankrah's justification for the coup d'état in Ghana in 1966. The quest for national unity and political stability was also used as a justification for military coups in Africa. Major General Juvenal Habyalimana's coup against the elected government in Rwanda, for example, was justified by the desire to end growing national disunity. (Carney, 2014)

Moreover, elected politicians sometimes face political crises and questions of legitimacy, which can contribute to military coups. There are other reasons for military coups in Africa. Corruption is one of them, as is the accusation that civilian governments do not respect the military profession. Ethnic rivalries have also played a role in some coups, such as the Nigerian coups in 1966. The first coup was led by ethnic Igbo military officers, while the counter-coup was led by the Hausa/Fulani military group. In some cases, internal military rivalries, as in Ghana, have led to a series of a series of coups and counter-coups in the 1960s and 1970s (Orhero & Okolie, 2023). The military has also justified its interference in African politics by citing high unemployment, extreme poverty and the misuse of public resources by civilian rulers (Adeyanju & Adeyanju, 2023).

The importance of competition for resources is an issue that is sometimes overlooked when considering military coups in Africa. According to Siollun (2009), the conflict between the citizens and the military over the management of oil wealth is at the root of the coup culture in Nigeria. Since the military benefited from Nigeria's oil wealth, they believed that direct control of the state would give them better access to this wealth than a position on the periphery of the government. Mbaku (1994) claimed that similar to Nigeria, many coups in Africa are motivated by the desire for financial gain. According to Collier & Hoeffler (2005) and Harkness (2016), Africa is caught in a cycle of coups because all countries have the same causes and there is a significant probability of repeated occurrences. According to Johnson et al. (1983), countries with rapid economic growth, high social mobilisation and unity experienced fewer coups than countries that did not.

Most justifications for rejecting military rule in Africa are: Setback to democracy, tyranny, poor governance, corruption, hostility from the international community, violation of human rights and restriction of freedom of expression. The civilian African leaders, on the other hand, are not absolved of the same accusations. According to Le Van (2015), not even the protracted democratic experiment had been able to establish a genuine democratisation process. Huntington (1975) supported this point of view and emphasised that the primary differences between governments lie not in the type of governance but in the degree of good governance, even if they profess democracy. According to Edeh & Ugwueze (2014), military coups and military dictatorships become important features and characteristics of developing countries. After the Second World War, increasing ethnic and class tensions, pervasive corruption, socio-economic policy



failures, human rights violations and disregard for the rule of law led to civil unrest, mob violence, frequent military takeovers and unstable political systems in Africa (Huntington, 1975; Kposowa & Jenkins, 1984). Furthermore, the problem of legitimacy that is often raised against military rule also applies to democratic governments in Africa, as most of their elections show (Attah, 2012). Undemocratic practises such as rigged and manipulated elections, unauthorised constitutional amendments that grant many African leaders life tenures, the suppression of multi-party competition, the denial of freedom of expression and authoritarian rule undermine the legitimacy of many civilian regimes in Africa, similar to what military rule did (Attah, 2003). Amoateng (2022) emphasises that coups in Africa are essentially the continuation of politics by other means.

The legitimacy of African military governments is often cited as one of several offences against democracy, although, as mentioned earlier, they have never questioned it. They therefore go to great lengths to demonstrate their legitimacy by governing swiftly and cutting back on spending on democracy. Each time the democratic system collapsed in Africa, the military established itself as an alternative form of administration (Ogueri, II, 1973). The military has employed several legitimisation strategies, including appointing a significant number of civilians to their cabinet posts, beginning to build key infrastructure, maintaining national political structures, upholding traditional institutions and opening up some limited freedom of debate on political issues. In other cases, they create new institutions where none existed before, as in the creation of states and local governments in Nigeria during military rule (Zolberg, 1973). In coups, however, the military is always asked to return to its barracks. Nevertheless, when coups are reversed, the military is always asked to return to their barracks.

The African Union (AU) and regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have produced and presented manuals to combat coups and anti-military regimes in Africa, but the efforts have not been successful (Witts, 2020; Ubi, 2022). At least six successful coups were carried out between 2020 and 2023, most of them in West Africa. To stop or prevent the ongoing coups, neither ECOWAS nor the AU have done enough, including enforcing good governance (Ziblim, 2022). ECOWAS has imposed strict sanctions on Mali and other countries where the military has recently taken power. According to Avoulete (2023), ECOWAS should rethink its strategy because the consequences affect the innocent people rather than the military authorities in the nations concerned. This underpins the view that the people are not included in the reckoning of democratic governance as democracy in Africa has become “rule of the politicians by the politicians for the politicians” (Bett, 2023). The inability to professionalise the army and disengage the military from direct involvement in political affairs is evidence of the failure of democracy in Africa. The challenging political and socio-economic crises that have manifested in insecurity, wars and conflicts, hunger and diseases, electoral fraud and violence as well as constitutional amendments to extend tenure and other vices have failed to distinguish constitutional democracy from military rule (Avoulete, 2023).

Although the AU is considered an ineffective body in strategically combating coups in Africa, the Lome Declaration in 2000 banned military coups and imposed sanctions on military regimes (Souaré, 2014), however, the AU has been criticised for remaining silent on the government's crackdown on citizens while it was quick to condemn the military-backed revolutions during the Arab Spring in 2011 (Ani, 2021). However, the AU is sometimes constrained by security considerations, as in the case of the 2021 coup in Chad, but the AU is perceived as the body responsible for devising policies and measures to reverse coups and counter democratic upheavals in Africa (Mohammed, 2022).

### *A Resurgence of Coups D'état in West Africa: Some Explanations*

Coups do not take place in a vacuum. Often, the corrupt and dictatorial tendencies of so-called democrats tacitly invite military intervention (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). Military coups originated as palace coups, armed rebellions, social upheavals and full-fledged coups d'état (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). The idea that democracy is being fought for by the global proponents of democracy and imposed on African states resonates with the withdrawal of the military from the political sphere. This is not a popular movement of the kind that emerged in Europe and America (Ngoma, 2004). The West has internationalised democracy, denigrated the military and imposed hostile sanctions that African leaders have been unable to resist. Elections are held at regular intervals to meet the criteria for the system to be called a democracy, even if it does not satisfy the proponents of democratisation (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). This is evident in the irony and parody of how a non-democratic institution (the military) oversees the democratisation that Africans continue to believe will bring about true democratisation (Anene, 1995). So a mere withdrawal of the military and a return to civilian rule – political control - is a simplistic view of democratisation in Africa.

The transition to civilian rule is often rushed and democracy is installed without careful consideration of the necessary conditions for good governance (Gutteridge, 1985). This practise cannot defuse military rule in Africa, as the recent coups in West Africa have shown. Due to authoritarian electoral behaviour, the absence of democratic norms and good governance, and the autocratic behaviour of African civilian leaders, democracy has not been able to curb the likelihood of military coups in Africa (Lindberg, 2008). The ease with which the military planned and executed coups in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s has facilitated the next step of military intervention (Charlton, 1983). This is because of the rampant cases that dominated the political climate in Africa during this period. One of the main characteristics of coups in Africa is the tendency of military dictators to transform themselves into civilian rulers (Assensoh, & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). These examples include Sudanese President Omar El Bashir and Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, while others left the stage and returned as democratic leaders, such as Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria and Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

One of the theoretical explanations for military coups in Africa is the link to foreign powers and their influence foreign influence (Wikings, 1983), the Cold War, or

international conspiracies were identified as factors in the rampant coups in Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Kalu, 2021). The ideological struggle between the USA and the USSR during the Cold War strongly influenced and inspired some coups in Africa. The Cold War led to liberation movements, regime changes and coups d'état in Africa on both sides of the competing ideological rivals, i.e. the Eastern and Western blocs. For example, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana, said that the US and the CIA used unpatriotic Ghanaians to overthrow him because he was against exploitative capitalism (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). However, the conspiracy of the world's superpowers is still present after the Cold War. For example, the West tacitly approved the coup to overthrow Morsi in Egypt in 2013, while the West not only supported the coup in Zimbabwe in 2017, but also ensured that Emerson Mnangagwa, one of the coup's backers, became president (Jawo, 2022). Similarly, France is believed to have supported the coup d'état in Chad in 2021, which is why the AU failed to take strong action against the military junta (Jawo, 2022).

Ideological predisposition is considered another theory that could explain military coups in Africa and is closely linked to the idea mentioned above. Some well-known African patriots, including Gamel Abdulnasser in Egypt, Patrice Lumumba in Zaire, Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Murtala Muhammed in Nigeria and many others, were allegedly overthrown because of their ideological differences with the West (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). Sometimes conflicting ideologies of the military and the rulers led to the overthrow of democratic regimes (Singh, 2014). Another explanation is that after independence, the military in Africa has become an important social institution, not only for territorial defence but also as a guardian of society (Kalu, 2021). As a result, the military sees itself as the messiah of African socio-economic and political crises by immediately intervening and taking control when they believed society was in danger of imploding (Huntington, 2000a).

The military have always cited these reasons as justification for their incessant coups in West Africa (Hoel, 2008). After political independence, the imbalanced civil-military relations meant that the military found itself in a position where it could influence the political processes to the point of invasion when necessary (Janowitz, 1984a)). The lack of a specified agenda for the military's withdrawal from politics is a problematic way of not defining a clear separation of civil-military relations. As a result, military influence on African politics remains intact (Al-Hamdi, 2014). However, Matei (2012) believes that improving civil-military relations can limit the military to its constitutional role in securing the state without encroaching into the political space. This is possible if the military is physically and ideologically separated from the political institutions, but politicians also have to play a role in ensuring good governance (Schiff, 2009).

Huntington (1975) postulates a contagion perspective as a theoretical basis for military coups in Africa by emphasising that "political organisations and procedures that are susceptible to apolitical influences from within society are also susceptible to influences from outside society. They can easily be infiltrated by agents, groups and ideas from other political systems. Thus, a coup in one political system can easily be



triggered" by similar groups in other, less developed political systems." (Huntington, 1975). This has been the historical trend in military coups in the West African sub-region since the 1960s. The recent coups in Chad and Niger, among other West African countries, have clearly demonstrated this. A situation that is already scaring other West African leaders such as Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, whose election is being questioned. Because a coup in one country can trigger another coup in a weak and fragile country the neighbouring political system instead of trying to build solid political institutions at home (Agyeman-Duah, 1990). The military finds an alibi in seizing power in this context, rather than stabilising the state through an improved security apparatus. However, the military always argue that the state will never stabilise if they have not taken over decision-making power.

### *Coup D'Etat in West Africa: A Democratic Failure or A Liberation Movement against Neo-Colonialism?*

Huntington (2000b) took the early and premature view that the entire world democratised in the twentieth century in the third wave of democratisation. Huntington (2000b) argues that it is the democratisation phase in which African states, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe are building democracy and democratic institutions. Similarly, Clark (2007) emphasises that coups and military rule have steadily declined in Africa. This has almost convinced the world that democracy is here to stay. Unfortunately, the recent events of military coups the Republic of Chad, Guinea, Mali, the Republic of Niger and Gabon show that Africa is still a long way from democratisation in the 21st century. Onwumechili (1998) notes that there are five main reasons why military coups keep occurring in West Africa. These are the control and willingness to use arms, the declining professionalism of the military, the increasing perception of the military as a reasonable alternative to a political career, the lack of a lasting modern democratic culture and the deplorable support for military coups by some sections of the world community (Onwumechili, 1998).

The resurgence of coups in West Africa in the 21st century shows that the sub-region has not achieved any significant political development after more than half a century, apart from the ritual of holding regular elections to qualify for a nomenclature of democracy (Akinola et al. 2022). Between August 2020 and August 2023, six successful military coups were carried out after three failed attempts (Akinola et al. 2022). The military used a rigged parliamentary election to support its coup d'état in Mali in August 2020. Between March and April 2021, successive military coups took place in the Republic of Niger and Chad, the latter leading to the death of former President Idris Deby (Akinola et al. 2022). In May 2021, there was a counter-coup in Mali, followed by the coup in Guinea in September 2021. In October 2021, there was a counter-coup in Sudan, Chad's neighbouring country, against the 2019 coup that overthrew President Omar El Bashir (Akinola et al. 2022). In January 2022, there was another coup in Burkina Faso, followed by the most recent coup in the Republic of Niger on 26 July 2023 (Nsaibia, 2023).

In a seemingly unstoppable wave of resurgence of military rule in Africa, another coup was announced in Gabon on 30 August 2023, where President Ali Bongo was overthrown a few hours after the result of the country's presidential election was announced (Daily Trust Newspaper, 30th August, 2023). The removal of Ali Bongo in Gabon is another challenge to democratisation in Africa because the military claimed that the election had been massively rigged, amounting to a civilian coup d'état that is often ignored by democracy advocates. The internet and social media were shut down during the election, which was believed to be characterised by irregularities (Daily Trust Newspaper, 30th August, 2023) . Gabon is a good example of an undemocratic civilian regime where the Bongo family dynasty has held the country hostage for 55 years since political independence in 1960. Some indicators that justify the failure of democracy as a plausible explanation for the resurgence of the military are overwhelming. Most of the countries that have recently experienced coups are among the poorest in the world. The Republic of Niger is the seventh poorest country in the world, Chad the ninth poorest, Mali the eighteenth poorest, Burkina Faso the nineteenth poorest and Guinea the twenty-fifth poorest (Ventura, 2023). The five West African countries affected by coups from 2021 to 2023 are therefore fall within the 25 poorest countries in the world. The GDP of these countries, as shown in Figure 1, displays extreme poverty and impoverishment.

#### Global Poverty Ranking of West African States Affected by Military Coups between 2021 and 2023

S/No.	Country	Global Poverty Ranking	GDP-PPP(\$)
1.	Niger Republic	7	1,600
2.	Chad	9	1,787
3.	Mali	18	2,656
4.	Burkina Faso	19	2,726
5.	Guinea	25	3,218

Figure 1: Source: Ventura, 2023 (tabulated by the authors).

However, there is no connection between the natural resources of these countries and the harsh reality of their global poverty ranking. This again raises the question of the failure of democracy and the perceived neo-colonialist emasculation of France. Gold and uranium exports are Niger's main sources of income and foreign revenue, yet the country is one of the poorest in the world. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Niger earned \$300 million from its uranium exports in 2019 alone, but of the uranium produced in Niger in 2021, which accounted for 311,110 tonnes or more than 5% of global production, was ceded to France as part of a repugnant neo-colonialist agreement. Similarly, despite producing about 6.5 tonnes of gold in 2019, worth about \$260 million, Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 189th out of 189 (Orufa, 2023). Through proper, independent management of mineral

resources, proportional negotiations and planned development of mineral resources without the dictates of France, Niger should be able to overcome its poverty. However, the democratic leaders, who are usually France's puppets, are not nationalist in the sense of modernisers and have consequently failed to promote economic development and growth. This explains why the country's population joyfully celebrated the coup of July 2023.

Chad also has deposits of gold, silver, diamonds, quartz, bauxite, granite, tin, tungsten, uranium, limestone, sand, gravel, kaolin and salt that could have increased exports and revenues by billions of dollars if properly developed. Gold mining alone brought the country revenues of 137 million dollars in 2018 (International Trade Administration, 2020). According to the International Trade Administration (2022a), Mali's gold reserves are estimated at 800,000 metric tonnes, with a net export value of 63.4 metric tonnes worth \$3.7 billion. Mali's mining sector comprises 2 million tonnes of iron ore, 5,000 tonnes of uranium, 20 million tonnes of manganese, 4 million tonnes of lithium and 10 million tonnes of limestone (International Trade Administration, 2022a). Despite these huge deposits of mineral resources, Mali still ranks 18th on the global poverty league table. Similarly, Burkina Faso is rich in minerals such as gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphate and limestone in significant quantities. These industries account for only 8% of government revenue, but 75% of exports in 2019, as France has been muzzled. It is estimated that the Burkinabe minerals sector will bring the country USD 4 billion in revenue each year if those responsible do not have to answer to French imperialism. Like other countries, Guinea is rich in mineral resources, including graphite, manganese, nickel and uranium, and has large quantities of high-quality iron ore. Guinea exported bauxite worth just over 4.3 billion dollars (85.7 million tonnes) and gold worth 5.8 billion dollars (3,281,600 ounces). Despite the wealth potential of these mineral resources (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2023).

Guinea, like most African countries, has not been able to overcome its underdevelopment, partly due to the poverty of its leadership. Guinea like its other counterparts is rich in mineral resources, which include graphite, manganese, nickel, and uranium, with a large amount of high-quality iron ore. Guinea exported just over \$4.3 billion of bauxite (85.7 million tons) and \$5.8 billion of gold (3,281,600 oz.) (International Trade Administration, 2022b). Compared to other African countries affected by the military coup, Gabon has higher development indicators and also produces oil. With a population of only 2.3 million, Gabon produces 184,911 barrels of crude oil every day. With 150 million tonnes of reserves and a production of 1.8 million tonnes since 2015, it is the fourth largest producer of high-quality manganese in the world (Arise, 2023). More than 2 billion tonnes of iron ore have been found in the nation, along with over 40 tonnes of gold and a variety of other minerals such as lead, zinc, copper, diamonds, and titanium (Arise, 2023). Unfortunately, Gabon is one of the poorest nations in the world due to the mismanagement of state resources by its leaders and continued French exploitation.



These Francophone nations are underdeveloped and extremely poor despite their vast mineral resources. Burkina Faso ranks 77th on the Corruption Perceptions Index with 42 points, Niger 123rd with 32 points, Mali 137th with 28 points, Guinea 147th with 25 points and Chad 167th with only 19 points, all affected by the recent coups in West Africa (Transparency International, 2022). According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (2022), these African countries are also among the most unstable and most vulnerable to terrorism. According to the Global Terrorism Index for 2023, Burkina Faso is the second most terrorised country in the world with a score of 8.564, Mali is the fourth most terrorised with a score of 8.412, Niger is the tenth most terrorised with a score of 7.616 and Chad is the nineteenth most terrorised with a score of 6.168. Three of the countries examined in this study are among the top 10 most terrorised countries in 2023, which illustrates the extent of political and social unrest in these countries. Burkina Faso ranks 18th, Niger 32nd, Mali 37th, Guinea 42nd and Chad 47th in terms of good governance indicators in Africa according to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation standards (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022). These are all indicators of poor governance and backwardness in nations with abundant natural resources. Compared to other African countries affected by the military coup, Gabon has higher development indicators; it also produces oil. With a population of only 2.3 million, Gabon produces 184,911 barrels of crude oil per day. Gabon is also the fourth largest producer of high-grade manganese in the world, with 150 million tonnes of reserves and production of 1.8 million tonnes since 2015 (Arise, 2022).

While the West continues to insist that democracy in Africa is inevitable, it cares less about the institutionalisation of democratic values and strong political institutions that will promote good governance and democratic dividends. The West does not care about civilian coups in the name of democracy and unconstitutional regime extensions through constitutional amendments as witnessed in Cameroon and Uganda, while it looked the other way during the coup d'état in Egypt in 2013, Zimbabwe in 2017, Sudan in 2019 and Chad in 2022. Furthermore, the global champions of democracy have failed to support good governance by imposing harmful neoliberal economic policies that continue to underdevelop Africa. Ake's (1996) observation that democracy was not meant to stabilise or develop Africa is still relevant. Perhaps the democratic crusaders feared that a true institutionalisation of democracy would liberate Africa's political economy with an increasingly enlightened citizenry that would participate in politics and hold leaders accountable. But this fear, if true, is backfiring.

This leads us to the link between the liberation of West African Francophone countries from the excesses of France and a close observation of the terrain of the coups will show that the Anglophone countries have not been affected so far. All coups originate in the francophone countries. However, the Anglophone countries could be affected if the trend continues. This is because while Francophone countries are perceived to be reacting to the domination of France, the citizens of Anglophone countries are suffering from indigenous colonisation by their democratic rulers who have failed to introduce good governance and democratic dividends with the tacit support

of the West. France refused to accept the fact that these former colonies were now independent, at least politically. While Britain completely ceded power to the colonised West African states, France continued direct colonisation in secret, a situation that was well worked out during the period of decolonisation. For example, all francophone countries in West Africa still use the French currency, the CFA. The mineral deposits in these countries are largely mined, marketed and exported to France by French companies. Ironically, countries that are rich in minerals are poor in wealth. France, which has few minerals, is rich in these francophone African resources.

France must face the fact that these coups are vehement messages against the ongoing injustice of trade imbalance and the continued colonisation of its former colonies. France must take care, rethink, remodel and adopt a new model of respectful political and economic relations before it loses its heritage and influence over its former colonies. This study theorises that other Francophone countries in West Africa will continue to rebel against France. This could spill over to Anglophone countries like Nigeria where life under the so-called democratic rulers is hell. For example, in Nigeria, with an estimated population of 220 million people in 2023, about 25 million people will be affected by acute hunger, more than 20 million children will not go to school and about 70% will live below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Successive democratic governments continue to implement harsh economic policies under the supervision of neoliberal financial institutions, making life unbearable for the majority of people. The recent removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria led to an increase in the price of fuel from N198 to N620 in a country that is a leading producer of fossil fuels, and thus drive the cost of everything into an inflation that has never been seen in this country (Abayomi, 2023). If this trend continues, such coups are inevitable, provided that neighbouring Francophone countries continue to rebel against their master, France. The fact that the coups are not protested but supported by the citizens of the countries concerned is seen as tacit approval of military rule as an alternative to democratic failure. This means that not only some parts of the elite are fed up with the democratic failure and the constant colonisation by France, but also most of the citizens of these countries. If the deposed democratically elected leaders do a good job, the citizens will protest, no matter how brutal the military might be.

## *Conclusion*

The perspective and theory of the current coups differ from previous coups in Africa. Albert & Albert (2022) are of the opinion that the recent West African coups have not erased the past, this analysis offers an alternative perspective. Although all the elements, manifestations, dimensions and theoretical postulates are still relevant to explain contemporary coups in Africa, the West African coups show that, in addition to the earlier explanations, there is a theoretical reflection on the failure of democracy and a movement towards emancipation from the West, especially from the excesses of France in West Africa. Coups d'état are nothing new in West Africa as they have been part of Africa's political history since the 1950s when the continent began to experience military



coups and rule. The factors that led to the earlier coups are analysed to determine whether they continue to be the main causes of the recent coups in Africa. The main idea of the study, however, is that pseudo-democratisation and misrule affect democratic stability in Africa and coups are seen as an alternative to democratic failure. Most importantly, the study finds that the recent coups in West Africa have a different pattern to the events of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The French West African countries continue to suffer from the exploitation and economic dominance of France. Citizens and some military rulers are resentful of the pattern of post-colonial relations in francophone countries. French officials have fallen out of favour in states that have experienced recent coups, which have been interpreted as rebellion against the long-established French order in the countries. This simply means that France's continued control over its former colonies is coming to an end.

For France to regain its glory, it should rethink and reorganise its relations in a more reciprocal, respectful way than under the rigid control of the countries. The world's democracy advocates should heed the loud messages of the coups. Democratisation in Africa should be sincerely institutionalised and not just used to serve some foreign interests. A model that gives economic freedom to African states should work without forcing the impractical, prescriptive bitter pills of neoliberalism on Africans. If African citizens experience good governance and African civilian rulers have a free hand to initiate their own development policies, democracy will flourish and coups will be fought by the citizens from within and not come from outside. First of all, African countries need a technology transfer that enables the internal utilisation of natural resources. This will change the balance of trade from commodity production to industrialised nations. Leaders elected on the platform of democracy in Africa should be selfless, committed to genuine development and effectively utilise national resources for growth and development.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Professor Noah Echa Attah (neattah@gmail.com; ne.attah@nul.ls; Orcid: 0009-0009-8052-3330)

Noah Echa Attah is a Professor in the Department of African Historical Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma. He holds a PhD and an MA in History Degrees from the University of Ibadan (UI), Nigeria, as well as a BA in History Degree from Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Nigeria. He is a recipient of the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) Individual Research Grant of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 2017. His research focus includes Agrarian Studies, Environmental Studies, Natural Resource Conflicts and Peacebuilding. Noah is currently a Principal Investigator of a research



project entitled Policing and Security Provisioning in Nigeria: Exploring the Policy and Practice of Non-State Actors, supported by the National Research Fund (NRF) of the Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

Babayo Sule (PhD) (babayosule@gmail.com; b.sule@nul.ls; Orcid: 000-0002-3879-4884)

Is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere in Gombe State, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Maiduguri Nigeria, a Master of Science in Political Science from Bayero University Kano Nigeria and a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science from Universiti Utara Malaysia. His research interests are in the areas of elections and political parties, security studies and African politics. He has published numerous research articles in local and international journals and participated in several local and international conferences. He has supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate theses. He currently teaches undergraduate and postgraduate students, conducts research and does community work. He is currently with the Department of Political Science and Administrative Studies, National University of Lesotho. Babayo Sule has published numerous books, including Political Party Financing and Electoral Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Deradicalisation and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria: Countering Boko Haram Extremism, Nigerian Political Parties in the Fourth Republic: Evolution, Characteristics, and Dynamics of Transformation, and Non-State Actors and Violence in Nigeria: the Political and Socioeconomic Implications.

Professor Usman Sambo (PhD) (ussambo2@gmail.com; Orcid: 0000-0002-4529-3850)

Is a Professor in the Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University Damaturu. He obtained his Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration from the University of Maiduguri. He was the former Director of Administration of the Federal Medical Centre Nguru in Yobe State, Nigeria. He is interested in research in the areas of good governance, politics and administration as well as global issues. He has published numerous research articles in local and international journals and participated in several local and international conferences. He has supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate theses. He is currently teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, conducting research and doing community service. Usman Sambo has published numerous books, including Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Deradicalisation and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria: Countering Boko Haram Extremism

Dr Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane (sr.tsoeu@nul.ls)

Dr. Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane is a Senior Lecturer in Political and Administrative Studies at NUL and a Research Associate of the NUL-ERC. She has over twenty years of experience as a Research Professional in public policy analysis, development



management, and gender studies. Her research field spans topics such as informal economic policy, garment industry and trade unions, gender intersectionality, adolescent health policy, democratization and political constitutionalism, and energy democracy in Africa. She also has an interest in Futures studies such as developing forecasting scenarios for the Lesotho we want. Dr. Tsoeu-Ntokoane has extensive research collaborations with government institutions, NGOs, and international agencies such as the EU and UNDP.

Bala Lummo Kachalla (balalummo@gmail.com)

Bala Lummo Kachalla is a lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere. He is engaged in teaching, research, and community services. His main areas of interest are international relations, international politics, and Nigerian democracy. He taught many undergraduate courses, supervised several undergraduate courses, and is currently active in attending both local and international conferences, seminars, workshops, and other research undertakings.

## Reference

- Abayomi, O. (2023). "Consequences of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nigeria's Balance of Trade." *Vanguard* (June 28, 2023). Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/06/consequences-of-fuel-subsidy-removal-on-nigerias-balance-of-trade/> on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 04:11 pm.
- Adeyanju, J. B., & Adeyanju, F. O. (2023). Rethinking the Economic Implications of Leadership Deficit in Nigeria. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(1), 28-39. <https://journals.fukashere.edu.ng/index.php/kjpir/article/view/82>.
- Agyeman-Duah, B. (1990). Military Coups, Regime Change, and Interstate Conflicts in West Africa. *Armed Forces & Society*, 16(4), 547-570. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9001600404>.
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington: Brookings Institution.
- Akinola, A.O., & Ratidzo C. M. (2022). *The Resurgence of Military Coups and Democratic Reversals in Africa*. Auckland: Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation.
- Albert, I.O., & Olumayowa, O.A. (2022). "Coups Contagion in Africa: Is the Past Different from the Present?" *African Journal on Terrorism, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October 2022)*, 13-30.
- Albrecht, H., & Eibl, F. (2018). How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups. *International Studies Quarterly*, 62(2), 315-328. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx085>.
- Al-Hamdi, D. M. (2014). Military in-and-out of Politics: A Theoretical Approach to Military Disengagement. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(8), 193-201.
- Amoateng, N. (2022). "Military Coups in Africa: A Continuation of Politics by Other Means?"

- Accord* (August 19th 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/military-coups-in-africa-a-continuation-of-politics-by-other-means/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:45 pm.
- Anene, J. N. (1995). Military Coups and Redemocratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 12(1), 181-200. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45197413>.
- Ani, N. C. (2021). Coup or not Coup: The African Union and the Dilemma of “Popular Uprisings” in Africa. *Democracy and Security*, 17(3), 257-277. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2021.1899915>.
- Anyoko-Shaba, O. (2022). The Resurgence of Military Coups d'état in African Politics and the Reversal of Democracy. *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 12(1), 124-135. <https://www.unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/186>.
- Arise (2023). *Mining and Mineral Industry in Gabon: Unwinding the Potential of Mineral Extraction and Processing*. Arise Integrated Industrial Platforms, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/gabon-coup-omar-ali-bongo-history-b2401733.html> on 30th August 2023 at 09:37 pm.
- Assensoh, A.B., & Alex-Assensoh, Y.M. (2001). *African Military History and Politics Coups and Ideological Incursions, 1900–Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Attah, N.E. (2012). “Constitutional Democracy and Military Rule in Nigeria: Two Sides of the Same Coin?” In Olawale, A., Ogen, O., & Attah, N.E. (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Peace, Conflict and Warfare in Africa*, pp.223-238. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Attah, N.E. (2013). The Historical Conjunction of Neo-Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 5(5), 70-79. <http://www.academicjournals.org/JASD>.
- Aubyn, F. K., Ziblim, I., & Apau, R. (2022). “Implications of Unconstitutional Changes of Government on Violent Extremism and Terrorism Interventions: What More Could ECOWAS and AU do? *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 111-124.
- Avoulete, K. (2022). *Should ECOWAS Rethink its Approach to Coups?* Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 3 February 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/02/should-ecowas-rethink-its-approach-to-coups/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:51 pm.
- Barany, Z. (2012). *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Bett, R. (2023). For King or Country? The Role of Political Parties in Ensuring Democracy and Good Governance. The Role of Political Parties in Ensuring Democracy and Good Governance. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4472664>.
- Brömmelhörster, J., & Wolf-Christian, P. (2003). “Soldiers in Business: An Introduction”. In Brömmelhörster, J., & Wolf-Christian, P. (Eds.), *The Military as an Economic Factor: Soldiers in Business*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Carney, J. J. (2012). ‘Far from Having Unity, We are Tending Towards Total Disunity’: The Catholic Major Seminary in Rwanda, 1950–62. *Studies in World Christianity*, 18(1), 82-102. <https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/swc.2012.0007>.
- Charlton, R. (1983). Predicting African Military Coups”. *Futures*, 15(4) 281-292. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(83\)90129-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(83)90129-5).



- Cheeseman, N. (2021). "Lessons from Africa. "Is there such a Good Coup?" *Africa Report* (September 20th, 2021). Retrieved from <https://www.theafricareport.com/128857/lessons-from-africa-is-there-such-a-thing-as-a-good-coup/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:28 pm.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2005). *Coup Traps: Why does Africa have so many Coups D'état?* Oxford: Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, University of Oxford.
- Daily Trust Newspaper (2023). "Fresh Coup in Africa: Gabon President Removed". *Daily Trust* (30th August 2023). Retrieved from <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-fresh-coup-in-africa-gabon-president-removed/#>: on 30th August 2023 at 04:13 pm.
- Decalo, S. (1973). Military coups and military regimes in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1), 105-127. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00008107>.
- Edeh, H. C., & Ugwueze, M. I. (2014). Military and Politics: Understanding the Theoretical Underpinnings of Military Incursion in Third World Politics. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 2047-2058. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5901/MJSS.2014.V5N1P481>.
- Ejiogu, E. C. (2007). Colonial Army Recruitment Patterns and Post-Colonial Military Coups D'etat in Africa: The Case of Nigeria, 1966-1993. *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, 35(1), 100-132. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/smsajms/article/view/75317>.
- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2023). *Burkina Faso: Overview and Role of the EITI*. Wednesday 15th May, 2023. Retrieved from <https://eiti.org/countries/burkina-faso> on 30th August 2023 at 04:15 pm.
- Feit, E. (1968). Military Coups and Political Development: Some Lessons from Ghana and Nigeria. *World Politics*, 20(2), 179-193. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009794>.
- Finer, S.E. (2002). *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Fukuyama, F. (1996). *End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Global Terrorism Index (2023). *2022 Global Terrorism Index*. Stockholm: Institute for Peace and Economic Research.
- Gutteridge, W. (1985). Undoing Military Coups in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 7(1), 78-89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598508419825>.
- Harkness, K. A. (2016). The Ethnic Army and the State: Explaining Coup Traps and the Difficulties of Democratisation in Africa. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 60(4), 587-616. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714545332>.
- Hoel, R. (2008). *Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria and Tanzania: A Comparative, Historical Analysis*. Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the Stellenbosch University, December 2008, 23.
- Hoel, R. (2008). *Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria and Tanzania: A Comparative, Historical Analysis*. Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the Stellenbosch University, December 2008).
- Huntington, S.P. (1975). *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Free Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (2000a). *The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military*

- Relations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (2000b). *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Twentieth Century*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- International Trade Administration (2020). *Chad Country Commercial Guide: Mining and Precious Metals*. (7th September 2020) Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/chad-mining-and-precious-metals> on 30th August 2023 at 04:03 pm.
- International Trade Administration (2022a). *Mali Country Commercial Guide: Mining*. Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/mali-mining> on 30th August 2023 at 04:06 pm.
- International Trade Administration (2022b). *Guinea Country Commercial Guide: Mining and Minerals*. Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/guinea-mining-and-minerals> on 30th August 2023 at 04:06 pm.
- Janowitz, M. (1964a). *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Janowitz, M. (1964b). *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jawo, M. (2022). *The Re-emergence of Military Coups in Africa: An Analysis of the African Union Response to the Unconstitutional Change of Government in Chad in 2021*. Political Science: Global Politics and Societal Change One-year master 15 Credits Summer, 2022, Malmo University.
- Jenkins, J. C., & Kposowa, A. J. (1990). Explaining Military Coups d'Etat: Black Africa, 1957-1984. *American Sociological Review*, 861-875. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095751>.
- Jenkins, J. C., & Kposowa, A. J. (1992). The Political Origins of African Military Coups: Ethnic Competition, Military Centrality, and the Struggle Over the Postcolonial State. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36(3), 271-291. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600773>.
- Kalu, K.A. (2021). "Coups d'État: Theoretical Issues", In Kieh Jr. G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (Eds.), *Democratisation and Military Coups in Africa Post-1990 Political Conflicts*, pp.51-73. Lanham, Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kandil, H. (2016). *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kieh Jr., G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (2021) "Introduction: "No Farewell to Arms in Africa?" In Kieh Jr., G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (Eds.), *Democratisation and Military Coups in Africa Post-1990 Political Conflicts*, pp.1-15. Lanham, Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kposowa, A. J., & Jenkins, J. C. (1993). The Structural Sources of Military Coups in Postcolonial Africa, 1957-1984. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99(1), 126-163. DOI: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/230231>.
- Le Van, C.A. (2015). *Dictators and Democracy in African Development: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindberg & S. I., & Clark, J. F. (2008). Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa? *Democratisation*, 15(1), 86-105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701768182>.
- Luard, E. (1988). *The Blunted Sword: The Erosion of Military Power in Modern World Politics*, London: I B Tauris.
- Luckham, R. (1994). The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues. *African Studies Review*, 37(2), 13-75. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/524766>.





- Matei, F.C (2012). "A New Conceptualisation of Civil-Military Relations". In Bruneau, T.C., & Matei, F.C. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations*, pp.26-38. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Mbaku, J.M. (1994). Military Coup as Rent-Seeking Behaviour. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 22(2), 241-284. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45371310>.
- McGowan, P., & Johnson, T. H. (1984). African Military Coups d'État and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22(4), 633-666. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00056275>.
- McGowan, P., & Johnson, T. H. (1986). Sixty Coups in Thirty Years—Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D'état. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24(3), 539-546. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00007175>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2003). African Military Coups D'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(3), 339-370. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0300435X>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2005). Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part I, Theoretical Perspectives. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(1), 5-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277885>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2006). Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part II, Empirical Findings. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(2), 234-253. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277886>.
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022). *2022 Ibrahim Index of African Governance*. Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022. Retrieved from <https://iiag.online/downloads.html> on 30th August 2023 at 03:40 pm.
- Mohammed, H. (2022). "The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union (AU)". *Socialscientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(3), 83-110. <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/>.
- Mwai, P. (2023). "Are Military Takeovers on the Rise in Africa?" *Real Clear Defense* (January 5 2023). Retrieved from [https://www.realcleardefense.com/2023/01/05/are\\_military\\_takeovers\\_on\\_the\\_rise\\_in\\_africa\\_873912.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/2023/01/05/are_military_takeovers_on_the_rise_in_africa_873912.html) on 30th August 2023 at 05:20 pm.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2022). *Nigeria: Quarterly Report*. Abuja: NBS, 2022. Retrieved from [www.nbs.gov.org](http://www.nbs.gov.org) on 30th August 2023 at 04:18 pm.
- Ngoma, N. (2004). Coups and Coup Attempts in Africa: Is there a Missing Link? *African Security Studies*, 13(3), 85-94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2004.9627307>.
- Nsaibia, H. (2023). "Fact Sheet: Military Coup in Niger". *ACLEDDATA* (3rd August, 2023). Retrieved from <https://acleddata.com/2023/08/03/fact-sheet-military-coup-in-niger/> on 30th August 2023 at 03:30 pm.
- Ogueri, E. (1973). Theories and Motives of Military Coups D'état in Independent African States. *Africa Spectrum*, 8(3), 280-302. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40173589>.
- Onwumechili, C. (1998). *African Democratisation and Military Coups*. Westport: Praeger.
- Orhero, A. E., & Okolie, U. C. (2023). Nigeria's Trend of Military Administration and Economic Decay: An Analytical Review. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 4(2), 355-381. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25273/she.v4i2.17683>.
- Orufa, S. (2023). "What are the Economic Implications of Niger's Suspension of Uranium and



- Gold Exports?" *Ventures Africa* (August 3, 2023). Retrieved from <https://venturesafrica.com/what-are-the-economic-implications-of-nigers-suspension-of-uranium-and-gold-exports/> on 30th August 2023 at 03:45 pm.
- Schiff, R.L. (2009). *The Military and Domestic Politics*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Singh, N. (2014). *Seizing Power. The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Siollun, M. (2009). *Oil, Politics, and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup (1966-1976)*. New York: Algora Publishing.
- Smith, B.C. (2003). *Understanding Third World Politics. Theories of Political Change and Development*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Souaré, I. K. (2014). The African Union as a Norm Entrepreneur on Military Coups D'état in Africa (1952–2012): An Empirical Assessment. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52(1), 69-94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X13000785>.
- Transparency International (2022). *CPI 2022 for Sub-Saharan Africa: Corruption Compounding Multiple Crises*. Transparency International (2nd October, 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2022-sub-saharan-africa-corruption-compounding-multiple-crises> on 30th August 2023 at 03:35 pm.
- Efem N.U., & Efem, N. (2022). Africa's Zero Tolerance for Unconstitutional Changes of Government: A Review of the Extant Protocols and Frameworks. *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 55-82.
- Ventura, L. (2023). "Poorest Countries in the World 2023". *Global Finance* (May 24, 2023). Retrieved from <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world> on 30th August 2023 at 03:32 pm.
- Wang, T.Y. (1998). Arms Transfers and Coups d'Etat: A Study on Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Peace Research* 35(6), 659-675. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343398035006001>.
- Wikings, S. (1983). "Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: How to Justify Illegal Assumptions of Power". *Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies* 57(1), 139-152. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160199>.
- Witts, A. (2020). *Undoing Coups: The African Union and Post-Coup Intervention in Madagascar*. London: ZED Books.
- Ziblim, I., Apau, R., & Luckham, F.K. (2022). "Implications of Unconstitutional Changes of Government on Violent Extremism and Terrorism Interventions: What More Could ECOWAS and AU do? *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 111-124.
- Zimmermann, E. (1979). Towards a Causal Model of Military Coup D' Etat. *Armed Forces and Society*, 5(3), 387-413. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X7900500304>.
- Zolberg, A.R. (1973). The Military Decade in Africa. *World Politics* 25(2), 309-331. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010499>.

## Coup d'état in West Africa: A Resurgence of Military Rule in the 21st- Century?<sup>1</sup>

Babayo Sule<sup>2</sup>, Noah Echa Attah<sup>3</sup>, Usman Sambo<sup>4</sup>, Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane<sup>5</sup>, Bala Lummo Kachalla<sup>6</sup>,

### Abstract:

Recent developments in some West African countries are a classic case of reversal of democratic rule and have raised doubts about the feasibility of democracy in Africa. This study examines the factors that have led to the resurgence of coups d'état and the possibility of constructing a new typology of coups d'état and military rule in 21st century Africa. Documented data sources were used for the study and the method of analysis was content analysis. The study compared the nature and characteristics of recent coups with those of the past and the predominant causes. The study made an attempt to identify the gap in the theories by examining the various theories on military interventions, postulating an alternative theory that can better explain the current phenomenon different from those of the 1980s. The study is an early warning that military rule could re-emerge in West Africa and Africa.

### Keywords:

Coup d'état; France; Military Rule; Resurgence; West Africa.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.298>

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere in Gombe State, Nigeria; ORCID: 000-0002-3879-4884; babayosule@gmail.com b.sule@nul.ls.

<sup>3</sup> Professor in the Department of African Historical Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma; ORCID: 0009-0009-8052-3330; neattah@gmail.com.

<sup>4</sup> Professor in the Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University Damaturu; ORCID 0000-0002-4529-3850; ussambo2@gmail.com.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Political and Administrative Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma ; ORCID: 0000-0003-2310-9319, sr.tsoeu@nul.ls

<sup>6</sup> Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere; ORCID: 0000-0002-1997-0432; balalummo@gmail.com.



## *Introduction*

The military is a professional organisation with a highly structured hierarchy of officers and commands and coordinated tactical and strategic actions. States consciously build their militaries with security objectives in mind (Singh, 2014). The history of all great societies, mighty warriors, prominent leaders and world powers is incomplete without their ability to build military strength. It is assumed that the military limits its professionalism to providing nation states with internal and external security. However, this notion has been demystified by the actions of the military, particularly in the developing world in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and in the case of Africa in the 2020s (Luckham, 1990). Through coups d'état in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, the military has overstepped the boundaries of state security and interfered directly in political affairs. In this way, the infantile democratic experiment in the developing world has been halted, reversed and ended by the military's constant interference in politics (Wang, 1998).

Africa is one of the continents with the most successful coups, failed coups and attempted coups in the world (Decalo, 1973). Between the 1960s and the 1990s, more than 100 coups were documented in Africa. Although the phenomenon was thought to have ended forever, it has resurfaced in West Africa in the twenty-first century. Coups are either bloodless palace uprisings, violent civil wars or factional conflicts. Africa, which was rightly thought to be lagging behind other continents in the institutionalisation of democracy, is facing a governance crisis and increasing political instability. The recurring and seemingly unstoppable coups and counter-coups across Africa have multiple causes, such as socio-economic factors and poor governance (Albrecht & Eibl, 2018). Although Africa is rich in natural resources, it is economically underdeveloped, dependent on an asymmetric, carefully planned and Western-driven global political economy and impoverished (Kposowa & Jenkins, 1992). The situation was complicated by the ideological struggle between the US and the USSR during the Cold War, which created political instability in Africa through sponsored coups. In addition, the unstable political environment provided a breeding ground for uprisings or mutinies by military officers in Africa (Jenkins & Kposowa, 1990). Between 1956 and 1986, there were 60 coups in Africa (McGowan & Johnson, 1986).

Although coups and military rule are two different concepts, they are also closely linked, as coups often lead to military rule (Zimmermann, 1989). This study focuses primarily on coups in 21st century Africa, including their nature, causes, manifestations and changing dimensions. However, it is important to note that the link between coups and military rule remains relevant to the study. Although the focus is on coups, the relationship between coups and military rule is not ignored. The end of the Cold War in the 1990s brought with it a "third wave of democratisation" in which authoritarian states in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean began to institutionalise democratic values such as multi-party systems, civil societies, the protection of human rights and greater media freedom. Fukuyama (1996) passionately declared that Western liberal democracy had become sacrosanct as a result of this

development. However, recent developments in Africa and military takeovers have shown that democratisation is far from being achieved.

In the African context, the advocates of democracy have failed to recognise an important point: Coups are a clear sign that democracy has either failed or is failing. Therefore, military coups are seen as a solution or response to the mismanagement that results from democratic governance. This view and the theoretical postulates of military intervention in Africa are therefore analysed beyond the traditional debates. It is therefore argued that the recent coups in West Africa are the result of irresponsible governance and the mismanagement of African resources by puppet leaders supported by Western powers. Moreover, these coups are part of a movement against France's overbearing neo-colonialist intervention in Francophone countries, which has become a feature of Africa's history since independence (Attah, 2013). Although the coups mainly affected the former French colonies, they are discussed in the context of faltering democratic governance and the risks of a return to military rule in Africa. The following discussion will focus on the historical context of military rule in Africa to provide an overview of this phenomenon. We will examine the reasons for the resurgence of coups d'état in West Africa in light of the challenges facing democratic governance on the continent. We will also explore the question of whether these coups are the result of a failure of democracy or a response to neo-colonialism. Our study will aim to place the resurgence of coups d'état in West Africa in its historical context.

### *Historical Overview of Military Coups and Rule in Africa*

The political history of Africa cannot be complete without discussing military coups and military rule. The military as a professional organisation developed successively in Africa. Pre-colonial Africa had a robust military organisation with a strong army in various political organisations with sublime strategies and sophisticated warfare techniques (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). The colonial administrations established military organisations modelled on their own, such as the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) in British West Africa (Ejiogu, 2007). The military played an enormous role in the political, social and economic development of the new states in many ways, which characterised the military's psychological orientation towards political intervention in various circumstances, as can be observed in most new states (Janowitz, 1964a; Janowitz, 1964b; Brömmelhörster & Wolf-Christian). This phenomenon is not unique to emerging or African powers. Even established democracies have given the military the appearance of an unstoppable power player because they believe that military power is an indicator of national strength (Luard, 1988).

Military intervention is not the violent removal of a democratically elected government as most people perceive it. Once the military takes power, it integrates the civilian elites and forms a diarchy. The powers of their civilian counterparts seem invisible, but they play a major role in military rule (Finer, 2002). Under different circumstances, coups do not equal a military uprising. It can emerge from revolutionary



movements and a long-term interface between the ruling class and factions within a state (Kandil, 2016). Military coups continue to be popular in Africa because the soldier is not democratic. A democratic soldier is an army that is structured as an institution that is professional, independent and law-abiding within its legal framework (Barany, 2012). Military coups have become a threat to democratisation in Africa because the army has not retreated to the barracks and can return anytime the opportunity presents itself (Onwumechili, 1998). Most military coups in Africa are rarely resisted, giving the impression that they are accepted (Feit, 1968). This scenario has implications for the process of political development in African states.

Between 1945 and 1960, there were more than 50 successful military takeovers in Africa, Asia, South America, the Caribbean and the Middle East (Huntington, 1975). In addition, there was political unrest, violence and chaos in numerous other countries. These coups were associated with several elements such as weak political institutions, highly politicised military organisations, traditional political systems, tyranny and fragile social cohesion – with this tragic development. In Africa, military coups occurred in various phases. In Egypt, there were two successful coups in the 1950s, which marked the beginning of the first wave. During the second wave, which began in the 1960s and included 23 successful coups, the West African region was the worst affected with 13 coups (Kieh & Kalu, 2021). In the third phase, there were around 20 successful coups, while the fourth wave recorded over 30. In the 1980s, there were a total of 67 successful military coups in Africa (Kieh & Kalu, 2021).

As early as the 1960s, all African sub-regions were affected by coups, with the exception of southern Africa. Due to the constant coups and counter-coups, military power had established itself as the "legitimate" standard in African administration by the 1970s and 1980s (Kieh & Kalu, 2021). There were 88 successful military coups in Africa between 1952 and 2012 (Souaré, 2014). In 48 sub-Saharan African countries between 1956 and 2003, there were 139 known coup plots, 108 unsuccessful coup attempts and 80 successful military coups, according to a database on African military coups (McGowan, 2005). According to McGowan (2006), 16 West African countries experienced 44 successful military coups, 43 violent failed coups, 82 attempted coups, 7 civil wars and about 20 other types of political violence between their independence and 2004. In less than 50 years, there have been 196 violent coups in West Africa. Since the 1950s, there have been 200 successful and unsuccessful coups in Africa, according to a study by Mwai (2023). Furthermore, Cheeseman (2021) hypothesised that there could be more coups in Africa before the end of the century, as some of them are seen as successful protests against bad administration by the so-called democratic movement.

Ngoma (2014) has proposed four models to explain military coups in Africa. The first model posits that the top military hierarchy plans, coordinates and executes coups, which was common in the 1960s and 1970s. The second model assumes co-operation between the military and civilians in the planning and execution of coups, as was common during the Cold War in the 1980s. The third model is externally orientated and involves foreign mercenaries or troops, as seen in Libya in 2013. The last model

states that middle-ranking military officers orchestrate and carry out coups against other military regimes or civilian regimes. In Africa, military coups are triggered by various factors such as economic, social and political factors. Economic failure is one reason cited by the coup plotters as justification their intervention, as can be seen in General Ankrah's justification for the coup d'état in Ghana in 1966. The quest for national unity and political stability was also used as a justification for military coups in Africa. Major General Juvenal Habyalimana's coup against the elected government in Rwanda, for example, was justified by the desire to end growing national disunity. (Carney, 2014)

Moreover, elected politicians sometimes face political crises and questions of legitimacy, which can contribute to military coups. There are other reasons for military coups in Africa. Corruption is one of them, as is the accusation that civilian governments do not respect the military profession. Ethnic rivalries have also played a role in some coups, such as the Nigerian coups in 1966. The first coup was led by ethnic Igbo military officers, while the counter-coup was led by the Hausa/Fulani military group. In some cases, internal military rivalries, as in Ghana, have led to a series of a series of coups and counter-coups in the 1960s and 1970s (Orhero & Okolie, 2023). The military has also justified its interference in African politics by citing high unemployment, extreme poverty and the misuse of public resources by civilian rulers (Adeyanju & Adeyanju, 2023).

The importance of competition for resources is an issue that is sometimes overlooked when considering military coups in Africa. According to Siollun (2009), the conflict between the citizens and the military over the management of oil wealth is at the root of the coup culture in Nigeria. Since the military benefited from Nigeria's oil wealth, they believed that direct control of the state would give them better access to this wealth than a position on the periphery of the government. Mbaku (1994) claimed that similar to Nigeria, many coups in Africa are motivated by the desire for financial gain. According to Collier & Hoeffler (2005) and Harkness (2016), Africa is caught in a cycle of coups because all countries have the same causes and there is a significant probability of repeated occurrences. According to Johnson et al. (1983), countries with rapid economic growth, high social mobilisation and unity experienced fewer coups than countries that did not.

Most justifications for rejecting military rule in Africa are: Setback to democracy, tyranny, poor governance, corruption, hostility from the international community, violation of human rights and restriction of freedom of expression. The civilian African leaders, on the other hand, are not absolved of the same accusations. According to Le Van (2015), not even the protracted democratic experiment had been able to establish a genuine democratisation process. Huntington (1975) supported this point of view and emphasised that the primary differences between governments lie not in the type of governance but in the degree of good governance, even if they profess democracy. According to Edeh & Ugwueze (2014), military coups and military dictatorships become important features and characteristics of developing countries. After the Second World War, increasing ethnic and class tensions, pervasive corruption, socio-economic policy





failures, human rights violations and disregard for the rule of law led to civil unrest, mob violence, frequent military takeovers and unstable political systems in Africa (Huntington, 1975; Kposowa & Jenkins, 1984). Furthermore, the problem of legitimacy that is often raised against military rule also applies to democratic governments in Africa, as most of their elections show (Attah, 2012). Undemocratic practises such as rigged and manipulated elections, unauthorised constitutional amendments that grant many African leaders life tenures, the suppression of multi-party competition, the denial of freedom of expression and authoritarian rule undermine the legitimacy of many civilian regimes in Africa, similar to what military rule did (Attah, 2003). Amoateng (2022) emphasises that coups in Africa are essentially the continuation of politics by other means.

The legitimacy of African military governments is often cited as one of several offences against democracy, although, as mentioned earlier, they have never questioned it. They therefore go to great lengths to demonstrate their legitimacy by governing swiftly and cutting back on spending on democracy. Each time the democratic system collapsed in Africa, the military established itself as an alternative form of administration (Ogueri, II, 1973). The military has employed several legitimisation strategies, including appointing a significant number of civilians to their cabinet posts, beginning to build key infrastructure, maintaining national political structures, upholding traditional institutions and opening up some limited freedom of debate on political issues. In other cases, they create new institutions where none existed before, as in the creation of states and local governments in Nigeria during military rule (Zolberg, 1973). In coups, however, the military is always asked to return to its barracks. Nevertheless, when coups are reversed, the military is always asked to return to their barracks.

The African Union (AU) and regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have produced and presented manuals to combat coups and anti-military regimes in Africa, but the efforts have not been successful (Witts, 2020; Ubi, 2022). At least six successful coups were carried out between 2020 and 2023, most of them in West Africa. To stop or prevent the ongoing coups, neither ECOWAS nor the AU have done enough, including enforcing good governance (Ziblim, 2022). ECOWAS has imposed strict sanctions on Mali and other countries where the military has recently taken power. According to Avoulete (2023), ECOWAS should rethink its strategy because the consequences affect the innocent people rather than the military authorities in the nations concerned. This underpins the view that the people are not included in the reckoning of democratic governance as democracy in Africa has become “rule of the politicians by the politicians for the politicians” (Bett, 2023). The inability to professionalise the army and disengage the military from direct involvement in political affairs is evidence of the failure of democracy in Africa. The challenging political and socio-economic crises that have manifested in insecurity, wars and conflicts, hunger and diseases, electoral fraud and violence as well as constitutional amendments to extend tenure and other vices have failed to distinguish constitutional democracy from military rule (Avoulete, 2023).

Although the AU is considered an ineffective body in strategically combating coups in Africa, the Lome Declaration in 2000 banned military coups and imposed sanctions on military regimes (Souaré, 2014), however, the AU has been criticised for remaining silent on the government's crackdown on citizens while it was quick to condemn the military-backed revolutions during the Arab Spring in 2011 (Ani, 2021). However, the AU is sometimes constrained by security considerations, as in the case of the 2021 coup in Chad, but the AU is perceived as the body responsible for devising policies and measures to reverse coups and counter democratic upheavals in Africa (Mohammed, 2022).

### *A Resurgence of Coups D'état in West Africa: Some Explanations*

Coups do not take place in a vacuum. Often, the corrupt and dictatorial tendencies of so-called democrats tacitly invite military intervention (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). Military coups originated as palace coups, armed rebellions, social upheavals and full-fledged coups d'état (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). The idea that democracy is being fought for by the global proponents of democracy and imposed on African states resonates with the withdrawal of the military from the political sphere. This is not a popular movement of the kind that emerged in Europe and America (Ngoma, 2004). The West has internationalised democracy, denigrated the military and imposed hostile sanctions that African leaders have been unable to resist. Elections are held at regular intervals to meet the criteria for the system to be called a democracy, even if it does not satisfy the proponents of democratisation (Anyoko-Shaba, 2022). This is evident in the irony and parody of how a non-democratic institution (the military) oversees the democratisation that Africans continue to believe will bring about true democratisation (Anene, 1995). So a mere withdrawal of the military and a return to civilian rule – political control - is a simplistic view of democratisation in Africa.

The transition to civilian rule is often rushed and democracy is installed without careful consideration of the necessary conditions for good governance (Gutteridge, 1985). This practise cannot defuse military rule in Africa, as the recent coups in West Africa have shown. Due to authoritarian electoral behaviour, the absence of democratic norms and good governance, and the autocratic behaviour of African civilian leaders, democracy has not been able to curb the likelihood of military coups in Africa (Lindberg, 2008). The ease with which the military planned and executed coups in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s has facilitated the next step of military intervention (Charlton, 1983). This is because of the rampant cases that dominated the political climate in Africa during this period. One of the main characteristics of coups in Africa is the tendency of military dictators to transform themselves into civilian rulers (Assensoh, & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). These examples include Sudanese President Omar El Bashir and Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya, while others left the stage and returned as democratic leaders, such as Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria and Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

One of the theoretical explanations for military coups in Africa is the link to foreign powers and their influence foreign influence (Wikings, 1983), the Cold War, or

international conspiracies were identified as factors in the rampant coups in Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Kalu, 2021). The ideological struggle between the USA and the USSR during the Cold War strongly influenced and inspired some coups in Africa. The Cold War led to liberation movements, regime changes and coups d'état in Africa on both sides of the competing ideological rivals, i.e. the Eastern and Western blocs. For example, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana, said that the US and the CIA used unpatriotic Ghanaians to overthrow him because he was against exploitative capitalism (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). However, the conspiracy of the world's superpowers is still present after the Cold War. For example, the West tacitly approved the coup to overthrow Morsi in Egypt in 2013, while the West not only supported the coup in Zimbabwe in 2017, but also ensured that Emerson Mnangagwa, one of the coup's backers, became president (Jawo, 2022). Similarly, France is believed to have supported the coup d'état in Chad in 2021, which is why the AU failed to take strong action against the military junta (Jawo, 2022).

Ideological predisposition is considered another theory that could explain military coups in Africa and is closely linked to the idea mentioned above. Some well-known African patriots, including Gamel Abdulnasser in Egypt, Patrice Lumumba in Zaire, Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Murtala Muhammed in Nigeria and many others, were allegedly overthrown because of their ideological differences with the West (Assensoh & Alex-Assensoh, 2001). Sometimes conflicting ideologies of the military and the rulers led to the overthrow of democratic regimes (Singh, 2014). Another explanation is that after independence, the military in Africa has become an important social institution, not only for territorial defence but also as a guardian of society (Kalu, 2021). As a result, the military sees itself as the messiah of African socio-economic and political crises by immediately intervening and taking control when they believed society was in danger of imploding (Huntington, 2000a).

The military have always cited these reasons as justification for their incessant coups in West Africa (Hoel, 2008). After political independence, the imbalanced civil-military relations meant that the military found itself in a position where it could influence the political processes to the point of invasion when necessary (Janowitz, 1984a)). The lack of a specified agenda for the military's withdrawal from politics is a problematic way of not defining a clear separation of civil-military relations. As a result, military influence on African politics remains intact (Al-Hamdi, 2014). However, Matei (2012) believes that improving civil-military relations can limit the military to its constitutional role in securing the state without encroaching into the political space. This is possible if the military is physically and ideologically separated from the political institutions, but politicians also have to play a role in ensuring good governance (Schiff, 2009).

Huntington (1975) postulates a contagion perspective as a theoretical basis for military coups in Africa by emphasising that "political organisations and procedures that are susceptible to apolitical influences from within society are also susceptible to influences from outside society. They can easily be infiltrated by agents, groups and ideas from other political systems. Thus, a coup in one political system can easily be

triggered" by similar groups in other, less developed political systems." (Huntington, 1975). This has been the historical trend in military coups in the West African sub-region since the 1960s. The recent coups in Chad and Niger, among other West African countries, have clearly demonstrated this. A situation that is already scaring other West African leaders such as Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, whose election is being questioned. Because a coup in one country can trigger another coup in a weak and fragile country the neighbouring political system instead of trying to build solid political institutions at home (Agyeman-Duah, 1990). The military finds an alibi in seizing power in this context, rather than stabilising the state through an improved security apparatus. However, the military always argue that the state will never stabilise if they have not taken over decision-making power.

### *Coup D'Etat in West Africa: A Democratic Failure or A Liberation Movement against Neo-Colonialism?*

Huntington (2000b) took the early and premature view that the entire world democratised in the twentieth century in the third wave of democratisation. Huntington (2000b) argues that it is the democratisation phase in which African states, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe are building democracy and democratic institutions. Similarly, Clark (2007) emphasises that coups and military rule have steadily declined in Africa. This has almost convinced the world that democracy is here to stay. Unfortunately, the recent events of military coups the Republic of Chad, Guinea, Mali, the Republic of Niger and Gabon show that Africa is still a long way from democratisation in the 21st century. Onwumechili (1998) notes that there are five main reasons why military coups keep occurring in West Africa. These are the control and willingness to use arms, the declining professionalism of the military, the increasing perception of the military as a reasonable alternative to a political career, the lack of a lasting modern democratic culture and the deplorable support for military coups by some sections of the world community (Onwumechili, 1998).

The resurgence of coups in West Africa in the 21st century shows that the sub-region has not achieved any significant political development after more than half a century, apart from the ritual of holding regular elections to qualify for a nomenclature of democracy (Akinola et al. 2022). Between August 2020 and August 2023, six successful military coups were carried out after three failed attempts (Akinola et al. 2022). The military used a rigged parliamentary election to support its coup d'état in Mali in August 2020. Between March and April 2021, successive military coups took place in the Republic of Niger and Chad, the latter leading to the death of former President Idris Deby (Akinola et al. 2022). In May 2021, there was a counter-coup in Mali, followed by the coup in Guinea in September 2021. In October 2021, there was a counter-coup in Sudan, Chad's neighbouring country, against the 2019 coup that overthrew President Omar El Bashir (Akinola et al. 2022). In January 2022, there was another coup in Burkina Faso, followed by the most recent coup in the Republic of Niger on 26 July 2023 (Nsaibia, 2023).

In a seemingly unstoppable wave of resurgence of military rule in Africa, another coup was announced in Gabon on 30 August 2023, where President Ali Bongo was overthrown a few hours after the result of the country's presidential election was announced (Daily Trust Newspaper, 30th August, 2023). The removal of Ali Bongo in Gabon is another challenge to democratisation in Africa because the military claimed that the election had been massively rigged, amounting to a civilian coup d'état that is often ignored by democracy advocates. The internet and social media were shut down during the election, which was believed to be characterised by irregularities (Daily Trust Newspaper, 30th August, 2023) . Gabon is a good example of an undemocratic civilian regime where the Bongo family dynasty has held the country hostage for 55 years since political independence in 1960. Some indicators that justify the failure of democracy as a plausible explanation for the resurgence of the military are overwhelming. Most of the countries that have recently experienced coups are among the poorest in the world. The Republic of Niger is the seventh poorest country in the world, Chad the ninth poorest, Mali the eighteenth poorest, Burkina Faso the nineteenth poorest and Guinea the twenty-fifth poorest (Ventura, 2023). The five West African countries affected by coups from 2021 to 2023 are therefore fall within the 25 poorest countries in the world. The GDP of these countries, as shown in Figure 1, displays extreme poverty and impoverishment.

#### Global Poverty Ranking of West African States Affected by Military Coups between 2021 and 2023

S/No.	Country	Global Poverty Ranking	GDP-PPP(\$)
1.	Niger Republic	7	1,600
2.	Chad	9	1,787
3.	Mali	18	2,656
4.	Burkina Faso	19	2,726
5.	Guinea	25	3,218

Figure 1: Source: Ventura, 2023 (tabulated by the authors).

However, there is no connection between the natural resources of these countries and the harsh reality of their global poverty ranking. This again raises the question of the failure of democracy and the perceived neo-colonialist emasculation of France. Gold and uranium exports are Niger's main sources of income and foreign revenue, yet the country is one of the poorest in the world. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Niger earned \$300 million from its uranium exports in 2019 alone, but of the uranium produced in Niger in 2021, which accounted for 311,110 tonnes or more than 5% of global production, was ceded to France as part of a repugnant neo-colonialist agreement. Similarly, despite producing about 6.5 tonnes of gold in 2019, worth about \$260 million, Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 189th out of 189 (Orufa, 2023). Through proper, independent management of mineral

resources, proportional negotiations and planned development of mineral resources without the dictates of France, Niger should be able to overcome its poverty. However, the democratic leaders, who are usually France's puppets, are not nationalist in the sense of modernisers and have consequently failed to promote economic development and growth. This explains why the country's population joyfully celebrated the coup of July 2023.

Chad also has deposits of gold, silver, diamonds, quartz, bauxite, granite, tin, tungsten, uranium, limestone, sand, gravel, kaolin and salt that could have increased exports and revenues by billions of dollars if properly developed. Gold mining alone brought the country revenues of 137 million dollars in 2018 (International Trade Administration, 2020). According to the International Trade Administration (2022a), Mali's gold reserves are estimated at 800,000 metric tonnes, with a net export value of 63.4 metric tonnes worth \$3.7 billion. Mali's mining sector comprises 2 million tonnes of iron ore, 5,000 tonnes of uranium, 20 million tonnes of manganese, 4 million tonnes of lithium and 10 million tonnes of limestone (International Trade Administration, 2022a). Despite these huge deposits of mineral resources, Mali still ranks 18th on the global poverty league table. Similarly, Burkina Faso is rich in minerals such as gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphate and limestone in significant quantities. These industries account for only 8% of government revenue, but 75% of exports in 2019, as France has been muzzled. It is estimated that the Burkinabe minerals sector will bring the country USD 4 billion in revenue each year if those responsible do not have to answer to French imperialism. Like other countries, Guinea is rich in mineral resources, including graphite, manganese, nickel and uranium, and has large quantities of high-quality iron ore. Guinea exported bauxite worth just over 4.3 billion dollars (85.7 million tonnes) and gold worth 5.8 billion dollars (3,281,600 ounces). Despite the wealth potential of these mineral resources (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2023).

Guinea, like most African countries, has not been able to overcome its underdevelopment, partly due to the poverty of its leadership. Guinea like its other counterparts is rich in mineral resources, which include graphite, manganese, nickel, and uranium, with a large amount of high-quality iron ore. Guinea exported just over \$4.3 billion of bauxite (85.7 million tons) and \$5.8 billion of gold (3,281,600 oz.) (International Trade Administration, 2022b). Compared to other African countries affected by the military coup, Gabon has higher development indicators and also produces oil. With a population of only 2.3 million, Gabon produces 184,911 barrels of crude oil every day. With 150 million tonnes of reserves and a production of 1.8 million tonnes since 2015, it is the fourth largest producer of high-quality manganese in the world (Arise, 2023). More than 2 billion tonnes of iron ore have been found in the nation, along with over 40 tonnes of gold and a variety of other minerals such as lead, zinc, copper, diamonds, and titanium (Arise, 2023). Unfortunately, Gabon is one of the poorest nations in the world due to the mismanagement of state resources by its leaders and continued French exploitation.





These Francophone nations are underdeveloped and extremely poor despite their vast mineral resources. Burkina Faso ranks 77th on the Corruption Perceptions Index with 42 points, Niger 123rd with 32 points, Mali 137th with 28 points, Guinea 147th with 25 points and Chad 167th with only 19 points, all affected by the recent coups in West Africa (Transparency International, 2022). According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) (2022), these African countries are also among the most unstable and most vulnerable to terrorism. According to the Global Terrorism Index for 2023, Burkina Faso is the second most terrorised country in the world with a score of 8.564, Mali is the fourth most terrorised with a score of 8.412, Niger is the tenth most terrorised with a score of 7.616 and Chad is the nineteenth most terrorised with a score of 6.168. Three of the countries examined in this study are among the top 10 most terrorised countries in 2023, which illustrates the extent of political and social unrest in these countries. Burkina Faso ranks 18th, Niger 32nd, Mali 37th, Guinea 42nd and Chad 47th in terms of good governance indicators in Africa according to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation standards (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022). These are all indicators of poor governance and backwardness in nations with abundant natural resources. Compared to other African countries affected by the military coup, Gabon has higher development indicators; it also produces oil. With a population of only 2.3 million, Gabon produces 184,911 barrels of crude oil per day. Gabon is also the fourth largest producer of high-grade manganese in the world, with 150 million tonnes of reserves and production of 1.8 million tonnes since 2015 (Arise, 2022).

While the West continues to insist that democracy in Africa is inevitable, it cares less about the institutionalisation of democratic values and strong political institutions that will promote good governance and democratic dividends. The West does not care about civilian coups in the name of democracy and unconstitutional regime extensions through constitutional amendments as witnessed in Cameroon and Uganda, while it looked the other way during the coup d'état in Egypt in 2013, Zimbabwe in 2017, Sudan in 2019 and Chad in 2022. Furthermore, the global champions of democracy have failed to support good governance by imposing harmful neoliberal economic policies that continue to underdevelop Africa. Ake's (1996) observation that democracy was not meant to stabilise or develop Africa is still relevant. Perhaps the democratic crusaders feared that a true institutionalisation of democracy would liberate Africa's political economy with an increasingly enlightened citizenry that would participate in politics and hold leaders accountable. But this fear, if true, is backfiring.

This leads us to the link between the liberation of West African Francophone countries from the excesses of France and a close observation of the terrain of the coups will show that the Anglophone countries have not been affected so far. All coups originate in the francophone countries. However, the Anglophone countries could be affected if the trend continues. This is because while Francophone countries are perceived to be reacting to the domination of France, the citizens of Anglophone countries are suffering from indigenous colonisation by their democratic rulers who have failed to introduce good governance and democratic dividends with the tacit support

of the West. France refused to accept the fact that these former colonies were now independent, at least politically. While Britain completely ceded power to the colonised West African states, France continued direct colonisation in secret, a situation that was well worked out during the period of decolonisation. For example, all francophone countries in West Africa still use the French currency, the CFA. The mineral deposits in these countries are largely mined, marketed and exported to France by French companies. Ironically, countries that are rich in minerals are poor in wealth. France, which has few minerals, is rich in these francophone African resources.

France must face the fact that these coups are vehement messages against the ongoing injustice of trade imbalance and the continued colonisation of its former colonies. France must take care, rethink, remodel and adopt a new model of respectful political and economic relations before it loses its heritage and influence over its former colonies. This study theorises that other Francophone countries in West Africa will continue to rebel against France. This could spill over to Anglophone countries like Nigeria where life under the so-called democratic rulers is hell. For example, in Nigeria, with an estimated population of 220 million people in 2023, about 25 million people will be affected by acute hunger, more than 20 million children will not go to school and about 70% will live below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Successive democratic governments continue to implement harsh economic policies under the supervision of neoliberal financial institutions, making life unbearable for the majority of people. The recent removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria led to an increase in the price of fuel from N198 to N620 in a country that is a leading producer of fossil fuels, and thus drive the cost of everything into an inflation that has never been seen in this country (Abayomi, 2023). If this trend continues, such coups are inevitable, provided that neighbouring Francophone countries continue to rebel against their master, France. The fact that the coups are not protested but supported by the citizens of the countries concerned is seen as tacit approval of military rule as an alternative to democratic failure. This means that not only some parts of the elite are fed up with the democratic failure and the constant colonisation by France, but also most of the citizens of these countries. If the deposed democratically elected leaders do a good job, the citizens will protest, no matter how brutal the military might be.

## *Conclusion*

The perspective and theory of the current coups differ from previous coups in Africa. Albert & Albert (2022) are of the opinion that the recent West African coups have not erased the past, this analysis offers an alternative perspective. Although all the elements, manifestations, dimensions and theoretical postulates are still relevant to explain contemporary coups in Africa, the West African coups show that, in addition to the earlier explanations, there is a theoretical reflection on the failure of democracy and a movement towards emancipation from the West, especially from the excesses of France in West Africa. Coups d'état are nothing new in West Africa as they have been part of Africa's political history since the 1950s when the continent began to experience military



coups and rule. The factors that led to the earlier coups are analysed to determine whether they continue to be the main causes of the recent coups in Africa. The main idea of the study, however, is that pseudo-democratisation and misrule affect democratic stability in Africa and coups are seen as an alternative to democratic failure. Most importantly, the study finds that the recent coups in West Africa have a different pattern to the events of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The French West African countries continue to suffer from the exploitation and economic dominance of France. Citizens and some military rulers are resentful of the pattern of post-colonial relations in francophone countries. French officials have fallen out of favour in states that have experienced recent coups, which have been interpreted as rebellion against the long-established French order in the countries. This simply means that France's continued control over its former colonies is coming to an end.

For France to regain its glory, it should rethink and reorganise its relations in a more reciprocal, respectful way than under the rigid control of the countries. The world's democracy advocates should heed the loud messages of the coups. Democratisation in Africa should be sincerely institutionalised and not just used to serve some foreign interests. A model that gives economic freedom to African states should work without forcing the impractical, prescriptive bitter pills of neoliberalism on Africans. If African citizens experience good governance and African civilian rulers have a free hand to initiate their own development policies, democracy will flourish and coups will be fought by the citizens from within and not come from outside. First of all, African countries need a technology transfer that enables the internal utilisation of natural resources. This will change the balance of trade from commodity production to industrialised nations. Leaders elected on the platform of democracy in Africa should be selfless, committed to genuine development and effectively utilise national resources for growth and development.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Professor Noah Echa Attah (neattah@gmail.com; ne.attah@nul.ls; Orcid: 0009-0009-8052-3330)

Noah Echa Attah is a Professor in the Department of African Historical Studies, National University of Lesotho, Roma. He holds a PhD and an MA in History Degrees from the University of Ibadan (UI), Nigeria, as well as a BA in History Degree from Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Nigeria. He is a recipient of the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) Individual Research Grant of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 2017. His research focus includes Agrarian Studies, Environmental Studies, Natural Resource Conflicts and Peacebuilding. Noah is currently a Principal Investigator of a research

project entitled Policing and Security Provisioning in Nigeria: Exploring the Policy and Practice of Non-State Actors, supported by the National Research Fund (NRF) of the Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

Babayo Sule (PhD) (babayosule@gmail.com; b.sule@nul.ls; Orcid: 000-0002-3879-4884)

Is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere in Gombe State, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from the University of Maiduguri Nigeria, a Master of Science in Political Science from Bayero University Kano Nigeria and a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science from Universiti Utara Malaysia. His research interests are in the areas of elections and political parties, security studies and African politics. He has published numerous research articles in local and international journals and participated in several local and international conferences. He has supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate theses. He currently teaches undergraduate and postgraduate students, conducts research and does community work. He is currently with the Department of Political Science and Administrative Studies, National University of Lesotho. Babayo Sule has published numerous books, including Political Party Financing and Electoral Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Deradicalisation and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria: Countering Boko Haram Extremism, Nigerian Political Parties in the Fourth Republic: Evolution, Characteristics, and Dynamics of Transformation, and Non-State Actors and Violence in Nigeria: the Political and Socioeconomic Implications.

Professor Usman Sambo (PhD) (ussambo2@gmail.com; Orcid: 0000-0002-4529-3850)

Is a Professor in the Department of Public Administration, Yobe State University Damaturu. He obtained his Bachelor of Science, Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration from the University of Maiduguri. He was the former Director of Administration of the Federal Medical Centre Nguru in Yobe State, Nigeria. He is interested in research in the areas of good governance, politics and administration as well as global issues. He has published numerous research articles in local and international journals and participated in several local and international conferences. He has supervised numerous undergraduate and postgraduate theses. He is currently teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, conducting research and doing community service. Usman Sambo has published numerous books, including Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, Deradicalisation and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Northeast Nigeria: Countering Boko Haram Extremism

Dr Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane (sr.tsoeu@nul.ls)

Dr. Seroala Tsoeu-Ntokoane is a Senior Lecturer in Political and Administrative Studies at NUL and a Research Associate of the NUL-ERC. She has over twenty years of experience as a Research Professional in public policy analysis, development



management, and gender studies. Her research field spans topics such as informal economic policy, garment industry and trade unions, gender intersectionality, adolescent health policy, democratization and political constitutionalism, and energy democracy in Africa. She also has an interest in Futures studies such as developing forecasting scenarios for the Lesotho we want. Dr. Tsoeu-Ntokoane has extensive research collaborations with government institutions, NGOs, and international agencies such as the EU and UNDP.

Bala Lummo Kachalla (balalummo@gmail.com)

Bala Lummo Kachalla is a lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the Federal University of Kashere. He is engaged in teaching, research, and community services. His main areas of interest are international relations, international politics, and Nigerian democracy. He taught many undergraduate courses, supervised several undergraduate courses, and is currently active in attending both local and international conferences, seminars, workshops, and other research undertakings.

## Reference

- Abayomi, O. (2023). "Consequences of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nigeria's Balance of Trade." *Vanguard* (June 28, 2023). Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/06/consequences-of-fuel-subsidy-removal-on-nigerias-balance-of-trade/> on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at 04:11 pm.
- Adeyanju, J. B., & Adeyanju, F. O. (2023). Rethinking the Economic Implications of Leadership Deficit in Nigeria. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(1), 28-39. <https://journals.fukashere.edu.ng/index.php/kjpir/article/view/82>.
- Agyeman-Duah, B. (1990). Military Coups, Regime Change, and Interstate Conflicts in West Africa. *Armed Forces & Society*, 16(4), 547-570. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X9001600404>.
- Ake, C. (1996). *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington: Brookings Institution.
- Akinola, A.O., & Ratidzo C. M. (2022). *The Resurgence of Military Coups and Democratic Reversals in Africa*. Auckland: Institute for Pan-African Thought and Conversation.
- Albert, I.O., & Olumayowa, O.A. (2022). "Coups Contagion in Africa: Is the Past Different from the Present?" *African Journal on Terrorism, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October 2022)*, 13-30.
- Albrecht, H., & Eibl, F. (2018). How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups. *International Studies Quarterly*, 62(2), 315-328. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx085>.
- Al-Hamdi, D. M. (2014). Military in-and-out of Politics: A Theoretical Approach to Military Disengagement. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(8), 193-201.
- Amoateng, N. (2022). "Military Coups in Africa: A Continuation of Politics by Other Means?"

- Accord* (August 19th 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/military-coups-in-africa-a-continuation-of-politics-by-other-means/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:45 pm.
- Anene, J. N. (1995). Military Coups and Redemocratisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 12(1), 181-200. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45197413>.
- Ani, N. C. (2021). Coup or not Coup: The African Union and the Dilemma of “Popular Uprisings” in Africa. *Democracy and Security*, 17(3), 257-277. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2021.1899915>.
- Anyoko-Shaba, O. (2022). The Resurgence of Military Coups d'état in African Politics and the Reversal of Democracy. *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 12(1), 124-135. <https://www.unjpe.com/index.php/UNJPE/article/view/186>.
- Arise (2023). *Mining and Mineral Industry in Gabon: Unwinding the Potential of Mineral Extraction and Processing*. Arise Integrated Industrial Platforms, 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/gabon-coup-omar-ali-bongo-history-b2401733.html> on 30th August 2023 at 09:37 pm.
- Assensoh, A.B., & Alex-Assensoh, Y.M. (2001). *African Military History and Politics Coups and Ideological Incursions, 1900–Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Attah, N.E. (2012). “Constitutional Democracy and Military Rule in Nigeria: Two Sides of the Same Coin?” In Olawale, A., Ogen, O., & Attah, N.E. (Eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Peace, Conflict and Warfare in Africa*, pp.223-238. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.
- Attah, N.E. (2013). The Historical Conjunction of Neo-Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 5(5), 70-79. <http://www.academicjournals.org/JASD>.
- Aubyn, F. K., Ziblim, I., & Apau, R. (2022). “Implications of Unconstitutional Changes of Government on Violent Extremism and Terrorism Interventions: What More Could ECOWAS and AU do? *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 111-124.
- Avoulete, K. (2022). *Should ECOWAS Rethink its Approach to Coups?* Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 3 February 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/02/should-ecowas-rethink-its-approach-to-coups/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:51 pm.
- Barany, Z. (2012). *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Bett, R. (2023). For King or Country? The Role of Political Parties in Ensuring Democracy and Good Governance. The Role of Political Parties in Ensuring Democracy and Good Governance. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4472664>.
- Brömmelhörster, J., & Wolf-Christian, P. (2003). “Soldiers in Business: An Introduction”. In Brömmelhörster, J., & Wolf-Christian, P. (Eds.), *The Military as an Economic Factor: Soldiers in Business*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Carney, J. J. (2012). ‘Far from Having Unity, We are Tending Towards Total Disunity’: The Catholic Major Seminary in Rwanda, 1950–62. *Studies in World Christianity*, 18(1), 82-102. <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/swc.2012.0007>.
- Charlton, R. (1983). Predicting African Military Coups”. *Futures*, 15(4) 281-292. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(83\)90129-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(83)90129-5).





- Cheeseman, N. (2021). "Lessons from Africa. "Is there such a Good Coup?" *Africa Report* (September 20th, 2021). Retrieved from <https://www.theafricareport.com/128857/lessons-from-africa-is-there-such-a-thing-as-a-good-coup/> on 30th August 2023 at 05:28 pm.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2005). *Coup Traps: Why does Africa have so many Coups D'état?* Oxford: Centre for the Study of African Economies, Department of Economics, University of Oxford.
- Daily Trust Newspaper (2023). "Fresh Coup in Africa: Gabon President Removed". *Daily Trust* (30th August 2023). Retrieved from <https://dailytrust.com/breaking-fresh-coup-in-africa-gabon-president-removed/#>: on 30th August 2023 at 04:13 pm.
- Decalo, S. (1973). Military coups and military regimes in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 11(1), 105-127. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00008107>.
- Edeh, H. C., & Ugwueze, M. I. (2014). Military and Politics: Understanding the Theoretical Underpinnings of Military Incursion in Third World Politics. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(20), 2047-2058. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5901/MJSS.2014.V5N1P481>.
- Ejiogu, E. C. (2007). Colonial Army Recruitment Patterns and Post-Colonial Military Coups D'etat in Africa: The Case of Nigeria, 1966-1993. *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies*, 35(1), 100-132. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/smsajms/article/view/75317>.
- Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2023). *Burkina Faso: Overview and Role of the EITI*. Wednesday 15th May, 2023. Retrieved from <https://eiti.org/countries/burkina-faso> on 30th August 2023 at 04:15 pm.
- Feit, E. (1968). Military Coups and Political Development: Some Lessons from Ghana and Nigeria. *World Politics*, 20(2), 179-193. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009794>.
- Finer, S.E. (2002). *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Fukuyama, F. (1996). *End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Global Terrorism Index (2023). *2022 Global Terrorism Index*. Stockholm: Institute for Peace and Economic Research.
- Gutteridge, W. (1985). Undoing Military Coups in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 7(1), 78-89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436598508419825>.
- Harkness, K. A. (2016). The Ethnic Army and the State: Explaining Coup Traps and the Difficulties of Democratisation in Africa. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 60(4), 587-616. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002714545332>.
- Hoel, R. (2008). *Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria and Tanzania: A Comparative, Historical Analysis*. Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the Stellenbosch University, December 2008, 23.
- Hoel, R. (2008). *Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria and Tanzania: A Comparative, Historical Analysis*. Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (International Studies) at the Stellenbosch University, December 2008).
- Huntington, S.P. (1975). *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Free Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (2000a). *The Soldier and the State. The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military*

- Relations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Huntington, S.P. (2000b). *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Twentieth Century*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press.
- International Trade Administration (2020). *Chad Country Commercial Guide: Mining and Precious Metals*. (7th September 2020) Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/chad-mining-and-precious-metals> on 30th August 2023 at 04:03 pm.
- International Trade Administration (2022a). *Mali Country Commercial Guide: Mining*. Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/mali-mining> on 30th August 2023 at 04:06 pm.
- International Trade Administration (2022b). *Guinea Country Commercial Guide: Mining and Minerals*. Retrieved from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/guinea-mining-and-minerals> on 30th August 2023 at 04:06 pm.
- Janowitz, M. (1964a). *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Janowitz, M. (1964b). *The Military in the Political Development of New Nations: An Essay in Comparative Analysis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Jawo, M. (2022). *The Re-emergence of Military Coups in Africa: An Analysis of the African Union Response to the Unconstitutional Change of Government in Chad in 2021*. Political Science: Global Politics and Societal Change One-year master 15 Credits Summer, 2022, Malmo University.
- Jenkins, J. C., & Kposowa, A. J. (1990). Explaining Military Coups d'Etat: Black Africa, 1957-1984. *American Sociological Review*, 861-875. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095751>.
- Jenkins, J. C., & Kposowa, A. J. (1992). The Political Origins of African Military Coups: Ethnic Competition, Military Centrality, and the Struggle Over the Postcolonial State. *International Studies Quarterly*, 36(3), 271-291. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600773>.
- Kalu, K.A. (2021). "Coups d'État: Theoretical Issues", In Kieh Jr. G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (Eds.), *Democratisation and Military Coups in Africa Post-1990 Political Conflicts*, pp.51-73. Lanham, Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kandil, H. (2016). *The Power Triangle: Military, Security, and Politics in Regime Change*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kieh Jr., G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (2021) "Introduction: "No Farewell to Arms in Africa?" In Kieh Jr., G.K. & Kalu, K.A. (Eds.), *Democratisation and Military Coups in Africa Post-1990 Political Conflicts*, pp.1-15. Lanham, Lexington: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kposowa, A. J., & Jenkins, J. C. (1993). The Structural Sources of Military Coups in Postcolonial Africa, 1957-1984. *American Journal of Sociology*, 99(1), 126-163. DOI: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/230231>.
- Le Van, C.A. (2015). *Dictators and Democracy in African Development: The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lindberg & S. I., & Clark, J. F. (2008). Does Democratization Reduce the Risk of Military Interventions in Politics in Africa? *Democratisation*, 15(1), 86-105. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701768182>.
- Luard, E. (1988). *The Blunted Sword: The Erosion of Military Power in Modern World Politics*, London: I B Tauris.
- Luckham, R. (1994). The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues. *African Studies Review*, 37(2), 13-75. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/524766>.



- Matei, F.C (2012). "A New Conceptualisation of Civil-Military Relations". In Bruneau, T.C., & Matei, F.C. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Civil–Military Relations*, pp.26-38. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Mbaku, J.M. (1994). Military Coup as Rent-Seeking Behaviour. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 22(2), 241-284. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45371310>.
- McGowan, P., & Johnson, T. H. (1984). African Military Coups d'État and Underdevelopment: A Quantitative Historical Analysis. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 22(4), 633-666. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00056275>.
- McGowan, P., & Johnson, T. H. (1986). Sixty Coups in Thirty Years—Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D'état. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 24(3), 539-546. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00007175>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2003). African Military Coups D'état, 1956–2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 41(3), 339-370. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0300435X>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2005). Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part I, Theoretical Perspectives. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(1), 5-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277885>.
- McGowan, P. J. (2006). Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part II, Empirical Findings. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(2), 234-253. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277886>.
- Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022). *2022 Ibrahim Index of African Governance*. Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2022. Retrieved from <https://iiag.online/downloads.html> on 30th August 2023 at 03:40 pm.
- Mohammed, H. (2022). "The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa and the Role of the African Union (AU)". *Socialscientia Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, 7(3), 83-110. <https://journals.aphriapub.com/index.php/SS/>.
- Mwai, P. (2023). "Are Military Takeovers on the Rise in Africa?" *Real Clear Defense* (January 5 2023). Retrieved from [https://www.realcleardefense.com/2023/01/05/are\\_military\\_takeovers\\_on\\_the\\_rise\\_in\\_africa\\_873912.html](https://www.realcleardefense.com/2023/01/05/are_military_takeovers_on_the_rise_in_africa_873912.html) on 30th August 2023 at 05:20 pm.
- National Bureau of Statistics (2022). *Nigeria: Quarterly Report*. Abuja: NBS, 2022. Retrieved from [www.nbs.gov.org](http://www.nbs.gov.org) on 30th August 2023 at 04:18 pm.
- Ngoma, N. (2004). Coups and Coup Attempts in Africa: Is there a Missing Link? *African Security Studies*, 13(3), 85-94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2004.9627307>.
- Nsaibia, H. (2023). "Fact Sheet: Military Coup in Niger". *ACLEDD Data* (3rd August, 2023). Retrieved from <https://acleddata.com/2023/08/03/fact-sheet-military-coup-in-niger/> on 30th August 2023 at 03:30 pm.
- Ogueri, E. (1973). Theories and Motives of Military Coups D'état in Independent African States. *Africa Spectrum*, 8(3), 280-302. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40173589>.
- Onwumechili, C. (1998). *African Democratisation and Military Coups*. Westport: Praeger.
- Orhero, A. E., & Okolie, U. C. (2023). Nigeria's Trend of Military Administration and Economic Decay: An Analytical Review. *Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal)*, 4(2), 355-381. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25273/she.v4i2.17683>.
- Orufa, S. (2023). "What are the Economic Implications of Niger's Suspension of Uranium and

- Gold Exports?" *Ventures Africa* (August 3, 2023). Retrieved from <https://venturesafrica.com/what-are-the-economic-implications-of-nigers-suspension-of-uranium-and-gold-exports/> on 30th August 2023 at 03:45 pm.
- Schiff, R.L. (2009). *The Military and Domestic Politics*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Singh, N. (2014). *Seizing Power. The Strategic Logic of Military Coups*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Siollun, M. (2009). *Oil, Politics, and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup (1966-1976)*. New York: Algora Publishing.
- Smith, B.C. (2003). *Understanding Third World Politics. Theories of Political Change and Development*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Souaré, I. K. (2014). The African Union as a Norm Entrepreneur on Military Coups D'état in Africa (1952–2012): An Empirical Assessment. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 52(1), 69-94. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X13000785>.
- Transparency International (2022). *CPI 2022 for Sub-Saharan Africa: Corruption Compounding Multiple Crises*. Transparency International (2nd October, 2022). Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2022-sub-saharan-africa-corruption-compounding-multiple-crises> on 30th August 2023 at 03:35 pm.
- Efem N.U., & Efem, N. (2022). Africa's Zero Tolerance for Unconstitutional Changes of Government: A Review of the Extant Protocols and Frameworks. *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 55-82.
- Ventura, L. (2023). "Poorest Countries in the World 2023". *Global Finance* (May 24, 2023). Retrieved from <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world> on 30th August 2023 at 03:32 pm.
- Wang, T.Y. (1998). Arms Transfers and Coups d'Etat: A Study on Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Peace Research* 35(6), 659-675. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343398035006001>.
- Wikings, S. (1983). "Military Coups in Sub-Saharan Africa: How to Justify Illegal Assumptions of Power". *Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies* 57(1), 139-152. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160199>.
- Witts, A. (2020). *Undoing Coups: The African Union and Post-Coup Intervention in Madagascar*. London: ZED Books.
- Ziblim, I., Apau, R., & Luckham, F.K. (2022). "Implications of Unconstitutional Changes of Government on Violent Extremism and Terrorism Interventions: What More Could ECOWAS and AU do? *African Journal on Terrorism*, Special Edition on Implications of Coups D 'etat and Political Instability on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in the Sahel (October, 2022): 111-124.
- Zimmermann, E. (1979). Towards a Causal Model of Military Coup D' Etat. *Armed Forces and Society*, 5(3), 387-413. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X7900500304>.
- Zolberg, A.R. (1973). The Military Decade in Africa. *World Politics* 25(2), 309-331. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010499>.





## The Escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict: The Significance for Africa<sup>1</sup>

Mathieu Gotteland<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

After a short exposition of the Iran-Israel proxy war before 7 October 2023 and between then and April 2024, this article researches their consequences on historically contextualized Iranian-, Israeli- and Palestinian-African relations, exemplifying both African and Israeli ambivalent stances towards the other party. On the whole, it has been found that Israeli partnerships and alliances on the continent have been strained but have mostly held in the considered period despite the proxy war, while the position of hostile African nations has been further entrenched. The difficulties of Israel with international justice have been partly the result of efforts from the latter, enhancing their standing on the international stage rather than the continent's. Reactions have been mild and/or discreet to the proxy war beyond the Palestinian theatre, including Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. That is despite the huge impact of the related Red Sea crisis on the continent, especially in Egypt, Somalia and Sudan. The larger proxy war has however allowed for a series of diplomatic successes on the part of Iran. The consequences of the proxy war on African public opinion and perceptions is the subject of further enquiry.

**Keywords:** Iran,  
Israel, Palestine, Red  
Sea crisis,  
International justice

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.252>

<sup>2</sup> Independent Researcher in (History of) International Relations;  
ORCID: 0009-0001-8511-5274; mathieu.gotteland@gmail.com.

## *Introduction*

### *The Iran-Israel proxy war before 7 October 2023*

The Iranian revolution of 1978-1979 turned the country from an Israeli ally under the last shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (since 1953) to a hostile regime that withdrew the recognition of Israel's very legitimacy as a state and severed diplomatic and commercial relations. The religious fundamentalism, Shia Islamism, pan-Islamism, nationalism, professed anti-colonialism and hostility to both Zionism and the US, combined with a solidarity for the Palestinian cause and a policy of support for Shia minorities helps explain both early Iranian hostility to Israel – dubbed the "Little Satan" – and support to the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Nevertheless, regional geopolitical imperatives – the so-called "periphery doctrine" or solidarity against the Arab states – and the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) allowed some room for clandestine cooperation (Farhang, 1989).

Later however, and despite an overture for peace and normalization on Iran's side in 2003 (Judis 2013), Iran-Israel relations grew steadily worse, fuelled – beyond those factors already mentioned – by Iranian state terrorism and inflammatory rhetoric including calls for the destruction of Israel and denial of the Shoah, Israeli covert operations in Iran and/or against Iranian interests, Iran's nuclear program (since the early 2000's), Hamas' coup in Gaza (2007), Iran's rapprochement with Iraq (after the US invasion in 2003), rising influence and intervention in this country (since 2014), Iranian and Israeli involvement in the Syrian civil war (since 2011), as well as the parallel Iran-Saudi and Iran-US proxy wars and the normalization process between Israel and key Arab partners since 2019.

Meanwhile, the situation in Palestine, which has remained the main theatre of this proxy war, has also grown steadily worse since the non-implementation of the Oslo Accords (1993-1995), the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre (1994) and the murder of Yitzhak Rabin (1995) by Israeli extremists and the corresponding attacks of Israeli civilians by Hamas. The further radicalization and distaste for compromise on both sides (Klein 2023), combined with a blatant disregard for international law (IL) and international humanitarian law (IHL), the weakening of the Palestinian authority (PA), the Egyptian-Israeli blockade and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the worsening of the economic and humanitarian situation in wider Palestine and specifically in the Gaza strip have allowed for several major and ever worsening open conflicts to take place, especially in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021.

Hamas, although Sunni, is a key component of the so-called Iranian "Axis of Resistance" (Brandenburg 2010, Soltaninejad, 2019). That fundamentalist movement claims Palestinian nationalism, Islamism, anti-Zionism and anti-colonialism to be its main tenets, while its 1988 charter has been softened in 2017 to avoid accusations of antisemitism. It has been accused of numerous atrocity crimes and human rights violations, is a criminal, fascist and terrorist organization. It has also been backed by Qatar and Turkey (Lindenstrauss & Kivam 2014).



The Axis has been so dubbed since 2002, as a comeback to US president Bush's "axis of evil", then meant to encompass Iran, Iraq and North Korea. It mostly takes aim at Jewish, Israeli and American targets. Other "Axis" proxies include the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansar Allah a.k.a. the Houthis in Yemen and the Fatemiyun and Zainabiyun brigades in Syria, as well as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq. This loose Axis, along with Iranian partners and allies, have all been used and supported as proxies against Israel, and in turn taken as targets by Israeli military operations of diverse scales, ensuring, to an extent, both deterrence and plausible deniability (Soltaninejad 2019).

One should refrain to deduce however, that those events since the 1990's that led to ever worsening relations between Iran and Israel on the one side, Israel and Palestine on the other, as well as their consequences, were inevitable. Iranian and Israeli diplomacy have likewise known major shifts for the past 30 years, in the region and beyond, and the Axis itself should not be considered as fully compliant or even aligned with Iran, nor should these groups be considered as being content with one foreign backer. The background of both the Iran-Israel proxy war and of the Israel-Palestine conflict nevertheless inform these dynamics relationships, the partnerships and alliances of both Iran and Israel with infra-state and state actors, as well as international organizations, in the region and worldwide, including in Africa.

In parallel to an ever worsening Iran-Israel and Iran-US proxy war, several geopolitical dynamics have forced the Palestinian cause into progressive irrelevance. Among them are the normalization process between Israel and Arab states, that between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the enlargement of the BRICS as well as the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor (IMEC) (Ashby et al. 2023, Lynfield 2022, Monroe 2023). Palestine's diplomatic push at the United Nations (UN) and at the International Criminal Court (ICC) had also stalled.

### *The escalation: The war in Gaza, intensifying Iran-Israel proxy war and limited direct warfare*

On 7 October 2023, Hamas has launched an attack of an unprecedented nature and scale on neighbouring Israeli territory, dubbed Operation Flood of Al Aqsa. After regaining its lost territory, Israel invaded the Gaza strip from 27 October to this day. The rise of an Israeli government comprising far-right, fascist, fundamentalist, religious Zionist, ultranationalist, Jewish supremacist elements (2022) and its subsequent Palestine policy has helped the conflict erupt as well as give it justification. Hamas' stated *casus belli* includes the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, the continued Israeli blockade of the Gaza strip, Israeli operations and settler violence in the West Bank, as well as imminent threats to the Al Aqsa mosque, a Muslim holy site in Jerusalem. Both the 7 October attack and Israeli response have been condemned for disregarding IL and IHL, while atrocity crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocidal attacks have been carried out on both sides. The PIJ participates at a lesser scale (Mehvar 2023). This newest open conflict has been framed by both Iran and Israel as being a

major escalation within their own war by proxy. While 6,417 Palestinians and 321 Israelis had died between 1 January 2008 and 6 October 2023 as a result of the conflict (OCHA n.d.), the latest higher intensity occurrence (from 7 October 2023 to 24 April 2024) has resulted in 34,262 Palestinian fatalities in the Gaza strip (according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, OCHA 2024c), 1,200 Israeli facilities from the 7 October attack (1,162 of which have been identified) and 255 Israeli soldiers killed as a result of the invasion of the Gaza strip (OCHA 2024a).

Since 7 October 2023, Axis proxies have targeted American bases in Iraq, Jordan and Syria, as well as the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), mainly by drone and missile strikes. In response, the US have targeted Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Iranian proxies in Iraq and Syria since 27 October (Mehvar 2024). These led to the announcement by Iraqi PM Mohammad Shia' Al Sudani that the process of removal of the US-led coalition in the country had begun, on 5 January 2024 (Selignan & Banco 2024).

Since 8 October 2023, Hezbollah has struck Israel and been struck in return, through rocket and artillery strikes on both sides and Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon. Israel has further carried an airstrike on Beirut to kill a high-ranking member of Hamas. The Israel-Hezbollah conflict has not, so far, escalated into direct warfare, although the risk remains high. The latest occurrence was in 2006, with the last low intensity conflict dating from 2015 (Matusiak 2024).

Since 19 October 2023, the Houthis have targeted both Israel and ships of various nationalities in the Red Sea, in solidarity with Palestine (Nevola 2024). The UN Security Council (UNSC) has condemned the strikes in resolution 2722 on 10 January 2024. The defensive EUNAVFOR Aspides launched on 19 February (Gros-Verheyde 2024), while a US-led coalition, Operation Prosperity Guardian, was assembled on 18 December. Some participants to the latter have remained anonymous (Freebairn 2024). Since 12 January, the US and the UK have struck Houthi targets in Yemen – the so-called Operation Poseidon Archer (CNN 2024). Yemen had been engulfed in a civil war opposing the Iran-backed Houthis to the Saudi Arabia- and UAE-backed internationally recognized government since 2015. Hostilities had ceased in 2022.

Since October 2023, Israel has increased the frequency of its strikes in Syria against both Syrian and IRGC targets, killing several commanders of the latter. The proxy war has taken a graver turn on 1 April 2024 when Israel struck the Iranian consulate in Damascus, killing several IRGC commanders, in direct connexion with the war in Gaza (Chehayeb & Aji 2024). The strike, carried out in violation of international law and the UN charter, failed to be condemned at a UNSC meeting requested by Russia (UN 2024c). It has been tantamount to an attack on Iranian soil, and represented the first ever escalation into direct warfare. On 13 April, Iran retaliated with a massive drone and missile attack on Israel itself (Operation True Promise). Other attacks have been carried out by Iranian proxies from Iraq and Yemen. A large number of drones and missiles were intercepted by Israel, France, Jordan, the UK, the US before reaching their target (Motamedi 2024). The Madeira-flagged MSC Aries had been seized by Iranian

commandos on the same day in the Strait of Hormuz, while in international waters, on the ground it "violated maritime laws" and was linked to Israel (Reuters 2024c). The latter launched a limited and symbolic strike on Isfahan on 19 April, an attack downplayed by Iran, that some have commented illustrates the will on both sides to de-escalate, although tensions remain high (Gambrell & Federman 2024). The events have been framed on the Iranian side as a reason to expedite their nuclear program (Dolzikova & Savill 2024).

### *African reactions to the Gaza war*

Africa has been left divided in the wake of the 7 October attack, much more so than on other recent major geopolitical events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine (2022). It is in part because of Israel's long history of an ambivalent relationship with African countries and different African interpretations of Israeli policy or Palestine's significance. Early relatively warm relations have been mostly cut off after the Yom Kippur war (1973), except for Eswatini (then Swaziland), Lesotho and Malawi (Le Gouriellec 2023, Lubotzky 2023).

Relations have been rekindled in the context of the Oslo Accords during the 1990's, with Israel trying to normalize relations with most holdout African countries since 2016 in the frame of the Abraham Accords. The memory, moral, political and emotional capital of Africa-Israel and -Palestine relations is naturally most acute in Arab and/or Muslim countries, but also in countries which histories are marked by either apartheid (South Africa, Zimbabwe) or genocide (Namibia, Rwanda). The volume of bilateral trade, defence relationships (especially with the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan), as well as state vulnerability are also major factors in the positioning of African countries (Gidron 2024).

Over 54 African Union (AU) members, 8 do not recognize Israel (Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara), with a further 3 having suspended diplomatic relations (Mali and Niger since 1973, Mauritania since 2010). Conversely, only 2 AU members have failed to recognize the State of Palestine (Cameroon and Eritrea). At the latest vote on the UN membership of the latter, on 18 April 2024, all A3+1 representatives (Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone + Guyana) voted in favour of Palestine (UNSC 2024). Most African countries however have remained largely neutral, calling for a ceasefire, the respect of IL and IHL, and a two-state solution, after the manner of the AU declaration (AU 2023).

Israel's recent diplomatic push allowed for the normalization of relations, not only with Morocco (2021) and an intended normalization with Sudan (negotiations ongoing since 2020 and interrupted by the civil war in 2023), but also with Guinea-Conakry (2016), Senegal (2017) and Chad (2019). Malawi (2020) and Sierra Leone (2023) have also intended to move their embassies to Jerusalem, a show of support for Israel at odds with IL but encouraged by the policy of former US president Donald Trump.

While Sudan has been careful not to antagonize it, Morocco, Senegal and Chad have had to contend with public opinions largely favourable to Palestine (Tijani 2023, France

24 2023a), which was the case in most African Arab and/or Muslim countries. Senegal, the head of the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, has largely remained neutral (France 24 2023a), while Chad has recalled its envoy to Israel in protest on 4 November 2023 (Olivier 2023). Nigeria has merely cancelled a planned visit by Czech PM Petr Fiala over the latter's staunch support to Israel (Gencturk 2024).

Malawi, along with historic allies of Israel such as Cameroon, the DRC, Ghana and South Sudan, as well as Kenya, Rwanda, Togo and Zambia have been among those African countries to firmly condemn the 7 October attack and show support to Israel early on. Only Djibouti seems to have seized the occasion during the same period to show its support to the Palestinian cause and condemn Israeli policy (Le Gouriellec 2023). Workers from Malawi have helped Israel face a labour shortage from 25 November onwards, sending several hundreds of its citizens to work in the country's farms; the first flight came two weeks after the African country benefited from \$60m in Israeli development aid (VOA 2023b). A visa-free accord has further been signed by Israel and the Seychelles, an archipelago heavily dependent on tourism, in a context of growing Israeli demand (SNA 2023, SNA 2024).

To this day, the conflict does not seem to have seriously threatened the Abraham Accords and various normalization agreements, although it certainly has strained them. Nevertheless, informal talks with Libya, Mauritania and Somalia are now completely out of the question, and would be tantamount to political suicide. Libya has expelled foreign diplomats seen as supporting Israel (VOA 2023a), Tunisia had a law voted to criminalize all interactions with the latter (Galtier 2023), while Somalia has publicly condemned some of its actions in the Gaza strip. The latter's PM Hamza Abdi Barre has even pronounced a remarked – albeit to this day without serious consequence – speech in support of Hamas, with frankly anti-Semitic overtones (Horn Observer 2023a).

The Jordan-proposed UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution ES-10/21 entitled "Protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations" and voted upon on 27 October 2023 had 13 African sponsors out of 40 (Botswana, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan and Zimbabwe). Only 5 African representatives abstained (Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zambia), while 8 were absent (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eswatini, Liberia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Togo). None voted against it (UN 2023a). The UAE-proposed UNGA resolution ES-10/22 and voted upon on 12 December 2023 saw a similar divide, with only Liberia voting against it. 6 African representatives abstained (Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Malawi, South Sudan, Togo) while 2 were absent (Burkina Faso, Eswatini) (UN 2023c). Malta-introduced UNSC resolution 2712 (15 November) (UN 2023b) and UAE-introduced UNSC resolution 2720 (22 December 2023) (UN 2023d) saw the A3 (then Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique) united in favour of a ceasefire in the Gaza strip. Both resolutions were passed but had seen Russia and the US abstaining.

### *African activism against Israel and in support to Palestine*

Hamas has completed a major strategic objective by heightening the geopolitical relevance of the Palestinian cause and placing itself at the forefront of this fight. Interestingly, it has also sought to frame itself – despite an obvious disregard for the laws of war as well as the taking of hostages – as a defender of IL and IHL, in contrast to Israeli occupation, blockade, settlements, but also of Israeli conduct during the war (Palestine Chronicle 2024). Without necessarily going as far as supporting Hamas – apart from the Somali PM, as previously mentioned – Israel's image on the continent has suffered greatly from its blatant disregard for IHL and dehumanizing language by senior officials regarding Palestinians/Gazans.

This has in turn allowed for some activism on the part of several African countries in support to the Palestinian cause. South Africa especially, at first ambivalent in her response to the war, has been at the forefront of this fight in the arena of international justice, building on her own experience of apartheid and historic support to Palestine. Although she has not followed through on her parliament's recommendation to close the Israeli embassy in Pretoria and cut bilateral ties until there is a ceasefire (Africanews 2023), she did recall her diplomats in Tel Aviv (November 2023) (O'Regan & Fabricius 2023). She then proceeded to submit a referral to the ICC along with Bangladesh, Bolivia, Comoros and Djibouti (same month) (Baboolal 2023). She instituted proceedings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel on the basis of the Genocide Convention (December 2023), obtaining an array of provisional measures (January 2024, and again in March) (ICJ 2023).

No African country has requested to intervene in the case in what is still an early stage in the proceedings (although Colombia and Nicaragua both submitted such a request). The AU has nevertheless saluted the ICJ January decision (VOA 2024), while Uganda has publicly distanced itself from the Ugandan judge at the ICJ, which took a remarked and extremist position, in the sense that its pro-Israeli tendency was more marked than that of the Israeli judge himself (Ndebele 2024).

Namibia is the African state that has reacted most strongly to South Africa's move, or rather to Germany's reaction to the case, the latter having pledged to come to the defence of Israel at the ICJ (Talmon 2024). The former German colony has harshly criticized German support to Israel, conjuring the memory of the Herero and Nama genocide (1904-1908), an issue not fully settled between colonized and colonizer to this day (Kupemba 2024). Namibia has went on to criticize ICJ's provisional order, finding cause for disappointment in the Court not ordering a ceasefire in the Gaza strip (Iyambo 2024).

Algeria has been another African champion of the Palestinian cause. She seized the ICC as early as 7 November 2023 (MEMO 2023), besides which she led the charge at the UNSC, her tenureship having begun on 1 January 2024. She seized the UNSC regarding South Africa v. Israel on 16 January (Leslous 2024) and obtained a meeting on the ICJ's provisional order on 31 January. The latter allowed for other A3 members Mozambique and Sierra Leone to take a stand, saluting the order, calling for Israel's

compliance and criticizing the suspension of funding to UNRWA by several countries (UN 2024a). An Algeria-drafted resolution at the UNSC demanding a ceasefire in the Gaza strip was vetoed by the US on 20 February (UN 2024b). Both Algeria and South Africa have successfully opposed Israel's observer status at the AU (Du Plessis 2024).

### *African reactions to the intensifying Iran-Israel proxy war and limited direct warfare*

By and large, African nations have failed to react to the Iran-Israel proxy war that had been escalating in parallel to the Gaza war, including the Israeli airstrike on Beirut. The latter probably weighed heavily in Lebanon's recent decision to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC (Reuters 2024d). They also remained cautious on the much nearer Red Sea crisis. Only 2 African countries publicly endorsed US-UK strikes on the Houthis: Guinea-Bissau and Kenya (Mutambo & Kitimo 2024); Egypt having only called for "uniting international and regional efforts to reduce instability in the region" (Al Jazeera 2024). Many major UK and US African allies took a neutral stance instead, despite the very direct implications to their own trade and security, by fear of getting entangled in the proxy war.

Several African countries however, including Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and South Africa have condemned the Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus (Al Harathy 2024, AMI 2024, SANews 2024, SIS 2024). At the subsequent UNSC meeting on 2 April, Algeria and Sierra Leone firmly condemned the strike, while Mozambique "emphasized that all parties involved, especially Israel, must strictly adhere to international legal norms and agreements" (UN 2024c). After Operation True Promise, at another UNSC meeting (14 April), the A3 unanimously called "on all parties to exercise utmost restraint" (UN 2024d), echoing the Egyptian position (Samir 2024). The representative of Sierra Leone, talking in the name of the A3+1 (also Algeria, Mozambique and Guyana), found it "imperative to avoid a regional spillover of the Gaza conflict and to de-escalate tensions in the wider region of the Middle East, including in Yemen" at another UNSC meeting (15 April), this time called to discuss the extension of the conflict to Yemen (UN 2024e).

Both Israel and Palestine are Africa's neighbours, as they share land and sea borders with Egypt. The latter has been caught between a rock and a hard place, usually meeting criticism for her role in the conflict and in the blockade of the Gaza strip. She has been reluctant to let Palestinian refugees in the Sinai, for security and financial reasons, but also not to facilitate an ethnic cleansing of Gazans that would pave the way for Israeli colonization; a scenario publicly supported by certain Israeli officials. It further entertains a complicated relationship with both Israel and Hamas (Kayali 2024). Qatar-facilitated peace talks have mainly taken place in Cairo. Meanwhile, Egypt has fortified her border as Israeli operations moved south, creating a 2 miles-wide buffer zone with the Gaza strip. The measure has been framed as "precautionary" (Murphy 2024).



### *The African coast and the Red Sea crisis*

No front of the Iran-Israel proxy war has this far had as much importance for the African continent as Yemen. The most obvious consequence of the Houthi strikes and US-UK counter-strikes has been the disruption of navigation on the Red Sea, with dire consequences for all coastal states (Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia) as well as Ethiopia and South Sudan. Egypt, a country already facing a severe economic crisis, and that has been only barely bailed out by UAE, IMF and EU agreements (Lewis 2024, Werr 2024, Werr & Strohecker 2024), has reported a 40% fall in revenue from the Suez canal in January (Reuters 2024a).

Eritrea is also in danger of becoming a Houthi target (Sheba Intelligence 2024), as was already the case during the Yemeni civil war in 2016 (Tekle 2016). Port Sudan is threatened by complete paralysis after Sudanese external trade and South Sudanese oil exports have already fallen sharply due to the civil war in Sudan and heavy taxes levied by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) (Dabanga 2024a, 2024b). The port had also been a vital entry point for humanitarian aid, now diverted (Dabanga 2024c, Harter 2024). South Sudan had already been going through a grave economic crisis due to the war in neighbouring Sudan and damage on an oil pipeline to Port Sudan. It has further blamed the Red Sea crisis for its current woes (Africanews 2024).

Djibouti, which is also the main port for Ethiopian exports, has had to step up efforts to secure shipments, while still facing a declining traffic, delays and rising costs (Taylor 2024). While the small country is home to several foreign military bases, a feature it says participates in its security, Houthi strikes on the US base cannot be excluded outright (Milliken 2024). Djibouti is the primary base of operations for the US Africa Command (AFRICOM). A stray Houthi missile further landed in Taleh, SSC-Khatumo (Somalia) (Horn Observer 2024). Although it is unlikely the crisis was the reason behind Ethiopia's move, the latter has been careful to frame her controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Somaliland, signed on 1 January 2024, within the context of Houthi strikes (Maddox 2024).

The MoU, that allows Ethiopia to access the port of Berbera for commercial purposes and to obtain a naval base near Djibouti's border (Awdal), has triggered a grave crisis with Somalia, bringing both Horn nations to the brink of war. The crisis presents other threats, such as the resurgence of piracy in Puntland, apparent since November 2023 (Oyewole 2024). Another very likely consequence is the heightening of the illegal flow of war material and other smuggled goods between Yemen and Somalia (Abu Bakr 2024). The Somaliland Coast Guard has recently arrested 170 Ethiopian human traffickers in Eastern Sanaag, a disputed regions between Somaliland, SSC-Khatumo and Puntland (Garowe Online 2024).

### *Effect on terrorist groups across Africa*

In turn, this has naturally reinforced Al Shabaab (AS). The response from Al Qaeda (AQ), Islamic State (IS) affiliates and other terrorist groups across Africa, which base their legitimacy on a fundamentalist vision of islam and on armed jihad, has been

unambiguous. Communiques by AQIM, JNIM (AQ affiliates in North and West Africa) and AS have celebrated the 7 October attack (ADF 2023a, Weiss 2023). Conversely, the Iran-Israel and Iran-US proxy war and specifically the revival of the Israel-Palestine conflict are a bonanza for those groups' propaganda and recruitment, a feature the latter have been far from neglecting (Firode 2023).

The fact is exemplified by IS renewed campaign through its affiliates on all African fronts "in support to Palestinian Muslims", including in Cameroon, the DRC, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria (Karr 2024). Governments have often been at loss to counter this propaganda effort that more often than not builds on a pro-Palestinian sentiment in the general population, a fact particularly salient in Arab and Muslim African countries. This partly explains the pro-Hamas speech of the Somali PM, which has nevertheless backfired into favouring the desertion of around 1,000 troops in favour of clan militias or Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Jaysh al-Islam (Horn Observer 2023b).

The effects of an escalation of the Iran-Israel proxy war into a direct conflict would be less obvious however. Iran has murky links with AQ affiliates, despite official negations (Rafizadeh 2023). IS is however a long-standing enemy of both Israel and Iran (and Shia Muslims), as exemplified recently by the attack in Kerman (Smith, Kemal & Webber 2024).

### *Anti-westernism, anticolonialism and pan-Africanism as vectors of influence*

Major geopolitical confrontations have not only happened on the background of an ever-growing terrorist threat, but also of a war for influence between the West (France first and foremost, the US and the EU in a lesser measure) and subversive or revisionist powers, seen as pushing an agenda challenging a world order shaped by and for the West (primarily Russia, China in a lesser measure). The rise of anti-westernism has been helped both by French-Western attitudes and policies and Russian and Chinese disinformation campaigns in the wake of the most recent French interventions on the continent (CAR, Mali). It has coincided with Russia's and under her umbrella Wagner's (now Africa Corps') renewed interest for the continent and – mostly successful – attempt at dislodging France and other perceived Western enemies in her own favour. All the while, targeted countries, either in the West or amiable governments in Africa (Burkina Faso and Niger before the coups, now Chad and coastal West Africa in particular), have struggled to face the threat and respond to grievances, whether artificial or legitimate (Carbone & Ragazzi 2023, Gotteland 2023).

Perceived double standards in dealing with the war in Ukraine on the one side, the war in Gaza and the Iran-Israel proxy war on the other, either in the domains of economic sanctions, international justice or responses from international organizations and the UN – where some illegal strikes were unambiguously condemned, but not others, including the Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus – can only heighten the sense there is a new "Cold War" between the West and its allies on the one side and subversive/revisionist powers on the other. This perception can only be more acute on the African continent, where such a narrative has pervaded the information

sphere for several years, and with apparent success. The subversive/revisionist axis has attempted to court the "Global South" with a rhetoric supportive of anticolonialism – and, in Africa specifically, of pan-Africanism (Gardin 2023, Rodkiewicz 2023).

Whereas Iran clearly portrays itself as a one of the subversive/revisionist and by extension anticolonial powers (France 24 2023b), Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu has framed the war in Gaza as the defence of "Western civilization" (Times of Israel 2024). This in turn has helped not only the cause of Palestine, but Iran's diplomatic push on the continent since 2023 and has also further pressured Israeli efforts at normalization of relations or deepening of ties with African nations (Soufan Center 2024, Toğa 2024).

### *Iran's diplomatic offensive in Africa*

Vying for influence on the continent, while not new, has met with little success and has not been a major strategic focus for Iran. The normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia (March 2023), combined with the string of coups in the Sahel, had given impetus to Iranian efforts in Africa well before the Gaza war (Cafiero 2023, Soufan Center 2024). President Ebrahim Raisi's East Africa tour in July 2023 had been the first in more than 11 years. It followed the 1st Iran-West Africa Economic Summit held in Tehran in March of the same year. This was followed by Iranian attendance to the BRICS summit in Johannesburg in August – at which Iran, along with others, including Egypt and Ethiopia, were invited to join the forum (ADF 2023b, Financial Tribune 2023).

Historically, Iran's main partners are Algeria, post-apartheid South Africa, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Chigora & Goredema 2011, Collins & Burr 2003, Dazi-Héni 2019, Onderco 2016). Ghana and Guinea-Bissau also cooperate with this country in various domains (Hashiru 2017). Iranian drones had been used by Ethiopia in the war against her Tigray region (2020-2022) (ADF 2023b). Egypt and Morocco are the most inimical to the Iranian regime (Al-Obeidy 2019, Bahgat 2009).

The 2010's had been a low point for Africa-Iran relations, with no less than 6 African countries (Comoros, Gambia, Morocco, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan) severing bilateral ties. International sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, perceived Shia proselytism in Sunni countries and destabilizing operations (state terrorism, arms and drugs trade, support to the Axis on the African coast of the Red Sea, support to separatist movements in Casamance and Western Sahara, the Iran-Israel, -Saudi and -US proxy wars) have long impeded both political relations and trade (Al Jazeera 2018, BBC News 2010, Hinshaw 2011, Reuters 2016a, 2016b, RFE/RL 2016). Terrorist plots to be carried out by Iranian agents have been prevented in Kenya (2012), Ethiopia (2021), Ghana, Senegal and Tanzania (2022) (Lough & Miriri 2012, ADF 2023b).

The normalization of relations with Djibouti (September 2023) and Sudan (October 2023) are rather the direct result of the Iran-Saudi normalization than that of the brewing conflict between Iran and Israel. It should be added that while Djibouti and Iran share a common view of the Palestinian question, Sudan is not keen on endangering his own normalization process with Israel, as was exemplified by the latter's refusal to allow for an Iranian naval base to be set up on its coast in exchange for a warship

(Barlyo & Faucon 2024, Scollon 2024). Beyond the strengthening of ties in the Sahel and with Algeria (Lucente 2024) or Tanzania, Iran also seems to be in the process of normalizing relations with Somalia (Xinhua 2024).

### *Perspectives on the significance for Africa of the Iran-Israel conflict and a possible further escalation*

The Palestinian question, the Iran-Israel, -Saudi and -US proxy wars have been major stakes of both Iranian and Israeli diplomatic efforts in Africa. That Israel should picture itself as an outpost of "Western civilization" and Iran frame itself as a champion of anti-westernism and anticolonialism have helped the latter's cause thanks to the military coups that shook the Sahel since 2020. The normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and onset of the Gaza war have also favoured Iran in this quest for allies, proxies, as well as business partners and supporters on the international arena.

The longer and the bloodier the current Gaza war is getting, the more difficult it becomes for African partners of Israel to maintain even a neutral stance, while warmer relations with Iran are seen in an ever more favourable light. This is all the more apparent as the continent has come at the front of the fight for international justice and within international organizations and the UN in favour of Palestine and against Israel. Current African nations of an ambiguous standing, such as Chad or Senegal, could well be the next to get closer to Iran, although not necessarily by breaking ties with Israel. Sudan is a case in point in that regard.

On the other hand, the consequences of the Gaza war on African public opinion, especially in Arab or Muslim countries, are a boon for terrorist groups across the continent, whether or not they have any sympathy for Iran or Shiism. A ceasefire in Gaza would therefore not only relieve pressure on Israel on the African diplomatic front, but also temper terrorist propaganda and recruitment. It remains difficult to project how Iran's influence in Africa would be affected by a lapse in open hostilities. In any case, whether Hamas is crushed or Israel withdraws without attaining its war aims in the Gaza strip, Iran is set to benefit by heralding resistance to colonialism and the Western world order, in an always more favourable information environment and political atmosphere. Another major security risk is the opportunity this presents for destabilization in Africa on either side of the proxy war, as there is little doubt Iran would use the opportunity to reinforce the Axis.

On the opposite end, a further escalation of the Iran-Israel conflict into direct hostilities as has been witnessed in April 2024 and remains a high risk likely would pressure both Israeli and Iranian partners, as the US and their allies would be likely to sanction Iran further, or perhaps even join the Israeli war effort. Even if this escalation remains limited to both Iran and Israel, without further external involvement, the economic fallout of such an escalation could be disastrous for the continent, on a scale similar to the consequences of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In that regard, the Red Sea crisis represents but a taste of what the entire continent would have to suffer. And yet, as things stand, the extension of the Iran-Israel proxy

war to Yemen and the Red Sea have already crippled various African economies and finances by impeding navigation and external trade. For this reason, it remains possible that the war, should it escalate or last much longer at its current intensity, be exported to the African continent itself. The likeliest such event is the strike by the Houthis of targets within Eritrea, Djibouti or Somalia. Covert operations by one or the other against the interests of its adversary remain also a very high risk, as has been demonstrated by foiled Iranian terrorist plots on African soil.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Dr Mathieu Gotteland holds a PhD in History of international relations (University Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, France). A former Jean Walter-Zellidja fellow (Académie française) and a former PhD fellow of the French Ministry for Defence, he has been awarded by the latter a Prize in Military History (2014). Currently an independent researcher in (history of) international relations, he has published a number of academic articles and book chapters. A participant to several think tanks and international research groups, his research interests include informal imperialism, terrorism, hybrid and secret warfare, and the dynamics of international and non-international conflict, particularly in Africa.

### References

- Abu Bakr, F. (2024) 'Houthis recruit fishermen, pirates to assist with arms smuggling', *Al-Fassel*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from [https://alfasselnews.com/en\\_GB/articles/gc1/features/2024/02/02/feature-04](https://alfasselnews.com/en_GB/articles/gc1/features/2024/02/02/feature-04)
- ADF (2023a) 'Al-Shabaab Hopes to Recruit by Celebrating Hamas Attacks', *Africa Defense Forum*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/11/al-shabaab-hopes-to-recruit-by-celebrating-hamas-attacks/>
- ADF (2023b) 'Iranian Efforts to Deepen Ties in Africa Draw Skeptical Response', *Africa Defense Forum*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/11/iranian-efforts-to-deepen-ties-in-africa-draw-skeptical-response/>
- Africanews (2023) 'South Africa: Ruling ANC in favour of closing Israeli embassy over onslaught in Gaza', *Africanews*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.africanews.com/2023/11/16/south-africa-ruling-anc-in-favour-of-closing-israeli-embassy-over-onslaught-in-gaza/>
- Africanews (2024) 'South Sudan blames fighting in neighbouring Sudan and attacks in



- the Red Sea for its crisis', *Africanews*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from
- Al Harathy, S. (2024) 'Libya condemns attack on Iranian consulate in Damascus', *The Libya Observer*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/libya-condemns-attack-iranian-consulate-damascus#:~:text=Libya%20has%20condemned%20the%20attack,resulted%20in%20fatalities%20and%20injuries.>
- Al Jazeera (2018), 'Morocco cuts diplomatic ties with Iran over Western Sahara feud', *Al Jazeera*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/1/morocco-cuts-diplomatic-ties-with-iran-over-western-sahara-feud>
- Al Jazeera (2024), 'World reacts to US, UK attacks on Houthi targets in Yemen', *Al Jazeera*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/12/world-reacts-to-us-uk-attacks-on-houthi-targets-in-yemen>
- Al-Obeidy, M.A.Y. (2019) 'السياسية البلدية عالقات يف دراست - املغربيت واململكيت الإسلامية إيران مظهرية' [The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Morocco A study of the political relations between the two countries after the Iranian revolution in 1979], *العدد إقليمية دراسات*, [Regional Studies Journal], nr 91, pp. 34-53
- AMI (2024) 'La Mauritanie condamne l'attaque du consulat d'Iran à Damas par l'aviation israélienne', *Agence Mauritanienne d'Information*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://ami.mr/fr/archives/243346>
- Ashby, H., Markey D., Randolph, K., Sharad, K., Tugendhat, H. and Verjee, A. (2023) 'New additions highlight the bloc's global appeal — but more members could further complicate its consensus-based approach', *United States Institute of Peace*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/08/what-brics-expansion-means-blocs-founding-members>
- AU (2023) 'Joint statement by the African Union Commission and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States on the Grave Situation in Gaza', *African Union*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20231015/african-union-and-league-arab-states-issue-joint-statement-gaza-crisis>
- Baboolal, S. (2023), 'ICC receives Palestine referral from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Comoros, Djibouti and South Africa', *Juristnews*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.jurist.org/news/2023/11/icc-receives-palestine-referral-from-bangladesh-bolivia-comoros-djibouti-and-south-africa/>
- Bahgat, G. (2009) 'Egypt and Iran: The 30-year Estrangement', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 16, nr 4 (Winter 2009), pp. 47-54
- Barlyo & Faucon (2024) 'Iran Tried to Persuade Sudan to Allow Naval Base on Its Red Sea Coast', *The Wall Street Journal*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/iran-tried-to-persuade-sudan-to-allow-naval-base-on-its-red-sea-coast-77ca3922>
- BBC News (2010) ", *BBC News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from





- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11819143>
- Brandenburg, R. (2010) 'Iran and the Palestinians', *United States Institute of Peace*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/10/01/netanyahu-s-shockingly-bad-iran-speech-pub-53177>
- Cafiero, G. (2023) 'Iran Sees Potential Gain in Loss of Western Influence in the Sahel', *Stimson*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.stimson.org/2023/iran-sees-potential-gain-in-loss-of-western-influence-in-the-sahel/>
- Carbone, G. and Ragazzi L. (2023), *Is Africa Turning Against the West?*, Ledizioni Publishing, Milan, November 2023
- Chehayeb, K. and Aji, A. (2024) 'Israeli strike on Iran's consulate in Syria killed 2 generals and 5 other officers, Iran says', *AP News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://apnews.com/article/israel-syria-airstrike-iranian-embassy-edca34c52d38c8bc57281e4ebf33b240>
- Chigora P. and Goredema D. (2011) 'Zimbabwe-Iran Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, vol. 13, nr 4 (2011), pp. 423-430
- CNN (2024) 'January 22, 2024 Israel-Hamas war', *CNN*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from [https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-01-22-24/h\\_bcea34adfb7d01899d1d59278a3a9bfe](https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-01-22-24/h_bcea34adfb7d01899d1d59278a3a9bfe)
- Collins, R.O. and Burr, J.M., *Revolutionary Sudan: Hasan al-Turabi and the Islamist State, 1989-2000*, Brill, 2003
- Dabanga (2024a) 'Red Sea tensions threaten Sudan ports activity', *Dabanga*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/red-sea-tensions-threaten-sudan-ports-activity>
- Dabanga (2024b) 'Sudanese livestock traders hit by hefty customs duties', *Dabanga*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudanese-livestock-traders-hit-by-hefty-customs-duties>
- Dabanga (2024c) 'Vital aid to Sudan faces 40%+ shipping cost hike amid Red Sea disruption', *Dabanga*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/vital-aid-to-sudan-faces-40-shipping-cost-hike-amid-red-sea-disruption>
- Daily News (2024) 'Tanzania commits to strengthening ties with Iran', *Daily News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://dailynews.co.tz/tanzania-commits-to-strengthening-ties-with-iran/>
- Dazi-Héni, F. (2019) 'Algeria's Foreign Policy in the Gulf Iran and the GCC States', in Yahia H. Zoubir, *The Politics of Algeria, Domestic Issues and International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2019
- Dolzikova, D. and Savill, M. (2024) 'Why Iran may accelerate its nuclear program, and Israel may be tempted to attack it', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://thebulletin.org/2024/04/why-iran-may-accelerate-its-nuclear-program-and-israel-may-be-tempted-to-attack-it/>
- Farhang, M. (1989) 'The Iran-Israel Connection', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 11, nr 1

- (Winter 1989), pp. 85-98
- Financial Tribune (2023) '1st Iran-West Africa Economic Summit Convenes in Tehran', *Financial Tribune*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://financialtribune.com/articles/domestic-economy/117421/1st-iran-west-africa-economic-summit-convenes-in-tehran>
- France 24 (2023a), 'Au Sénégal, un soutien “modéré” aux Palestiniens remis en question', *France 24*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20231029-au-s%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal-un-soutien-mod%C3%A9r%C3%A9-aux-palestiniens-remis-en-question>
- France 24 (2023b) 'Iran hails African countries' resistance to 'colonialism', *France 24*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20230904-iran-hails-african-countries-resistance-to-colonialism>
- Freebairn, T. (2024) 'Operation Prosperity Guardian Faces Early Hurdles', *Defense Security Monitor*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://dsm.forecastinternational.com/2024/01/02/operation-prosperity-guardian-faces-early-hurdles/>
- Galtier, M. (2023) 'En Tunisie, une loi pour criminaliser tout lien avec Israël', *Libération*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from [https://www.liberation.fr/international/moyen-orient/en-tunisie-une-loi-pour-criminaliser-tout-lien-avec-israel-20231102\\_3NH5Z4464FADJG5U5IGFX5FJNA/](https://www.liberation.fr/international/moyen-orient/en-tunisie-une-loi-pour-criminaliser-tout-lien-avec-israel-20231102_3NH5Z4464FADJG5U5IGFX5FJNA/)
- Gambrell, J. and Federman, J. (2024) 'Israel, Iran play down apparent Israeli strike. The muted responses could calm tensions — for now', *AP News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://apnews.com/article/iran-israel-mideast-tensions-4-19-2024-a7ccbae2e2844bab089e8e4377a24ddb>
- Gardin, O. (2023) 'Hidden in plain sight: Pro-Kremlin Pan-African influencers and the threat to Africa's stability and democracy', *RUSI Europe*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://rusieurope.eu/hidden-in-plain-sight-pro-kremlin-pan-african-influencers-and-the-threat-to-africa-s-stability-and-democracy/>
- Garowe Online (2024) 'Ethiopian nationals arrested in Somalia', *Garowe Online*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/ethiopian-nationals-arrested-in-somalia>
- Gencturk, A. (2024) 'Nigeria cancels Czech premier's visit, citing government's inability to provide adequate reception', *Anadolu Agency*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/nigeria-cancels-czech-premiers-visit-citing-governments-inability-to-provide-adequate-reception/3046628>
- Gidron Y. (2024) 'Israel and Africa' in Joel Peters and Rob Geist Pinfold, *Routledge Handbook on Israel's Foreign Relations*, London, Routledge, 2024
- Gotteland M. (2023) 'La stratégie française en Afrique : état des lieux et défis', *IPSA*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.ipsa-afrique.org/la-strategie-francaise-en-afrique-etat-des-lieux-et-defis/>
- Gros-Verheyde, N. (2024) '[Actualité] Premier bilan de l'opération européenne Aspides',



- B2, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.bruxelles2.eu/2024/03/actualite-premier-bilan-de-loperation-europeenne-aspides/>
- Harter, F. (2024) 'Houthi attacks in Red Sea having a 'catastrophic' effect on aid to Sudan', *The Guardian*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/feb/16/houthi-attacks-in-red-sea-having-a-catastrophic-effect-on-aid-to-sudan>
- Hashiru, M. (2017) 'Using Foreign Policy as a Tool for Spreading Ideology: The Case of Iran in Ghana (1979-2016)', Master's Thesis, Sakarya University
- Hinshaw, D. (2011) 'Senegal's Breaking Ties With Iran Won't Affect Trade, Minister Says', *Voice of America*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.voanews.com/a/iran-calls-diplomatic-split-with-senegal-illogical-116811423/157522.html>
- Horn Observer (2023a) 'Somali prime minister expresses support for Hamas, sparks controversy on Ukraine', *Horn Observer*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://hornobserver.com/articles/2503/Somali-primeminister-expresses-support-for-Hamas-sparks-controversy-onUkraine>
- Horn Observer (2023b) 'Trained Somali forces desert after PM's support for Hamas', *Horn Observer*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://hornobserver.com/articles/2521/Trained-Somali-forces-desert-after-PMs-support-for-Hamas>
- Horn Observer (2024) 'SSC-Khaatumo probes 'misguided' Houthi projectile that crashed near Taleex', *Horn Observer*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://hornobserver.com/articles/2741/SSC-Khaatumo-probes-misguided-Houthi-projectile-that-crashed-near-Taleex>
- ICJ (2023) 'Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)', *International Court of Justice*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>
- Iyambo, S. (2024) 'World court missed opportunity on Israel-Palestine war – Nandi-Ndaitwah', *The Namibian*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.namibian.com.na/world-court-missed-opportunity-on-israel-palestine-war-nandi-ndaitwah/>
- Judis, J. (2013) 'Netanyahu's Shockingly Bad Iran Speech', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/10/01/netanyahu-s-shockingly-bad-iran-speech-pub-53177>
- Karr, L. (2024) 'Salafi-Jihadi Movement Weekly Update, January 10, 2024: New IS Campaign Presents Pro-Palestine Propaganda Opportunities for Sub-Saharan Affiliates', *Critical Threats*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/salafi-jihadi-movement-weekly-update-january-10-2024>
- Kayali, L. (2024) 'Why Egypt refuses to open its border to Palestinians forcibly displaced from Gaza', *The Conversation*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://theconversation.com/why-egypt-refuses-to-open-its-border-to-palestinians->

forcibly-displaced-from-gaza-223735

- Klein, M. (2023) 'Israeli arrogance thwarted a Palestinian political path. October 7 revealed the cost', *+972 Magazine*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.972mag.com/hamas-fatah-elections-israel-arrogance/>
- Kupemba, D.N. (2024) 'Namibia criticises German support for Israel over ICJ genocide case', *BBC News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67974067>
- Le Gouriellec, S. (2023) 'Israël-Hamas : les pays d'Afrique subsaharienne dans la guerre de Soukkot', *Le Grand Continent*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2023/10/20/israel-hamas-les-pays-dafrigue-subsaharienne-dans-la-guerre-de-soukkot/>
- Leslous, S. (2024) 'Après la décision de la CIJ sur Gaza: L'Algérie convoque une réunion du Conseil de sécurité', *L'Algérie aujourd'hui*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://lalgerieaujourd'hui.dz/apres-la-decision-de-la-cij-sur-gaza-lalgerie-convoque-une-reunion-du-conseil-de-securite/>
- Lewis, A. (2024) 'Egypt signs expanded \$8 billion loan deal with IMF', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/markets/egypt-signs-expanded-8-billion-loan-deal-with-imf-2024-03-06/>
- Lindenstrauss, G. and Kivam, S.K. (2014) 'Turkish-Hamas Relations: Between Strategic Calculations and Ideological Affinity', *Strategic Assessment*, vol. 17, nr 2 (July 2014)
- Lough, R. and Miriri D. (2012) 'Wary of sanctions, Kenya cancels Iran oil deal', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE8630CX/>
- Lubotzky, A. (2023) 'Israel's Uncertainty in Africa', *The Republic*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://republic.com.ng/october-november-2023/africas-divided-response-to-the-israel-hamas-war/>
- Lucente, A. (2024) 'Iran, Algeria to build closer energy, tourism ties', *Al-Monitor*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2024/03/iran-algeria-build-closer-energy-tourism-ties>
- Lynfield, B. (2022) 'Two Years Later, the Abraham Accords Are Losing Their Luster', *Foreign Policy*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/23/abraham-accords-israel-palestine-two-years/>
- Maddox, D. (2024) 'The unlikely country that could solve Houthi crisis in the Red Sea', *Express*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1860189/red-sea-crisis-houthi-somaliland>
- Matusiak, M. (2024) 'Israel–Hezbollah: the state of the conflict and the outlook', *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2024-03-07/israel-hezbollah-state-conflict-and-outlook>
- Mehvar, A. (2023) 'Fact Sheet: Israel and Palestine Conflict', *ACLED*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://acleddata.com/2023/10/10/fact-sheet-israel-and-palestine-conflict/>
- Mehvar, A. (2024) 'ACLED Factsheet | US strikes and counter-strikes in the Middle East (Updated 2/9/23)', *ACLED*



- MEMO (2023) 'Algeria calls on ICC to hold Israel accountable for its crimes in Gaza', *The Middle East Monitor*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20231107-algeria-calls-on-icc-to-hold-israel-accountable-for-its-crimes-in-gaza/>
- Milliken, E. (2024) 'Will the Houthis Target U.S. Troops in Djibouti Next?', *The National Interest*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-houthis-target-us-troops-djibouti-next-208738>
- Monroe, S.L. (2023) 'The India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor: an early assessment', *Economic Research Forum*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://theforum.erf.org.eg/2023/10/30/the-india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor-an-early-assessment/>
- Motamedi, M. (2024) 'True Promise': Why and how did Iran launch a historic attack on Israel?', *Al Jazeera*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/14/true-promise-why-and-how-did-iran-launch-a-historic-attack-on-israel>
- Murphy, P.P. (2024) 'Egypt is building a new walled buffer zone more than 2 miles wide on Gaza border, satellite images show', *CNN*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/16/middleeast/egypt-wall-buffer-zone-gaza-border-intl-hnk/index.html>
- Mutambo, A. and Kitimo, A. 'US pushes Nairobi into anti-Houthi campaign as EA peers steer clear', *The East African*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/us-pressure-kenya-into-anti-houthi-campaign-4507802>
- Ndebele, L. (2024), 'Ugandan ICJ judge's vote on Gaza case does not reflect Kampala's views, diplomat says', *News24*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/ugandan-icj-judges-vote-on-gaza-case-does-not-reflect-kampalas-views-diplomat-says-20240127>
- Nevola, L. (2024) 'Yemen and the Red Sea: Rising Tensions Threaten Peace Process and International Security', *ACLED*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://acledata.com/conflict-watchlist-2024/yemen/>
- OCHA (n.d.) 'Data on casualties', *OCHA*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>
- OCHA (2024a) 'Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - reported impact | Day 181', *OCHA*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-181>
- OCHA (2024c) 'Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #157', *OCHA*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-157>
- Olivier, M. (2023) 'Guerre Israël-Hamas : le Tchad rappelle son chargé d'affaires de Tel-Aviv', *Jeune Afrique*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1500869/politique/guerre-israel-hamas-le-tchad-rappelle-son-charge-daffaires-de-tel-aviv/>

- Onderco, M. (2016) 'A battle of principles: South Africa's relations with Iran', *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, vol. 54, nr 2 (2016), pp. 252-267 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2016.1151168>
- O'Regan, V. and Fabricius, P. (2023) 'SA recalls diplomats in Tel Aviv over 'untenable' situation with Israeli ambassador', *Daily Maverick*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-11-06-sarecalls-diplomats-in-tel-aviv-over-israeli-ambassador/>
- Oyewole, S. (2024) 'Houthi militant attacks in the Red Sea raise fears of Somali piracy resurgence', *The Conversation*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://theconversation.com/houthi-militant-attacks-in-the-red-sea-raise-fears-of-somali-piracy-resurgence-221665>
- Palestine Chronicle (2024) ' Hamas Urges Action to Enforce Israel to Oblige ICJ Ruling', *The Palestine Chronicle*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.palestinechronicle.com/hamas-urges-action-to-enforce-israel-to-oblige-icj-ruling/>
- Rafizadeh M. (2023) 'The long-time alliance between Al-Qaeda and the Iran regime', *Arab News*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2256736>
- Reuters (2016a) 'Sudan cuts diplomatic ties with Iran', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN0U1177/>
- Reuters (2016b) 'Somalia received Saudi aid the day it cut ties with Iran: document', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN0UV0CL/>
- Reuters (2024a) 'Egypt's Suez Canal revenues down 40% due to Houthi attacks', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/egypts-suez-canal-revenues-down-40-due-houthi-attacks-2024-01-11/>
- Reuters (2024c) 'Iran says MSC Aries vessel seized for 'violating maritime laws'', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-says-msc-aries-vessel-seized-violating-maritime-laws-2024-04-15/>
- Reuters (2024d) 'Lebanon moves towards accepting ICC jurisdiction for war crimes on its soil', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanon-moves-towards-accepting-icc-jurisdiction-war-crimes-its-soil-2024-04-27/>
- RFE/RL (2016) 'Saudi Ally Comoros The Latest To Break Diplomatic Ties With Iran', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.rferl.org/a/saudi-ally-comoros-latest-break-diplomatic-ties-iran-embassy-ransacking/27491171.html>
- Rodkiewicz, W. (2023) 'An anti-colonial alliance with the Global South. The new 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation'', *Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW)*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-04-07/anti-colonial-alliance-global-south-new-foreign-policy->





concept

- Samir, M. (2024), 'Egypt voices concerns over Iran-Israel escalation, urges restraint', *Daily News Egypt*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2024/04/13/egypt-voices-concerns-over-iran-israel-escalation-urges-restraint/>
- SANews (2024), 'South Africa condemns attack on consular section building in Damascus', *South African Government News Agency*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/south-africa-condemns-attack-consular-section-building-damascus#:~:text=South%20Africa%20condemns%20attack%20on%20consular%20section%20building%20in%20Damascus,-Thursday%2C%20April%204&text=South%20Africa%20has%20condemned%20Monday's,in%20the%20Syrian%20Arab%20Republic.>
- Schollon, M. (2024) 'Iran Homing In On Africa With Trade Promises, Chaos', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-russia-africa-israel-terror/32917323.html>
- Selignan, L. and Banco, E. (2024) 'Iraqi officials privately signal they want US forces to stay', *Politico*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/01/09/iraq-us-troops-removal-00134564>
- Sheba Intelligence (2024), 'Yemen's Houthis Consider Launching an Attack on a Military Base in Eritrea', *Sheba Intelligence*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://shebaintelligence.uk/yemens-houthis-consider-launching-an-attack-on-a-military-base-in-eritrea>
- SIS (2024) 'Egypt condemns targeting Iranian consulate in Damascus', *State Information Service*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/192309/Egypt-condemns-targeting-Iranian-consulate-in-Damascus/?lang=en-us>
- Smith, P., Kemal, L. and Webber L. (2024) 'Islamic State Khorasan's Westward Network Expansion Into Iran, Turkey, and Europe', *The Diplomat*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/islamic-state-khorasans-westward-network-expansion-into-iran-turkey-and-europe/>
- SNA (2023) 'Seychelles attracts more tourists from Israel: Air Seychelles to operate more flights', *Seychelles News Agency*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/18233/Seychelles+attracts+more+to+urists+from+Israel+Air+Seychelles+to+operate+more+flights>
- SNA (2024) 'Seychelles and Israel sign visa-free accord, islanders now have one of strongest passports in the world', *Seychelles News Agency*, <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/19916/Seychelles+and+Israel+sign+v+isa-free+accord%2C+islanders+now+have+one+of+strongest+passports+in+the+world>
- Soltaninejad, M. (2019) 'Coalition-Building in Iran's Foreign Policy: Understanding the 'Axis of Resistance'', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, nr 6 (2019),

pp. 716-731

- Soufan Center (2024) 'IntelBrief: Iran Extends its Influence in Africa', *The Soufan Center*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from [https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief/?\\_sf\\_s=IntelBrief%3A%20Iran%20Extends%20its%20Influence%20in%20Africa](https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief/?_sf_s=IntelBrief%3A%20Iran%20Extends%20its%20Influence%20in%20Africa)
- Talmon, S. (2024) 'Germany Rushes to Declare Intention to Intervene in the Genocide Case brought by South Africa Against Israel Before the International Court of Justice', *GPIL – German Practice in International Law*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://gpil.jura.uni-bonn.de/2024/01/germany-rushes-to-declare-intention-to-intervene-in-the-genocide-case-brought-by-south-africa-against-israel-before-the-international-court-of-justice/>
- Taylor, L. (2024) 'Djibouti, the port-state squeezed by the Houthis' Red Sea campaign', *The Economist*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.economist.com/1843/2024/03/22/djibouti-the-port-state-squeezed-by-the-houthis-red-sea-campaign>
- Tekle T.-A. (2016) 'Yemen's Houthi forces attack Eritrea's Airport, Navy base : rebels', *Sudan Tribune*, <https://sudantribune.com/article58567/> (Accessed: 7 May 2024)
- Tijani, Y. (2023) 'Guerre Hamas-Israël : pourquoi la position du Maroc est particulière', *Le Point*, Available at: [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/guerre-hamas-israel-pourquoi-la-position-du-maroc-est-particuliere-20-10-2023-2540102\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/guerre-hamas-israel-pourquoi-la-position-du-maroc-est-particuliere-20-10-2023-2540102_3826.php)
- Times of Israel (2024) 'Thanking US, Netanyahu says military aid for Israel 'defends Western civilization'', *The Times of Israel*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from [https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog\\_entry/thanking-us-netanyahu-says-military-aid-for-israel-defends-western-civilization/](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/thanking-us-netanyahu-says-military-aid-for-israel-defends-western-civilization/)
- Toğa, O. (2024) 'Iran's Approach to the African Continent and Its Strategic Objectives', *IRAM*, [https://iramcenter.org/en/irans-approach-to-the-african-continent-and-its-strategic-objectives\\_en-2470](https://iramcenter.org/en/irans-approach-to-the-african-continent-and-its-strategic-objectives_en-2470)
- UN (2023a) 'General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling for Immediate, Sustained Humanitarian Truce Leading to Cessation of Hostilities between Israel, Hamas', *United Nations*, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12548.doc.htm>
- UN (2023b) 'Adopting Resolution 2712 (2023), Security Council Calls for 'Urgent and Extended' Humanitarian Pauses in Gaza, Immediate Release of Hostages', *United Nations*, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15496.doc.htm>
- UN (2023c) 'General Assembly Adopts Resolution Demanding Immediate Humanitarian Ceasefire in Gaza, Parties' Compliance with International Law, Release of All Hostages', *United Nations*, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12572.doc.htm>
- UN (2023d) 'Security Council Requests UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid in Gaza, Adopting Resolution 2720 (2023) by Recorded Vote', *United Nations*, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15546.doc.htm>
- UN (2024a) 'Humanitarian Response in Gaza 'Completely Dependent' on Palestine Refugee Agency, Relief Chief Tells Security Council, Urging Countries to Restore



- Funding', *United Nations*, <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15575.doc.htm>
- UN (2024b) 'Security Council Again Fails to Adopt Resolution Demanding Immediate Humanitarian Ceasefire in Gaza on Account of Veto by United States', *United Nations*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15595.doc.htm>
- UN (2024c) 'Briefing Security Council on Reported Israeli Attacks against Iran's Diplomatic Premises in Syria, Top UN Official Urges Efforts to Prevent Further Escalation', *United Nations*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15650.doc.htm>
- UN (2024d) 'Warning Middle East at Risk of Full-Scale Conflict, Secretary-General Urges All Parties to 'Step Back from the Brink', in Emergency Security Council Session', *United Nations*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15660.doc.htm>
- UN (2024e) 'Red Sea Crisis, Gaza Conflict Pose Threat to Progress, Stability in Yemen, Speakers Tell Security Council', *United Nations*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15661.doc.htm>
- UNSC (2024) 'Algeria: draft resolution', *United Nations Security Council*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://undocs.org/en/S/2024/312>
- VOA (2023a) 'Libya Parliament Orders Out Diplomats of Countries Supporting Israel', *Voice of America*
- VOA (2023b) 'Malawi Migrants Head to Israel as Farm Labor', *Voice of America*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/malawi-migrants-head-to-israel-as-farm-labor/7372493.html>
- VOA (2024) 'Le chef de l'Union africaine "salue" la décision de la CIJ concernant le Proche-Orient', *Voice of America*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.voaafrrique.com/a/isra%C3%ABl-gaza-le-chef-de-l-union-africaine-salue-la-d%C3%A9cision-de-la-cij/7459813.html>
- Weiss, C. (2023) 'Al-Qaeda's North and West African branches respond to the Hamas-led invasion of Israel', *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/10/13/al-qaedas-north-and-west-african-branches-respond-to-the-hamas-led-invasion-of-israel/>
- Werr, P. (2024) 'EU pledges billions of euros for Egypt as it seeks to curb migration', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/eu-bolster-egypt-ties-with-billions-funding-2024-03-17/>
- Werr, P. and Strohecker, K. (2024) 'Egypt announces \$35 billion UAE investment on Mediterranean coast', *Reuters*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.reuters.com/business/egypt-announces-multi-billion-uae-investment-boost-forex-2024-02-23/>
- World Bank (2023) 'Addis-Djibouti Corridor to Get Major Upgrade That is Key to Unlocking Connectivity and Trade for Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa', *World Bank*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/07/20/addis-djibouti-corridor-to-get-major-upgrade-that-is-key-to-unlocking-connectivity-and-trade-for-ethiopia-afe-hoa>

Xinhua (2024) '33 Iranians jailed in Somalia released', *Xinhua*, Retrieved May 7, 2024 from  
<https://english.news.cn/20240325/1f61bf84bfc14e4d9534666161f44432/c.html>

## Contemporary security threats in Africa<sup>1</sup>

Darko Trifunovic<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The analysis of potential and actual security threats and challenges leads us to the conclusion that Africa is one of the most endangered continents. Constant confrontations, wars, internal political crises, local and international terrorism, organized crime, illegal trade, and other threats on the one hand and, on the other hand, an inadequate response from both individual states and the international community. Is Africa, a continent rich in ores and minerals as well as other possibilities, a training ground for the dominance of superpowers? Are internal instabilities mainly caused by external influences to ensure puppet governments that do not care about the interests of the state and society they represent, but about the interests of the former and current colonial powers? Analysis of threats and risks from one side is only half the job. The second half is the presence of elements of the National Security System of each country, which must work on prevention, and elimination of the consequences of the actions of the bearers of security threats, as well as on the suppression of the bearers themselves. For the successful functioning of the National Security System, it is necessary to develop a “System” of education in the field of Security Studies based on Security Science.

### Keywords:

Africa; security; intelligence; National Security System; Security Science.

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.231>

<sup>2</sup> Director, Institute for National and International Security.  
ORCID: 0000-0003-3591-9554; galileja@yahoo.com.

## Introduction

To be able to consider any threats on the African continent at all, we must know the growing threats that come from outside and the big threats that come from each country individually. In modern history, but also in the past, Africa has been seen as part of the spoils of great powers that are fighting and competing for their dominance. The last few decades seem to have borne the consequences of the new paradigm after the end of the Cold War year after year. More than any other part of the globe, Africa has in the past Cold War period been associated with conflict, insecurity, and human rights atrocities. (Abrahamsen, 2013). With these consequences came the aspirations of the great powers marked by internal political and security crises throughout the African continent. The overflow of the Ethiopian Civil War, the Sudanese Civil War, and Egypt's socio-economic crisis into global politics impacted the Red Sea/Suez Sea Lane, toward comprehensive rejection of foreign great power dominance in Africa. That is occurring because of the decline in great power resources and budgets, and, in particular, because of the declining prestige and influence of those external powers. At the same time, African frustration with imported geopolitical models, including artificial borders, is being matched by the growth, or return, of African philosophical and cultural approaches to governance. All of this, coupled with European<sup>3</sup> and North American governance issues, will interact with the global population movement crisis.<sup>4</sup> Africa faces the following major internal security challenges that most, if not all, African countries face: corruption, terrorism, organized crime, illicit trade, drug trafficking, piracy, violence by extremist groups, and, increasingly, cybercrime.

There are also serious external security challenges with actors within African countries such as international terrorism, foreign mercenary armies, as well as the influence of major powers such as Russia, China, the UK, the US, and France to achieve dominance over minerals, oil, and gas through political means and countries rich in minerals. Turkey, some Arab countries, Iran, Germany, Portugal, but more and more India, which is one of the five most important investors in Africa, should be added to this list of countries that have interests and are present in Africa. How and in what way all these countries reflect their interests is a special consideration, as is the related topic of how and in what way these countries secure their interests. Through diplomacy, economic presence and power, or the use of brute force while controlling the political and security situation in certain countries through puppet dictatorial regimes.

The question arises, whether the countries, especially the powerful ones outside of Africa, which are vitally interested in the exploitation of mineral and natural resources, can and want to develop the security system of each country individually. Are African countries able to independently build a strong national security system that would

---

<sup>3</sup> "The swelling influx into Europe of migrants from the Asian and African continents has prompted debates and raised the issue of their integration in the new milieux and of their susceptibility to radicalization" (Milosavljević, Maksimović, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> *Trend Analysis 2024: Global Security in 2024: Five Contextual Trends, and 10 Possibilities*, Defense & Foreign Affairs, Volume XLII, No. 1, Alexandria, VA, US, 2024



guarantee the peace and security of the country, and thus of the African region in which that country is located? Is it just political will and the lack of adequate educational institutions in the fields of defence, security, and intelligence? If, hypothetically, every African country developed in terms of security and improved its security system, would such circumstances affect greater political and economic independence? Under such circumstances, it would be difficult to abuse these countries in terms of neo-colonialism. Although African countries are largely underdeveloped, such a situation is in contrast to the natural and other resources that these countries have at their disposal. Historically, but also politically, the great powers that have already been present in Africa for centuries in a way that expands the natural and mineral wealth of African countries have at least a moral obligation to help in the development and education of those countries. One of the logical directions of the development of African countries is the possibility that the political leaders of African countries seek greater cooperation with countries that are friendly towards them and that have never shown any sign or desire for domination. This circle of countries includes countries such as Hungary and Serbia, but also other countries of central and Eastern Europe that have extremely large economic, political, educational and other potentials. To achieve this, it is first of all necessary to provide as much information as possible about possible cooperation and potential so that all parties are familiar with the possibilities and modalities of cooperation. This kind of initiative is not only important for African countries, but also for the aforementioned European ones, which in their prospective development plans will have to consider more and more through diplomacy in the future, but also other possibilities of cooperation.

#### *A Security Educational Challenge for Africa*

Every country reacts to security risks and threats with adequate institutions. The role of institutions is that they should systematically and comprehensively monitor all risks and threats to security that come from internal and external threat factors. Analysing the content of subjects studied at all military and police academies in Africa, it is seen that key subjects such as Security Science, Security Analytics, Intelligence and Counterintelligence with work methods, and other important subjects are missing from the teaching cycle. In such circumstances, there are no qualified security managers or intelligence members who can do Security Risk Assessments based on general and special methods of Security Science. (Todorovic, Trifunovic, 2020). For the Security System to exist and function successfully, it is necessary to build it based on the law and the constitution the Act of National Security Strategy. This act must contain internal and external threats and risks, as well as the state institutions that are part of the National Security System to counter the above-mentioned risks and threats, such as the army, police, intelligence, in some cases of total defence concept, and the citizens themselves. Again, knowledge of Security Science is the starting point. From Security Science to Security Studies to the next level such as Security Management and finally Security Systems. The main goal of the entire security cycle, from Security Education, National

Security Strategy, and competent institutions is to achieve the main goal - Security Culture. (Piwowarski, Trifunovic, 2023). Considering that Africa is one of the most unstable continents with a high degree of risk, it is necessary to emphasize the fact that in most African countries there is no highly developed system of education in Security Studies that would enable professionals in adequate institutions of the Security System to deal with internal and external risks and threats. There are three major areas to which all actors of the National Security System must pay attention:

1. Threats and risks
2. Assets and Targets
3. Security Capabilities & Resources (National Security System)

### *Threats and risks*

Threats and risks, as mentioned, come from internal and external risk factors. Although most risks are recognizable and the effects of such activities can be extremely visible, to detect them it is necessary to know Security Science and the methods of this science, both general and special ones that are extremely important for creating Security Risk Assessments. Special Security Science methods are used for data collection, data processing, and assessment of data, analysis, and finally predictions. For example, as a method of data collection and analysis, the hybrid algorithm method is used for an in-depth search of social networks. (Stanimirovic, Miskovic, 2014). It is also important to demarcate the risks and threats that come from the actions of man and nature, which are classified as security threats and risks, and those that come from the technical-technological side, which are classified as safety risks and threats. In the literature, these terms are often confused, and in certain languages, such as Italian, only one term *sicurezza* is used, which means both security and safety at the same time, which is not correct. From the classification of security threats and risks, it is possible to conclude that they are mostly present in Africa. (Z.Dragisic, 2020). We will mention the most common ones:

1. Terrorism (terrorist violence, hostage situations, radical and extreme organizations with religious or political motives, and foreign terrorist groups and organizations).
2. Political threats (political coup d'état, political instability, espionage, migration, and other forms of political violence).
3. Violence and Crimes (local criminal groups, international criminal groups, organized crime, narcotics, weapons, luxury goods, kidnappings, financial crimes, fraud).
4. Insurgency - Military (civil war, sabotage, foreign countries, rebels, and other militant groups).
5. Cyber Crime (hacking, viruses, cyber theft, cyber warfare, and subversion of the state).

## 6. Threats that come from nature:

(Floods, droughts, viruses, lack of market water, radiation).

### *Assets - Targets*

For state institutions from the National Security System to be able to successfully perform their tasks, they must have a list of objects of ultimate protection. In the first place are the facilities of key or vital infrastructure. (Trifunovic, 2019) We will list the most important objects and systems that can be or are the most frequent targets of attacks, i.e., objects of protection:

1. Critical Infrastructure (Facilities for the production and transfer of electricity, water, airports, vital roads, railways, health facilities and institutions, nuclear facilities including laboratories...)
2. Special Objects (state buildings, courthouses, municipalities, HQ police, HQ army, HQ intelligence, HQ emergency services)
3. General Public (kindergartens, schools, universities, public meeting places, sports arenas, public institutions, super malls, and shopping centres)
4. Financial Systems (financial markets, financial institutions, financial instruments)

Knowledge of threats and risks from both the internal and external spheres enables us to draw up a National Security Strategy based on precise data. This strategy must contain, as stated, threats and risks as well as the identification of objects or assets to be defended. In this sense, the state creates an organization of institutions that are part of the National Security System and determines by law the competence of their actions to suppress the mentioned threats, which foresees physical and technical protection as well as intelligence in the sense of collecting data on risks and security threat carriers.

The National Security System represents a set of institutions that act in peace, war, and emergencies to prevent, protect, and eliminate the consequences of security threats and challenges. This system and its functioning in the operational and tactical sense depends in most countries on the supreme act called the National Security Strategy. Actors of the National Security System are the Army, Police, and Intelligence. Special attention is often paid to other segments, such as the role of NGOs and the role of citizens in the National Security System, where the concept of total defence is implemented, according to which every citizen has his place in the defence of the state. Certainly, the ultimate goal of every country, including African countries, is to develop the concept of Security Culture among their citizens, for several reasons. This concept of Security Culture can only develop if all actors in the Security System work together with functional educational institutions. Perhaps the development of Security Culture in African countries is the most necessary at this moment.

## *Security challenges in Africa?*

### *COVID 19*

One of the biggest security challenges was also medical, the COVID-19 pandemic took African countries completely by surprise. Due to the paralyzed security system and the paralyzed health system, African countries faced this danger completely unprepared. An additional problem is the distrust of citizens in local authorities due to excessive corruption, so citizens did not even listen and act according to the instructions of local governments, but left their homes, moved, and entered into various interactions, which only spread the pandemic even more. While countries in the West have progressed tremendously in the vaccination of their citizens, African governments are still lagging (Dorasamy, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic in Africa has only shown how vulnerable this continent and countries are to security challenges coming from the medical arena. Rift Valley fever, rabies, West Nile, chikungunya, dengue, yellow fever, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, Ebola, and influenza viruses among many other viruses have been reported from different African countries (Chauhan, R.P.; Dessie, Z.G.; Noreddin, A.; El Zowalaty, M.E, 2020). Although various pandemics and viruses are the ultimate threat to people's safety and health, African countries and their governments do very little to plan and systematically act to prevent the occurrence and spread of these dangerous diseases.

### *Increasing Russian presence in Africa*

In the same way, Russian aggression against Ukraine only showed Russian aspirations toward domination in certain African countries. Russia inherited the narrative of the USSR, which was present in Africa, especially among countries that wanted to free themselves or reduce their dependence on the colonial influence of Western countries. Although Russia was not a colonial power in this part of the world, it increased its presence through political influence, which spread primarily because Russia is the largest arms exporter in Africa (Ramanai, 2023).

And not only that. Russia sent its "private" mercenary armies like "E.N.O.T" and "Wagner" throughout Africa, whose presence was followed by numerous crimes. (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Russia's aggression against Ukraine made Russia, which was the second or third superpower in the world, now the second power in Ukraine. At any cost, Russia wanted to divert the attention of the international community from Ukraine to other parts of the world such as the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. Thus, thanks to Russian intelligence connections and networks from Ukraine, the focus of the conflict from Ukraine was transferred to the Balkans, Azerbaijan - Armenia, Hamas, and Israel. In the background of these conflicts, Russia provokes instability with all means including Russian mercenaries who are nothing but an extended arm of the Russian services. From Sudan, Mali, Libya, Central African Republic, Congo, Angola, Burkina Faso, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, etc. Russia has almost no direct investments in Africa. By exporting weapons

and demonstrating force through mercenary armies and spreading disinformation, Russia's goal in Africa is no different from the goals of other superpowers. They want to occupy parts of Africa to start massive exploitation. At the same time, with disinformation, they want to eliminate Western countries with an anti-Western campaign they are conducting. The leaders of African countries have no reason to rejoice or celebrate the Russian presence. On the contrary, this is already happening in a large number of African countries. In whatever country Russian exponents appeared, crises and political instabilities have occurred or will occur, which can turn into open bloodshed at any moment. In addition to Russia, new or old actors are certainly Turkey, which is increasingly expanding its projection of power and dominance, especially towards Libya and Somalia. Russian malignant influence, which is extremely visible in Europe, has been detected in Africa for the last twenty years. The Russian Federation and its citizens have never felt democracy throughout their history, that's why Russia's presence in Africa, especially in countries ruled by dictators, only further prevents the development of an already fragile democracy on this continent. Russian influence in Africa brought with it special methods that Russia applies in the target countries, from disinformation, psychological effects, propaganda war, as well as other methods and means of hybrid war.

### *Terrorism*

According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), the number of terrorist attacks increased in Africa between 2000 and 2018, rising from 330 attacks in 2000 to 2,365 in 2018.<sup>5</sup> At the end of 2016, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), announced that the group had “expanded and shifted some of our command, media, and wealth to Africa.” ISIS’s Dabiq magazine referred to the regions of Africa that were part of its “caliphate:” “The region that includes Sudan, Chad, and Egypt has been named the caliphate province of Alkinaana; the region that includes Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda as the province of Habasha; the North African region encompassing Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Nigeria, Niger and Mauritania as the Maghreb, the province of the caliphate.” Leaving aside the mismatched ethnolinguistic groupings included in each of these “provinces,” ISIS’s interest in establishing a presence in Africa has long been a part of its vision for a global caliphate (Siegle, 2017). The leadership and planners of the Islamic Caliphate have great ambitions in Africa, but also a suitable ground for their operations. The umbrella organization for all jihadists is the Muslim Brotherhood, from which different organizations with different names but with one goal later develop. That goal is the establishment of the Islamic caliphate. The platform that these extreme organizations represent is political Islam, which should be realized in any way, including terrorism, terror, guerrilla warfare, and even wars or internal political destabilization. Religion is politicized and serves as a motive for achieving the goals of the mentioned terrorist

---

<sup>5</sup> GTD <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=Africa&sa.x=34&sa.y=17>



actors. These terrorist organizations have their groups and subgroups and are identically organized, financed, and trained. They have their operatives in the military segment, political, financial, media, non-governmental, but also support in religious circles. We will analyse the activities of jihadists in several African countries listed by the African Center for Strategic Studies:

- Algeria, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); Tunisia, Shabab al-Tawhid (a.k.a. Ansar al Sharia Tunisia (AST)) • Okba ibn Nafaa Brigade • Soldiers of the Caliphate (a.k.a. Jund al Khilafah);
- Libya, Ansar al Sharia Libya (ASL) – Benghazi • Ansar al Sharia Libya (ASL) – Derna • Wilayat Fezzan (a.k.a. Fezzan Province) • Wilayat Barqa (a.k.a. Cyrenaica Province; f.k.a. Majlis Shura Shabab al Islam) • Wilayat Tarabulus (a.k.a. Tripoli Province);
- Egypt, Ajnad Misr • Ansar Beit al Maqdis (ABM) (a.k.a. Wilayat Sinai)
- Somalia, Al Shabaab • Jahba East Africa;
- Mali/Burkina Faso/Niger, AQIM (a.k.a. the Sahara Emirate) • Al Mourabitoun • Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) • Ansar Dine • Macina Liberation Front (FLM) • Islamic State in the Greater Sahara;
- Nigeria, Boko Haram (a.k.a. Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyah)
- Kenya, Al Hijra (f.k.a. Muslim Youth Center) • Al Muhajiroun (a.k.a. Emigrants of East Africa)<sup>6</sup>.

### *Analysis of the activities of terrorist organizations*

When we talk about the Islamic State or Islamic Caliphate as one of the biggest bearers of the terrorist threat, we can conclude with a quick analysis:

- It is a serious organization that has its groups and subgroups.
- It is about an organization that equally applies terrorism and guerrilla warfare as a method of achieving its goals.
- It is about an organization and structure that uses or abuses Islam as one of the major world religions as a motive for conducting violence and its goals.
- It has a serious system and methods of recruitment.
- Some of the states sponsoring terrorism function completely normally without international sanctions.
- There is a wide-ranging network of so-called humanitarian organizations that serve as coordination for the terrorist network.

---

<sup>6</sup> African active militant jihadist groups, chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcapjcgclcfndmkaj/https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Africas-Active-Militant-Islamist-Groups-November-2016.pdf



This terrorist organization has a wide-branched worldwide network from which it is financed in diverse ways, directly from some countries, indirectly through so-called humanitarian organizations, participating in illegal operations of organized crime, including the smuggling of weapons, narcotics, and other valuables. The members of this international terrorist organization are deeply penetrated democratic states, and they use all resources available. They have a wide-ranging network of educators and training camps. They use vulnerable categories such as women and children to achieve their goals. When one territory is observed, whether it is a country or, in this case, as a broader term, the entire continent, appropriate parameters must be taken into the analysis, as is the case with the parameters and characteristics mentioned above. It is a well-known fact that almost nothing competent is being done in Africa from the position of Security Science on the process of de-radicalization with obvious examples such as the case of Kenya and Mozambique. In a world in which polarization of views is all too apparent, and where extremism is sometimes expressed in violent and terrorist acts, understanding the factors and processes involved in radicalization and the occasional transition from extreme views to violent actions, is of crucial importance. This is also imperative when we want to understand the process of de-radicalization and how to counter radicalization into violent extremism (Winter, Morrison, & Van den Bos, 2022). De-radicalization is the opposite process of radicalization. When the circumstances and the bearers, i.e., the subjects of the radicalization process, are determined, then by adequate institutions they are suppressed. This is the weakness of most African countries – institutions, which are paralyzed for many reasons, such as systemic corruption together with incompetence. It should also be emphasized that de-radicalization cannot be successful if it is not conducted and organized by those institutions that are responsible for it. In the case of Kenya and Mozambique, the authorities there believe that the goals of de-radicalization will be achieved through education and influence on those who abuse religion to recruit young people. Such an approach is desirable and correct, but there is a lack of deep analysis of all those who conduct radicalization to apply legal and other measures against them. In some countries, de-radicalization has been successfully conducted by identifying responsible individuals within the radicalization process as dangerous, and state institutions have designated such individuals as personally responsible if radicalization or any incident, including terrorism, occurs. In some European countries, such as Montenegro, the function of National Coordinator for the fight against violent extremism has been established, whose role is to bring the National Platform for the fight against violent extremism and establish a national team of experts dealing with these issues.

In most of the countries where the radicalization of the existing population has occurred, the following elements have been detected:

1. Presence of terrorists;
2. Presence of terrorist groups and organizations;

3. The presence of "states" sponsoring terrorism;
4. The presence of so-called non-governmental organizations that provide logistics to terrorism;
5. Abuse or use of religion as a motive for performing actions;
6. Operational possibilities that imply easy availability of weapons and other dangerous means of terrorist attack.

If all the listed elements in the chain of radicalization or a large part of them are detected on the territory of one state, the institutions in charge must take all those measures and legal possibilities in order to stop their work and activities. For the successful operation of institutions, a model of education in Security Studies based on Security Science is needed.

### *Conclusion*

From traditional risk factors and threats to contemporary ones, the fight against them and their prevention will remain a priority to preserve the peace that Africa desperately needs across the continent. To protect peace and stability, African countries must first provide the knowledge and skills for those who participate in the National Security System. Timely recognizing a security threat and risk is a task of intelligence. It does not end there. In the intelligence cycle, data collection is only one segment, followed by assessment, data processing, and finally predictions. This entire cycle is intended to provide decision-makers with better, more precise information, and an accurate picture of the circumstances and events that can affect the national security of a country. The vulnerability of the state apparatus of African countries is evident in the poor or inadequate education in the field of Security Science and systemic corruption, which mostly paralyzes these institutions. The leaders of the African countries themselves will have to take into consideration these well-intentioned observations, possibilities, and knowledge of how a modern National Security System with all its actors must function so that the state can function normally and develop. When Sir Francis Bacon published in his work, *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597), the saying: "knowledge itself is power", certainly all of us would agree with that. It is precisely this power of knowledge that African countries need in several segments, especially the knowledge that Security Science refers to. Without a safe state and without strong and professional institutions that can protect the state and society from risk factors and threats, all other functions of the state and all other activities, including the economy, cannot be fully productive and produce the expected results.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### Notes on Contributors

Prof. dr Darko Trifunovic is a full-time professor in research and he is a founding member and Director of the Institute for National and International Security. Dr. Trifunovic is Editor in Chief of the "Security Science Journal". Prof. dr Darko Trifunovic was awarded Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Public and Individual Security - Apeiron, Krakow, Poland. At the same time, dr Trifunovic was elected as a visiting professor at the Faculty of Security Studies, Skopje, N. Macedonia.

### References

- Abrahamsen, R. (Ed.). (2013). *African Political Economy and James Currey. Conflict & Security in Africa*. Woodbridge.
- Central African Republic. (May 3, 2022). *Abuses by Russia-Linked Forces-Killings, Torture of Civilians*. Human Right Watch. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/03/central-african-republic-abuses-russia-linked-forces>
- Chauhan, R. P., Dessie, Z. G., Noredin, A., & El Zowalaty, M. E. (2020). Systematic Review of Important Viral Diseases in Africa in Light of the 'One Health' Concept. *Pathogens*, 9(4), 301. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/pathogens9040301>
- Dorasamy, N. (Ed.). (2022). *Governance challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dragisic, Z. (2002). *System of National Security of Serbia*. Faculty of Security Studies.
- Milosavljević, Z., & Maksimović, A. (2021). Maksimović, Impact of social and security on the intensity of integration of immigrants to the EU. *National Security and Future*, 3(22), 101-128. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37458/nstf.22.3.1>
- Piowowski, J., & Trifunovic, D. (2023). *From Security Science to Security Culture*.
- Ramanai, S. (2023). *Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?* Oxford University Press.
- Siegle, J. (2017). *ISIS in Africa: Implications from Syria and Iraq*, African Center for Strategic Studies. National Defense University.
- Stanimirovic, Z., & Miskovic, S. (2024). A Hybrid Evolutionary Algorithm for Efficient Exploration of Online Social Networks. *Computing and Informatics*, 33, 410-430.
- Todorovic, B., & Trifunovic, D. (2020). Security Science as a Scientific Discipline - Technological Aspects. *Security Science Journal*, 1(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37458/ssj.1.1.1>
- Trifunovic, D. (2019). Elements of Critical Infrastructure Resilience. *National Security and Future*, 20(1-2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37458/nstf.20.1-2.6>
- Winter, D. A., Morrison, J. F., & den Bos, K. V. (2022). *Radicalization and Deradicalization: Process and Contest*. Frontiers in Psychology. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1059592>

## Cybercrime and dark web in Africa<sup>1</sup>

Attila Gulyás<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The widespread availability of smart devices and internet access has radically transformed the continent's cybersecurity landscape. However, this sudden technological change was not accompanied by the development of a robust cybersecurity infrastructure. State actors, economic operators, and the population were unprepared for the risks associated with new technology. Criminals have taken advantage of this situation, resulting in various types of cyberattacks against actors in economic life, state institutions, critical infrastructures, and the population. The author hypothesized that there is a correlation between cybercrime rates and dark web usage in African countries. To test this hypothesis, quantitative data was collected on internet penetration, cybercrime statistics, and dark web usage. The analysis of the collected data confirmed the hypothesis that there is a correlation between a country's use of the dark web and the severity of cybercrime.

### Keywords:

Dark web; TOR; cybercrime; ransomware; Africa.

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.278>

<sup>2</sup> Ret. Lt. Colonel, Doctoral Student, Óbuda University, Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: 0000-0001-5645-144X; gulyas.attila@phd.uni-obuda.hu.

## *Introduction*

Thanks to the digital technical revolution that took place in the last decade, the Internet has become part of everyday life on the African continent. Social media and various internet services quickly became popular among users. The wide spread of the Internet also increased the competitiveness of economic actors, which was accompanied by an increase in international interest.

Unfortunately, the explosive spread of the Internet has not been followed by the development of cyber security. The lack of training of users, the lack of professionals and the need for financial resources, combined with the lack of legal background, led to the formation of a significant gap between the spread of Internet services and the construction of the necessary cyber security systems.

Cybercriminals quickly recognized the gap and Africa soon became an attractive target for cybercrime. Parallel to the development of internet services, cybercriminals are also developing their tools and methods. They use increasingly sophisticated procedures that cause significant financial damage to the population and businesses and also put more and more pressure on cybersecurity organizations.

At the same time, organized criminals and terrorist organizations have also recognized the potential of cybercrime and use the special knowledge of cybercriminals in their operations related to cryptocurrencies and the dark web. Organized criminals on the dark web typically engage in activities like trading with false identities, drug sales, human trafficking, organ trafficking, and child pornography. (Interpol, 2023, pp.3-4)

In this research, the author examined the correlation between the countries most affected by cybercrime on the African continent and their population's use of the dark web.

## *The most typical cybercrimes on the continent*

First of all, we need to clarify what is the cybercrime itself. According to Kaspersky (Kaspersky, 2019) cybercrime is an activity in which the target or the device is a computer or a computer network. Typically, cybercrime is committed by cyber criminals or hackers to make money. However, in some cases, the aim is to cause damage to computers or computer networks for some reason instead of making money. The motivation behind the profit-free attacks can be political, or personal.

The perpetrators are highly skilled individuals, or organizations but it is not a rarity when novice hackers or so-called script kiddies are behind the attacks.

According to the Interpol report on African Cyber Threat Assessment 2024, (Interpol, 2024, pp. 11-22) ransomware and digital extortion are on the rise in the continent. This phenomenon is characterized by the continuous evolution as cybercriminals hone on their business models and extortion techniques.

The most common attack vector for ransomware attacks are phishing emails.

### *Ransomware and digital extortion*

These two types of cyber threats have the heaviest financial impact and besides, they can disrupt or paralyze the critical infrastructures and essential services in the continent. According to Check Point on average (Check Point Research, 2023) 1 out of every 15 organizations in Africa experienced a ransomware attack attempt every week in the first quarter of 2023 while the global average is 1 out of 31 attack attempts. Even more worrying are attacks on critical infrastructure. Nearly half of the countries reported ransomware attacks against business actors, hospitals, internet service providers, and power grids.

These type of attacks in most cases require some kind of human activity. The most typical example of this is phishing emails or messages as the most common attack vectors.

### *Phishing emails*

A phishing campaign is when specially crafted emails or other types of communication messages are sent with the intention of tricking recipients into doing something that compromises their security.

These emails or messages can contain links to malicious sites, malware-infected attachments, or attackers ask the receiver to answer with confidential information.

We can distinguish two types of phishing campaigns. The first one is mass phishing in which there is no dedicated target. The attackers send emails or messages in bulk to many recipients with the content for many people so for the attackers, it is not important who swallows their bait.

Unlike mass phishing in the case of spear phishing the target is designated and the message is specially crafted to trick him into undermining the security of the organization he is working for.

### *Other infection vectors*

Besides phishing campaigns, other vectors are also common among African ransomware groups.

The groups with preference use poorly secured RDP (Remote Desktop) connections, fake web applications, fake mobile applications especially fake mobile bank applications and unsecured networks where the administrators failing regularly update and patch their systems.

### *Tactics of digital extortion*

Once the ransomware operators have gained access to the system they explore it and its vulnerabilities and elevate their privilege on the system. After that, they deploy the malware that encrypts the data on the target system. The next step is demanding ransom in exchange for restoring the encrypted data. To increase the pressure on the victim they



threaten by leaking the sensitive information. Another tactic is the disruption of reluctant victim's service to paralyze the target.

Some ransomware groups simply exfiltrate the sensitive data and threaten to leak it unless the victim pays a ransom. Victims tend to pay because the reputational damage poses a bigger risk for their business than paying a significant amount of money. The ransom payment can reach millions of dollars, but there is no guarantee for not leaking the stolen data. Exfiltration is a growing business because the stolen data can be sold many times. Ransomware and hacker groups are trading with this kind of data. They split it into smaller parts, repack them, and sell them many times.

### *Ransomware affiliate program*

Besides evolving ransomware techniques the ransomware groups elaborated a new „affiliate” program. They develop ransomware programs and platforms and offer their ransomware software as a service for others who pay them a part of their income comes from the ransom. The ransomware owners provide the software, the infrastructure, and the user manual for their „affiliates”. This model has many advantages. The owners get more income than they would if they ran the software alone. They don't have to waste time for the target- related information collection, the malware deployment, and the contact with the victims. This model has many advantages. First of all, the owners stay behind the scenes. The owners get more income than they would if they ran the software alone. They don't have to waste time for the target-related information collection, and the malware installation. The spare time enables them to elaborate more sophisticated and more aggressive ransomware solutions. This affiliate program is known as ransomware- as- a- service (RAAS) program that is very common among cybercriminals. The core members of ransomware groups recruit professionals, pen-testers, cryptocurrency specialists, and software developers. Besides, they involve in their projects bulletproof hosting services and money laundering specialists just to name a few.

### *Online Scams*

In addition to ransomware, online scams are significant threats in Africa. An online scam is a fraudulent act carried out via the Internet or computer technology intending to steal money, personal or business information from people or organizations. Criminals achieve their aims by the use of a combination of malware components and social engineering techniques. Behind the epidemic-like spread of online scams across the continent is the explosive increase in digital technology. Africans spend significant time online communicating through social media, net banking, and gaming exposing themselves to cybercriminals seeking victims in the cyber realm. Estimating the real size of losses resulting from online scams is difficult. However, according to criminal professionals, all age groups and genders are involved. Any citizen or organization can be a victim, there is no exception.

African member countries reported different categories of online fraud to Interpol in 2023. These are the following in order of later discussion in detail:

- romance scams
- pig butchering
- mobile phone scams
- business email compromise (BEC)

### *Romance scams*

Romance scams has a variety of forms but they have a common feature. Criminals (often with fake identities) get in contact with the victims under the guise of fake romantic or intimate relationships for financial gain. The criminals use social media, messaging apps, or online dating sites and apps as communication platforms to approach their victims. The second phase involves building a trusted relationship by exploiting their vulnerabilities and weaknesses. The duration of this phase varies, depending on the victim. Once the scammers have succeeded, they start manipulating the victim to steal their money. Nowadays, the most common type of romance scam is catfishing. In this scheme, the perpetrator creates a fake online identity to deceive their victims. Generally, they steal profile pictures or complete accounts to make themselves more attractive and in addition to hide their real persona. After building the trusted relationship they come up with different wide variety of reasons to gain their sympathy, or support (sick close relatives, money to meet in person, etc.). This type of scam can be a hit-and-run action or a long-lasting process. After accomplishing their aims, they disappear leaving the victim both financially and emotionally ripped off.

### *Sextortion*

The modus operandi of this crime is similar to a romance scam but has some minor differences. After building the trusted relationship the scammer asks for intimate pictures from the victim. Once has succeeded, the perpetrator starts to blackmail the victim by threatening to publish the intimate pictures on social media. To increase the pressure on the victim the perpetrator in some cases publishes some samples and demands payment in exchange for taking the content down.

Another type of sextortion is when the perpetrator unlawfully gains access to the victim's hidden social media profile often by use of malware and blackmails the victim by publishing their private contents. Sometimes the hit-and-run blackmail turns into a recurring monthly payment. Undoubtedly romance scam has a huge financial impact on victims but the emotional impact is inestimable. These types of scams often result in continuous feelings of terror, psychological disorders, and suicide.

## *Pig butchering*

In a pig butchering scam, criminals contact targets out of the blue, gain their trust, and manipulate them into making phony investments. Once successful, the criminals disappear with the funds, leaving no trace behind. In the majority of instances, cryptocurrency is utilized in this kind of crime. According to Finra (Finra, n.d.) the scam has three stages:

### *1. A slow build*

A stranger gets in contact with the subject from the out of the blue. They have different explanations for why they contacted, such as having found their names on message lists, or social media. Of course, they use fake profiles and fake identities. Step by step they get closer and try to make friendship while they map the victim's personality. The duration of this stage varies, between days to months. Occasionally, they pretend to desire a romantic relationship. Until gain trust, they don't send investment-related messages.

### *2. Sharpening the knife*

The second phase has two goals. First, make the victim believe they will make money by following the „friend” advice and the second is to make sure of that the victim has enough capital to make a bigger investment.

The scammer makes the victim believe that he has a connection to a reputable financial institution from which he can receive confidential lucrative investment advice. To gain the victim's trust criminals can forge fake brokerage dashboards with attractive investment profits. Following this, the criminal urges the victim to make a smaller investment to ensure that the investment works. The victim makes his investment on the criminal's brokerage dashboard where he gets „profit” according to his user account balance. This trick usually dispels his suspicions.

### *3. The slaughter*

After having convinced the victims, criminals switch into high gear and urge victims to make a bigger investment or a series of investments. Once the victims do it they leave them with devastating losses and disappear without any trace or they express their sympathy over victims' losses and offer their help and suggest another investment to gain back the losses. But usually, it only helps them rip off the victims to their bones. When they succeed they disappear leaving no trace behind.

This relatively new type of crime affects especially Western and Southern African countries. (Interpol, 2024b, p. 5, 13, 14, 16) There is a close relationship between the increasing use of mobile bank services and the rise of smartphone scams across the continent.

The most common smartphone scams are mobile phishing and banking trojans.

The first one is a slightly modified version of a type of attack discussed previously, while the second involves malware like banking trojans. These are designed to steal sensitive financial information like banking credentials, account balances, and credit card data from infected phones. The trojans can be deployed through different vectors. The malware spread via phishing emails, fake applications, illegal or cracked software, etc. The trojan horses disguise themselves as legitimate program to gain access to the system. On top of that they act as remote access trojans (RATs) enabling the attacker to control the infected system. The malware can collect keystrokes, sensitive information, screenshot, some of them can control microphone, built-in cams, and eavesdrops the victim phone conversations.

In the last few years Africa witnessed the explosive growth of smartphones and in parallel to this increasing scams targeting smartphone users relying on their smartphones. The stakeholders of financial sectors and law enforcement agencies face big challenges due to this increasing scam wave across the continent.

### *Business Email Compromise (BEC)*

BEC is a type of cybercrime which involves different forms of email fraud to attack financial and business organizations or individuals. Cybercriminals compromise legitimate business or private email accounts by using social engineering and/or exploiting vulnerabilities and attempt to trick organizations or persons into completing funds transfers or divulging confidential or personal information.

According to Interpol report the BEC attacks are increasing both in their volumes and their impacts. BEC can result in loss of reputation and also have an emotional, and psychological impact on victims.

Mostly financial institutions and companies with active foreign business connections together with under-developed security controls are in the crosshairs of cyber criminals. The phishing emails were the attack vectors in 80 % of BEC in African countries in 2023. The reason for the popularity of phishing emails is their hard-to-detect feature. This type of email doesn't contain malicious links, malware, or attachments so they are not flagged as spam (Interpol, 2024a, p.23).

BEC can be classified into five categories:

1. Data theft: the criminal crafts a role-specific email (HR manager, or bookkeeper) to obtain personnel or TAX-related information. The stolen data can be used to launch further BEC attacks against the target.
2. Account or system breach: the attacker hacks an employee's or accountant's email account and from the compromised email to send requests for invoice payments to multiple partners, but the receiver bank account is controlled by the attacker.

3. CEO impersonation: after extensive reconnaissance of the targeted organization, the attackers impersonate high-level executives to initiate payment to an account under their control. This scheme of scam is also known as business executive scam.

4. Government, law enforcement or attorney impersonation: the attackers under the guise of officials such as TAX officers, government officials, or lawyers use various methods to put under pressure their targets to transfer funds to their accounts.

5. Bogus invoice: The attackers try to exploit the relationship between their target and its suppliers. Pretending to be one of the suppliers they issue a forged invoice or payment notice to targets asking them to transfer funds to their account.

BEC techniques are continuously evolving. The actors carry out extensive target-related reconnaissance by extensive use of all of the available OSINT tools and techniques. This reconnaissance involves social media and organization-related websites, events, conferences, financial information collection, and leaked databases both on the open and dark web. A new tendency the involve AI in the information collection phase.

### *Cyber espionage*

Cyber espionage (cyber spying) is a type of attack committed by malicious hackers against mostly governmental or significant business entities or universities and research & development centres to obtain information that provides attackers with advantages over the enemy or rival company (Gillis, 2023).

Cyber espionage often refers to a nation-state-launched attack with the aim to obtain political gain against the counterpart. In contrast, when the motive is financial gain the cyber-attack is economic espionage.

Of course, it goes without saying that the actors strive to remain undetected in the IT environment for as long as possible, making these types of attacks very complex.

The cyber espionage actors use the wide scale of attack vectors and tactics (Thomas, 2018). The most frequent are the following:

- Exploiting vulnerabilities in websites, web browsers
- Spear phishing emails designed to elevate the attacker's privileges
- Attack the supply chain including the closest partners
- Different malware, trojans, and worms
- Infection of commonly used third party software applications or free software components (libraries, header files)

According to the Africa Center for Studies as for the cyber espionage in the continent, China is the most concerning country (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, n.d.; Allen and van der Waag-Cowling .N, 2021).

Tilouine and Kadiri, the journalists from Le Monde (Tilouine and Kadiri, 2018) published an article on 26. January 2018 alleging that China had been spying on the African Union in the Chinese-built Center in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia. It was claimed that the servers in the centre every night between midnight and 2 a.m. uploaded the new content to another server located in Shanghai. AU initially declined to comment on allegations but later changed its stance and declared that China doesn't spy on AU.

### *The most cybercrime-affected countries in Africa*

Africa is susceptible to new technologies due to its population of which more than 60 percent is under 25 years old. The key economic sectors such as finance, education, agriculture, security, and telecommunication are trying to leverage the advantages of online platforms.

However, the widespread use of new technologies together with the insufficient cybersecurity architecture, the lack of cyber hygiene, and inadequate legislation foster favourable soil for cybercriminals. At the same time, many African countries are facing with economic problems making it difficult to allocate resources for cybersecurity. Africa experienced a 23% increase in cyberattacks per organization per week in the second quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. Cyberattacks face governments, and businesses overwhelming challenges (Allen and van der Waag-Cowling. N, 2021). In Africa the insufficient cyber security infrastructure costs countries 10% of their GDP, which is a significant burden on their budgets. According to Interpol survey about 90 % of African businesses operate without cybersecurity protocols (Economic Commission for Africa, 2022).

### *The main targets of attackers*

According to Positive Technologies survey (Positive Technologies, 2023) as it can be seen in figure 1. The most targeted sectors of economy were: finance (18%), Telecom (12%), government (12%), and retail (12%).

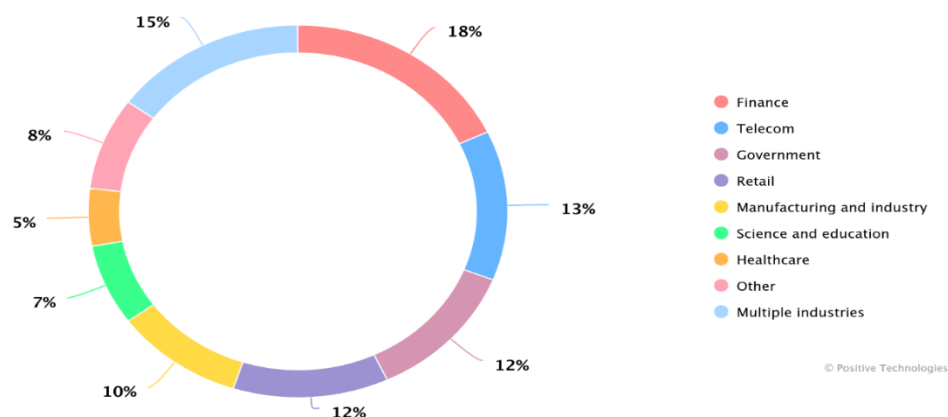


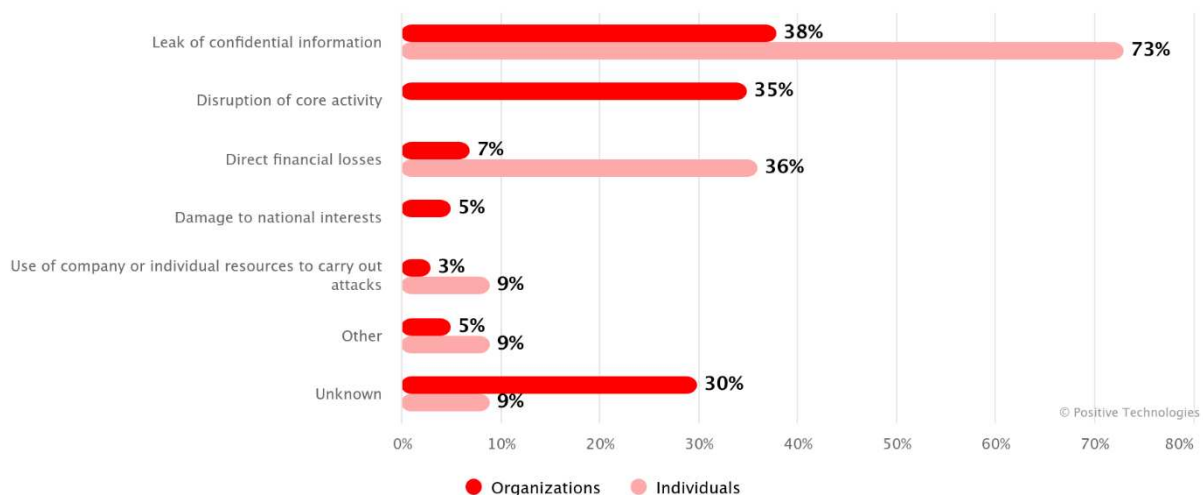
Figure 1: Categories of victim organizations. Source: <https://www.ptsecurity.com/ww-en/analytics/africa-cybersecurity-threatscape-2022-2023/>.



The targeted attacks accounted for 68% of successful attacks of which individual targeted attacks accounted for 15%. Among the targeted victims we can find the Flottenwave, TransUnion, Eskom, and government institutions like the Bank of Zambia, and ministries in Uganda, just to name a few.

### *Consequences of attacks*

Mostly, criminals obtained confidential information from companies (38%). Presumably, they multiple times can make money from this kind of information because it can be sold on markets and also can be used for further attacks. In some cases, the attacks can lead to functional disruption of the target organization (35%) while 7% of attacks cause direct financial losses. The consequences of attacks can be seen in the figure 2.



*Figure 2: Consequences of attacks (percentage of successful attacks). Source: <https://www.ptsecurity.com/ww-en/analytics/africa-cybersecurity-threatscape-2022-2023/>.*

The consequences of attacks may vary from minor damages (annoying incidents) to non-tolerable events. Non-tolerable events are events that are the results of cyberattacks and prevent the achieving the operational goals of the organization or have prolonged harmful effects on the organization's activity.

### *Finance sector*

The finance sector is the most favourable target of cybercriminals. First of all, they are interested in financial gain, and besides, this sector stores large amounts of customer data allowing attackers to plan further attacks against the customers (Positive Technologies, 2023).

The OPERA1ER group was responsible for 35 successful attacks between 2018 and 2022 in Africa. They attacked banks and telecom companies of which they managed to steal more than 30 million USD.

### *Telecommunications*

This sector is the second most attractive to cybercriminals in the continent. The reason is their huge dataset. They have customer payment information, and the customer's connections which can be sold and used for further attack planning last but not least, attackers can disrupt their operations and restore in exchange for ransom.

Criminals attacked the RSAWEB South African Internet service provider in February 2023, encrypted the company's database and demanded ransom in exchange for restoring the service leaving some customers without Internet access for several days.

### *Government institutions*

The reason why government institutions are in the crosshairs of cybercriminals is their significant functions and their databases on citizens. These two features make them ideal targets for cybercriminals to launch ransomware campaigns threatening service disruption and steal databases that also can be sold on markets and used for planning further attacks.

The BlackCat group (also known as the ALPHV group) attacked the African Union's computer network leaving paralyzed the headquarters and infecting 200 computers with malware. Luckily, the attack happened after ten days after the closure of the summit of the organization. The system restoration required the help of Interpol, Afripol, and African Bank.

### *Retail*

In the trade industry, the attackers focus on stealing customers' and partners' data, especially payment and personal data. Cybercriminals succeeded in stealing confidential data in 86% of successful attacks in the African continent.

Attacker in 2022 stole about 3, 7 million customer records from a pharmacy retailer company. The criminals accessed the data by compromising a third-party service provider's system. As researches show today common method is compromising one member of the supply chain's system to get into the target's network. Two-thirds of successful attacks started by compromising a trusted supply chain resulted in data leakage and 4 in every 10 attacks led to service disruption.

### *Manufacturing and industry*

Cybercriminals attack the industrial sector owing to their role in technological processes and their impact on entire industries and regions or even the whole country. The sector relies more and more on interconnected computer networks, robotization, and digitalization enabling attackers to find vulnerabilities, and security flaws.

Successful attacks can have even a country-wide effect. The attack on Ghana Grid Company Limited (GRIDCo) caused five days of country-wide outages earlier in 2021.

### *Dark web and cybercrime*

The Internet, or World Wide Web, can be divided into three different parts. The first part is the clear web or open web, which is accessible to everyone. Users can visit open websites using a simple browser without needing any special tools or authentication. These websites are free for all and are indexed by search engines to improve users' search experiences.

The second part is known as the deep web. It is accessible to everyone but requires authentication. Examples of deep websites are online bank accounts, personal medical records, or email accounts. These pages are not accessible to search engines. Both the clear web and the Deep Web are traceable, meaning site owners, visitors, and practically everyone who uses these can be tracked down by their IP addresses.

The third component is the dark web. It is a special domain that provides anonymity, geographical anonymity, and freedom from censorship to its users. Accessing the dark web requires special software solutions and, in some cases, above-average IT knowledge. Privacy-savvy users can feel safe on the dark web as it is free from IT giants, from surveillance, and from censorship.

At first sight, it seems that the dark web is a unitary part of the World Wide Web, but it is not. This domain is categorized into different segments based on the specific software solutions, as each creates its own segment. The most popular software packages are "The Onion Router" (TOR), the "Invisible to the Internet" (I2P), and the "Freenet".

Beyond question, the TOR is the most popular solution. Besides the wide range of TOR services, it is easy to install, and use. It has an extra function compared to other solutions because it enables access to open websites with the full scale of anonymity.

This study will only cover TOR-related dark web content due to space limitations. Additionally, the TOR system is the primary choice for cybercriminals, while the other solutions have no significant role in cybercrime.

### *TOR*

The Onion Router (TOR) is an overlay network protocol implemented as an open-source software solution that operates on a worldwide decentralized network run by volunteers. It offers users anonymity, geographic anonymity, and censorship-free communication by using encrypted layers over network connections. The system routes the information through multiple routers in multi-layered encrypted packages, preventing observers from eavesdropping on the communication and revealing the identity and location of participants. The layers of encryption resemble an onion that is where its name comes from, and its top-level domains end with „. onion“. (As for how TOR works please refer to my previous articles.).

The common opinion is that the TOR domain within the dark web is something diabolical dark place where drug dealers, pedophiles, money counterfeiters, fraudsters, and cybercriminals are playing their cruel games. For most people, the TOR is synonymous with crime. Unfortunately, it is partly true, however TOR has a white side as well, but it is not so interesting to get on headlines. Originally, the Tor system was designed to provide freedom of speech, and censorship-free communication for political dissidents, human rights activists, and believers persecuted for their religion.

Regrettably, privacy-focused features and the spread of cryptocurrency were precisely those circumstances that made this system attractive to criminals.

Next, let's shed some light on dark web-related crimes.

What crimes are typical on the dark web?

On dark web there are typical crime categories that are the following:

- illegal trading in all kinds of narcotics, drugs
- illegal trading in arms
- illegal trading in financial instruments
- illegal trading in stolen data
- cybercrime related software and knowledge trading
- child porn- related crimes

The first five types of crimes are typically conducted in dark marketplaces, but there are topic-dedicated sites as well.

Dark web markets are commercial websites on dark web that operate mainly on TOR system. They sell or broker typically illicit goods such as narcotics, drugs, weapons, counterfeit documents, currencies, stolen credit cards and payment information, stolen (leaked information), forged documents, stolen goods, hacking services, migrant routes, human organs, cyber-arms, malware, just to name a few.

To ensure secure transactions, sellers and buyers can utilize cryptocurrencies in combination with escrow services. On markets' websites, the goods are grouped by searchable categories. Vendors have a reputation rating system where the buyers can rate both the vendor and their services.

The way dark markets operate is ideal for vendors allowing them to reach a broader customer base and hide their activity from law enforcement agencies.

Usually, dark markets don't require any special authentication from the buyers to enter their sites, more over their offer can be checked without any registration, only buying can be tied to registration. At the same time, they are keen on their reputation so they remove the scammer, or fraudster vendors from their sites.

The child pornography-related crime is an exception in this aspect because even the dark web market owners exclude such kind of activity from their markets.

Dark markets often have partner forums where the users can receive market-related „good to know” information, and exchange experiences concerning the services

available on the market. Such forums don't have an e-commerce function they were established only for knowledge and experience sharing.

Independent forums (specialized shops) are for wisdom-sharing, and some of them have an e-commerce function. These forums pose a more significant threat because the partners and the details of the transactions are less traceable than in dark markets. Such forums are topic-specific, which means they are only dedicated to one category such as hacking, cybercrime, stolen information trading, arms trading, etc.

In contrast with the simple dark markets entering such forums is tied to the offer of a reference person or registration fee. On top of that, the hard-core forums require evidence from the applicants that proves their skills. Applicants are supposed to commit topic-related crimes such as intrusion into websites or web services.

Cybercrime or cyber security related forum members have access to vulnerabilities, tactics, techniques, procedures, zero-day exploits, tutorials, experiences, malware, etc. Some of the offers are free while others are paid services. Besides they can find partners (accomplices) for further actions. Membership of such forums can be very useful for cyber security experts.

The specialized shops or forums serve more sophisticated, more targeted, and higher-priced cybercriminal data and products, and their offers are for the experienced cybercrime buyers.

### *Cybercrime related pricelist*

The Flashpoint private intelligence company surveyed prices of stolen data (Flashpoint, 2020), exploit kits, and ransomware-as-a-services on dark markets on the dark web in 2020. The report contains aggregated pricing information for a wide range of dark web data and service types found on criminal marketplaces.

In this paper, the author will only present an extraction from the report concerning cybercrime-related prices to highlight how easy and cheap to buy tools, techniques, and procedures for a successful campaign on the dark web.

Exploit Kits: phishing, ransomware, and others

Item	Price (USD)
Ransomware exploit kit	\$9
Legacy ransomware, bundle of 9 types	\$12
Tailored phishing page with tutorial	\$35
Office365 exploit kit	\$125

*Figure 3: Pricing of exploit kits. Source: Flashpoint pricing analysis, 2020.*

### *1. RDP server access*

Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) is a proprietary protocol developed by Microsoft to allow system administrators to remotely connect to other corporate machines and

servers. This connection is used for tasks such as pushing updates, performing maintenance, and facilitating help desk support. RDP clients and RDP server software are available for most common operating systems, including Windows, Linux, Unix, Mac OS X, iOS, and Android.

RDP is also a popular target for cybercriminals who exploit RDP access to carry out various attacks, including account takeover attacks, carding, payment fraud, and conducting reconnaissance. The use of RDP is increasing in popularity within the cybercriminal ecosystem.

Item	Price (USD)
RDP with global admin access	\$10
RDP, country-specific	\$26
Hacked RDP	\$35
Bank drop RDP via PayPal	\$575

Figure 4: RDP server access. Source: Flashpoint pricing analysis, 2020.

## 2. Bank logs and routing numbers

Access to online bank accounts, also known as "bank logs", is a popular dark web product and is priced accordingly. The price of bank accounts on dark markets depends on the balance available and the institution from which it originates.

Item	Price (USD)
US bank log - \$100 USD balance	\$25
US bank log - \$4,000 USD balance	\$55
US bank drop (account number, routing number, linked accounts)	\$530
UK bank log - £3,000 GBP balance	\$50
Germany bank log - €3,500 EUR balance	\$300
Japan bank log - ¥400,000 JPY balance	\$350

Figure 5: Bank Logs and Routing Numbers. Source: Flashpoint pricing analysis, 2020.

## 3. Fullz (i.e., All-in-One Packages)

Fullz” is slang for a full package of personal information that is comprehensive enough for cybercriminals to impersonate the victim and profit off of identity fraud schemes. Personal information contains name, social security number, date of birth, account specific credential data. Personal information with financial data is more expensive while the price of a typical data package ranges from 4 to 10 USD.

Item	Price (USD)
US fullz identity data (incl SSN and DOB)	\$125
UK fullz identity data	\$50
EU fullz identity data	\$25
Japan fullz identity data	\$45

Figure 6: "Fullz" pricing. Source: Flashpoint pricing analysis, 2020.



The Flashpoint report gave us a glimpse of cybercrime-related dark web business showing that such type campaign doesn't require significant investment to acquire the software solutions. In light of this, it becomes understandable what is the reason for the explosive spread of cybercrime.

### *Correspondence between country crime index and the number of TOR users in Africa*

Author assumes there is a correspondence between the country crime index (especially cybercrime) and the number of TOR users in African countries.

In the comparison, the following data sources were used: statistical data on population and internet users per country (Worldometers, Statista), Global Cyber Safety Index (GCSI), Global Cybercrime Index (GCI), and European Union-funded Organized Crime Index (OCI).

A researcher can access a wide range of usage data of the TOR ecosystem by visiting the TOR metrics site (<https://metrics.torproject.org>). The service collects data from the TOR network and provides archive historical data preserving the users' privacy. TOR metrics includes data on users, servers, traffic, bridges, onion services, etc. In this paper, we analyse user-related data to determine the number of users connecting to the network in each African country.

TOR metrics gave us statistics on 45 countries of the 54 African countries. The author collected the number of TOR users per country into a database between 02.15.2024 and 05.15.2024. During this period the user number varied between 5 and 7900. Most users were from South Africa, totalling 7500, while the smallest number came from Eritrea, totalling 5. The average number of users is 1093, and the median number of users is 426.

The OCI ranks countries based on the frequency of occurrence of different types of crime. In this study, the African countries were investigated based on the frequency of cyber-dependent crimes (The Organized Crime Index, 2024).

To prove or refute the hypothesis concerning correspondence between the number of TOR users and the frequency of occurrence of cyber-dependent per country the number of TOR users and the ranking of cybercrime-dependent countries' rank list in Africa were compared.

The author examined the countries ranked below ten in the list of the most cyber-dependent affected countries. Due to identical rankings, 16 countries with an index below 10 are highlighted. Following rank 8, the subsequent rank is 18, resulting in the absence of ranks 9 and 10. To provide users with a clearer perspective, table 6 includes the number of Internet users per country and the proportion of TOR users in relation to Internet users per country.

Taking a closer look at the number of TOR users, we can determine that the average number of users is 1117, but a more realistic number is obtained if we consider the median number of users, which is 443. Comparing the cybercrime –dependent rank and

the median of TOR users we can conclude that there is a correspondence with the number of TOR users. There is three exception Burkina Faso Botswana and Mali.

	Country	Population	Internet Users	TOR Users	TOR per Internet Users	Cyber-Crime Rank in Africa
1.	Kenya	55100586	22481039	3634	0,0162%	1
2.	Nigeria	223804632	101831108	2650	0,0026%	1
3.	South Africa	60414495	45129628	7900	0,0175%	3
4.	Uganda	49933884	13482149	815	0,0060%	4
5.	Ghana	34121985	23817146	1772	0,0074%	4
6.	Burkina Faso	23251485	4627046	253	0,0055%	6
7.	Cote D'Ivoire	29608534	11369677	896	0,0079%	6
8.	Angola	36684202	14416891	904	0,0063%	8
9.	Tanzania	67438106	21512756	1045	0,0049%	8
10.	Togo	9262347	3482642	463	0,0133%	8
11.	Senegal	17763163	10657898	1365	0,0128%	8
12.	Cameroon	28647293	12576162	642	0,0051%	8
13.	Botswana	2675352	2068047	357	0,0173%	8
14.	Ethiopia	126527060	24546250	2348	0,0096%	8
15.	Namibia	2604172	1619795	460	0,0284%	8
16.	Mali	23293698	7710214	151	0,0020%	8

*Figure 7: OCI cybercrime rank in Africa (2023) and the number of Tor users in Africa between 02.15.2024-05.15.2024. Source: TOR metrics, Worldometers, Statista, and European Union-funded Organized Crime Index, composed by the author.*

Concerning Burkina Faso, according to the OCI report foreign hackers from China, Indonesia, Albania, and Sudan are responsible for the high-ranking in the list in question. As for Botswana, the number of TOR users is below the median, but the proportion of TOR users is equal to that of South Africa.

Taking the third country, the OCI report paints an incomplete picture of Mali's cybercrime situation because it only reports rising of ransomware, and viruses resulting in data breaches.

To make it easier to understand, the data in the table have also been represented on Figure 8.



6.	Liberia	5418377	1630931	49	0,0030%	18
7.	South Sudan	11088796	1341744	51	0,0038%	51
8.	Leshoto	29608534	13916011	54	0,0004%	51
9.	Niger	27202843	4597280	68	0,0015%	51
10.	Sierra Leone	8791092	2672492	75	0,0028%	45
11.	Gambia	2773168	1503057	140	0,0093%	29
12.	Sudan	48109006	13807285	141	0,0010%	32
13.	Guinea	14190612	4810617	145	0,0030%	40
14.	Republic of the Congo	6106869	1661068	150	0,0090%	32

Figure 9: Lowest number of TOR users and their ranks in African cyber-dependent list. Source: Composed by author.

It seems, that the comparison of the two datasets based on the collected data confirms my hypothesis that there is a correspondence between the number of TOR users and the OCI cyber-dependent crime rank list.

### Summary

We are witnessing a rise in cybercrime worldwide, and the African continent is no exception to this trend. With the advent and spread of new technologies, new types of crimes emerged and what is more criminals have found new ways to commit old crimes. Cybersecurity has not kept up with technological advances, leaving a void for cybercriminals to fill.

Cybercrimes primarily affect the financial, industrial, and commercial sectors, but at the same time, all social strata are exposed to the threat of cybercriminals.

Computer-dependent crimes have a significant impact on national economies, causing damages exceeding 10% of the countries' GDP.

This paper presented the most typical cybercrimes and the possible connections between them and the dark web markets and dedicated websites. The importance of the dark web is unquestionable for cybercrimes because this domain hosts those markets, dedicated webpages, and forums where a significant part of criminals and future criminals can acquire the knowledge, tools, and techniques that are needed to commit cybercrimes. The Flashpoint's report gave us an insight how simple and cheap for cyber criminals to access tools, knowledge, and information.

The author hypothesized that based on its role in cybercrime, there is a correspondence between dark web usage in African countries and their cybercrime index. It seems that the analysis of collected data proved that the proportion of dark web usage correlates with the OCI cybercrime-dependent country index in Africa. The counter-test proved that countries with low-level dark web usage have a low rank in the cyber-dependent crime list.

Summing up, the hypothesis can be considered confirmed.



Africa is not only involved in cybercrime on the dark web. A search in the TOR system yielded a significant number of results specific to Africa. These results led to various illicit activities such as narcotics markets, illegal trading of flora and fauna, as well as sites involved in arms and human trafficking, among others. It's important to note that the research did not explore the connection between dark web usage and the aforementioned crimes.

This may be the subject of further research.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Attila Gulyás ret. Lt. Colonel graduated from the Kossuth Lajos Military College as an infantry officer in 1988. After serving four years as a troop officer, he was transferred to the Military Security Office, where he served in different positions. He retired from the service as a head of a department and in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 2010. He has been interested in IT for a quarter-century. His hobby is computer programming (VB.net, Visual C++, and Python) and computer forensics on personal computers on MS Windows and Linux operating systems. He is a doctoral student at the Óbuda University, Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, researching the connection between terrorism and the Dark Web. His research subject is terrorist activity in cyberspace: from social media to the Dark Web.

### References

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (n.d.). *Understanding Africa's Emerging Cyber Threats*. Retrieved June 20, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/programs/cyber/>
- Allen, N. (2021). *Africa's Evolving Cyber Threats*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Retrieved July 7, 2024 from <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-evolving-cyber-threats>
- Allen, N., & van der Waag-Cowling, N. (2021). *How African states can tackle state-backed cyber threats*. Brookings. Retrieved June 23, 2024 from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-african-states-can-tackle-state-backed-cyber-threats/>
- Check Point Research. (2023). *Global Cyberattacks Continue to Rise with Africa and APAC Suffering Most*. Retrieved June 2021, 2024 from <https://blog.checkpoint.com/research/global-cyberattacks-continue-to-rise/>
- Economic Commission for Africa. (2022). *ECA launches the Guideline for a Model Law on Cybersecurity during the 17th IGF*. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Retrieved June 14, 2023 from <https://www.uneca.org/stories/eca-launches-the-guideline-for-a-model-law-on-cybersecurity-during-the-17th-igf>

- Finra. (n.d.). *Pig Butchering' Scams: What They Are and How to Avoid Them*. Retrieved June 19, 2024 from <https://www.finra.org/investors/insights/pig-butchering-scams>
- Flashpoint. (2020). *Dark Web Marketplaces 2020*. Flashpoint-Intel. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://flashpoint.io/resources/research/flashpoint-pricing-analysis-dark-web-marketplaces-2020/>
- Gillis, A. (2023). *What is Cyber Espionage? How to Protect Against It*. Search Securit. Retrieved June 15, 2024 from <https://www.techtarget.com/searchsecurity/definition/cyber-espionage>
- Interpol. (2023). *African Cyberthreat Assessment Report Cyberthreat Trends* file:///C:/Users/bened/Downloads/2023\_03%20CYBER\_African%20Cyberthreat%20Assessment%20Report%202022\_EN.pdf
- Interpol. (2024a). *Interpol African Cyberthreat Assessment Report 2024* file:///C:/Users/bened/Downloads/24COM005030-AJFOC\_Africa%20Cyberthreat%20Assessment%20Report\_2024\_complet\_EN%20v4.pdf
- Interpol. (2024b). *Interpol Global Financial Fraud Assessment* file:///C:/Users/bened/Downloads/24COM005563-01%20-%20CAS\_Global%20Financial%20Fraud%20Assessment\_Public%20version\_2024-03%20v2.pdf
- Kaspersky. (2019). *Tips on How to Protect Yourself against Cybercrime*. Retrieved June 10, 2024 from <https://www.kaspersky.com/resource-center/threats/what-is-cybercrime>
- Positive Technologies. (2023). *Cybersecurity threatscape of African countries 2022–2023*. Retrieved June 15, 2024 from <https://www.ptsecurity.com/ww-en/analytics/africa-cybersecurity-threatscape-2022-2023>
- The Organized Crime Index. (2024). *Countries with the Highest Cyber-dependent crimes rate in Africa - The Organized Crime Index*. Retrieved June 30, 2024 from [https://africa.ocindex.net/rankings/cyber-dependent\\_crimes?f=rankings&view=List&group=Country&order=DESC&region=&criminality-range=0%2C10&state-range=0%2C10](https://africa.ocindex.net/rankings/cyber-dependent_crimes?f=rankings&view=List&group=Country&order=DESC&region=&criminality-range=0%2C10&state-range=0%2C10)





## External Intervention in the Ethiopia-Tigray Conflict and Its Implications on Conflict Resolution and Political Stability<sup>1</sup>

Olileanya Amuche Ezugwu<sup>2</sup>, Moses M. Duruji<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract:

The Ethiopia-Tigray conflict unleashed devastating consequences on the Horn of Africa sub-region, entailing widespread humanitarian suffering and security concerns. Through a comprehensive analysis of historical, political, and socio-economic factors, this paper investigates the impact of external intervention on either exacerbating or resolving the conflict. Drawing on primary and secondary sources, including interviews, scholarly articles, and reports, this paper examines the various forms of external intervention employed during the course of the Tigray conflict. By critically assessing the effectiveness and limitations of these interventions, we provide valuable insights into their role in shaping the trajectory of the conflict. Based on the findings, this paper concludes that external intervention in the Tigray conflict has had mixed results. While certain interventions have contributed to de-escalation and the provision of humanitarian assistance, others have inadvertently fuelled tensions and perpetuated the conflict. In light of these findings, this paper recommends prioritising diplomatic efforts that include dialogue and negotiation processes, taking into account the legitimate concerns and grievances of all parties involved.

### Keywords:

Ethiopian Federal Government; external intervention; intra-state conflict; peace; Tigray conflict.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.295>

<sup>2</sup> Masters of Science. Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Nigeria; ORCID: 0009-0006-4459-2150; olileanya.ezugwupgs@stu.cu.edu.ng.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Political Science and International Relations, Covenant University, Nigeria; ORCID: 0000-0001-9776-0409; moses.duruji@covenantuniversity.edu.ng.

## *Introduction*

Conflict in Africa has become a plague that seems to be never ending. While inter-state conflict is on decline, intra-state conflict has increased over the years since 1989, as most conflicts which had been previously on hold violently reignited, as seen in the case of Rwanda, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. These conflicts have had substantial human and financial impacts, as they redirect scarce resources from development to support war, resulting in a deceleration of the continent's political and economic progress (Cilliers & Schunemann, 2013). Conflicts not only cause physical destruction to individuals and property, but also pose a challenge to the enforcement of laws, undermine the credibility of governments, and put their institutions at risk. Moreover, internal conflicts give rise to a state of significant unpredictability that amplifies the likelihood of both political and economic volatility, potentially affecting neighbouring states. The cause of these conflicts cannot be divorced from the nature of the colonial administration in the continent and the tangled process of political independence of African states, creating unstable marginalised states, highly characterised by diversity, and prone to conflicts and wars. In most cases, issues responsible for conflicts were consolidated by non-inclusive political settlements, instability and natural cataclysm (Milián, Aspa, García, Arestizábal, Ariño & Ariño, 2021).

The Ethiopia-Tigray conflict, which erupted in the Tigray region of Ethiopia on 4 November 2020, has caused immense suffering, displacement, and humanitarian crisis. The conflict emerged as a culmination of long-standing grievances, power struggles, and political tensions between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Federal Government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. For a country with over 80 ethnic groups that have been enjoying the constitutional rights of self-administration and self-determination, a call for unitary government would naturally generate tension and opposition. Relatively, political unrest, anti-government protests, assassination and other vices returned to the country (Human Rights Watch, 2019). To “purge” the federal state institutions, the Prime Minister in response implemented a series of measures including arrests of Protestants, limiting press freedom by clamping down on journalists, detaining opposition political leaders and heads of ethnic associations. In the cause of the protest, over 4000 people were prosecuted by the Federal authorities, including senior Oromo leaders - where the Prime Minister came from (Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), 2020; Antehungn, 2021).

External interventions in the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict played a role, with various actors becoming involved in attempts to shape the outcome and impact the trajectory of the conflict. Sudan, sharing a border with Tigray, faced the influx of refugees and the spillover of the conflict, leading to concerns over its own security. Eritrea, a historical rival of the TPLF, supported the Ethiopian government by deploying troops and engaging in military operations within Tigray (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Regional organisations, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), sought to mediate and facilitate dialogue between the conflicting parties. The AU established a mediation team to promote peace talks, but its efforts faced challenges due to the complex dynamics and the lack of consensus among its member states. The United Nations (UN), was also engaged in addressing the Tigray conflict (Plaut, 2021). The UN called for a ceasefire, expressed concerns over human rights violations, and urged all parties to engage in peaceful negotiations.

However, the ability of the international community to influence the conflict was limited, as the Ethiopian government maintained a stance of national sovereignty and resisted external interference. Non-state actors, including humanitarian organisations and advocacy groups, played a crucial role in responding to the humanitarian crisis and raising awareness about the conflict. The effects of external intervention in the Tigray conflict had been both complex and consequential. External actors' involvement has influenced the conflict dynamics, the prospects for peace, and the suffering experienced by the Tigray population (Mushoriwa, 2022).

This paper aims to analyse the multifaceted impacts of external actors on the resolution or escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict. By drawing on empirical evidence, documented accounts, and scholarly analysis, this comprehensive study aims to shed light on the complexities and nuances of external intervention in the Tigray conflict, ultimately contributing to the broader understanding of conflict dynamics, peacebuilding strategies, and the potential for sustainable resolution in the Tigray region. Understanding the impacts of external intervention in the Tigray conflict can guide the formulation of more effective strategies and policies that promote peaceful resolution, mitigate harm, and address the root causes of conflicts.

### *Africa and Intra-State Conflicts*

Many African nations saw tumultuous transitions following their independence, marked by instances of intra-state conflicts and large-scale killings. Given the contentiousness of the initial boundary-establishment procedures, the forceful character of colonial governance, and the chaotic course of achieving independence, this outcome is unsurprising. According to Cilliers & Schüneman (2013), post-colonial states, hastily established, frequently had similar traits to their colonial predecessors. These challenges were sometimes worsened by political compromises that did not include everyone, failings in governance, and natural disasters.

Cilliers (2018) posited that the complexity of conflict in Africa is growing due to a rise in the number of conflict participants. Rebel factions, including extremist groups, tend to be abundant and frequently splinter into further subdivisions. Africa has consistently borne the greatest weight of non-state warfare on a global scale. Instances encompass insurgent factions that engage in conflicts to assert dominance over populations and valuable assets in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, rural Central African Republic, or northern Mali. The limited geographical authority of numerous African governments is evident in this metric, which highlights their inability

to guarantee stability and law enforcement over vast areas of state territory. Consequently, there is a prevalence of communal violence related to disputes over water, land, and other precious resources. Furthermore, numerous non-state conflicts are interconnected with conflicts that originate from states.

In 2023, there was a significant increase of intra-state conflict in the sub-Saharan African region, particularly in Sudan, Niger Republic, and Gabon. This phenomenon prompted numerous experts to investigate the abrupt proliferation of violent and intra-state disputes in these regions.

According to Uyangoda (2005), countries with a propensity for conflict experience instability and constraints in their political state, despite the prevailing political mainstream that promotes revolution and federalism. Drawing on the Obuasi Artisanal Small-Scale Mining (ASM-mining) company conflict in Ghana as an illustrative instance, Okoh (2014) expounded upon the notion that grievances among the involved parties constitute a significant catalyst for conflict and its subsequent intensification. In numerous African nations, including Uganda, the enduring consequences of violence and the resulting societal disruption persist in the present, shaping the daily lives and identities of individuals. These repercussions coexist with ongoing conflicts and the ongoing contestation of significance, remembrance, and commemoration (Moles, Anek, Baker, Komakech, Owor, Pennell, and Rowsell, 2023).

Palik, Rustard, and Methi (2020) in their research on intra-state conflicts in Africa observed that since 1946, there have been recorded 101 state-based conflicts in Africa - more than any other region, followed by Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States; with 77, 48, 38, and 26 number of conflicts respectively. Over the same period, the majority of state-based conflicts in Africa were fought over issues of governance rather than territorial disputes, such as the choice of political system, the restructuring of the administrative structure, or the removal of the central authority. In Africa, there were 46 reported State-based conflicts between 2018 and 2019. Africa suffered 11 intra-state conflicts and 14 internationalised civil wars in 2019 alone, with external players getting involved in domestic hostilities in nations including Somalia, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. These conflicts have not only resulted in the collapse or near collapse of certain nations, but they have also led to significant economic upheaval and disruption in the delivery of public services.

### *Politicisation of Conflicts in Africa*

The politicisation of conflicts in Africa refers to the phenomenon where conflicts are shaped and influenced by political actors and their interests, often resulting in the manipulation of ethnic, religious, or regional divisions for political gain (Wilén, 2018). Siyum (2021) called it “political entrepreneurs”, through instrumentalization of identity, political actors in Africa have frequently exploited ethnic, religious, or regional identities for political purposes. By manipulating existing divisions or creating new ones to mobilise support, consolidate power, or divert attention from other issues, these actors



utilise this to gain power over the minority; which often fuels conflicts and deepens divisions within societies (Ifaloye, Folarin & Duruji, 2022).

External actors, including neighbouring countries or global powers, sometimes use conflicts in Africa as proxies to advance their own interests (Mngomezulu & Fayayo, 2019). They may provide support to specific factions or groups, thereby exacerbating existing conflicts or prolonging their duration, which contributes to the politicisation of conflicts, thereby complicating their resolution. The proxy war between Sudan and Uganda in the 1990s and the proxy war between Sudan and Chad, which fuelled the crisis in Darfur, are two examples that greatly affected the political stability of these countries. Through the cross-border assistance of rebels, the nation's sought to change the regional power structures in several instances (Brewer, 2011). This assistance led to a situation known as the Prisoners' Dilemma, in which the patron nations refused to stop providing proxies until the other side did as well.

In Sudan, the long-standing conflict between the central government and various rebel groups, particularly in the Darfur is said to have been fueled by political divisions along ethnic and regional lines. Similarly, the secession of South Sudan in 2011 led to a civil war between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and opposition groups, largely driven by political power struggles (Marina & El-Sandany, 2012). The conflict in Somalia has been marred by political fragmentation and the involvement of various political actors seeking power; as the country has experienced a long-standing civil war. In the Central African Republic (CAR), political leaders have exploited religious differences between Christians and Muslims, leading to violent clashes and widespread human rights abuses (Shehu, 2015). In addition, the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria has been politicised in various ways; political actors have used the conflict to rally support or demonise opponents, and corruption and political patronage have undermined efforts to address the root causes of the conflict. The intercommunal conflicts between farmers and herders in Nigeria, have been politicised by politicians who manipulate ethnic and religious fault lines for personal or political gain (Shehu, 2015).

It is important to note that while conflicts in Africa are often politicised, there are also complex historical, socioeconomic, and ethnic factors that contribute to their emergence and persistence. In the context of Ethiopia's history, conflicts between different groups have commonly erupted due to religious, regional, or national ideologies, or a combination of these. The underlying objective of these battles has been to gain control over resources and establish authority (Geda, 2004). Politicians with self-serving agendas have exploited ethnic identity in Ethiopia, resulting in political instability (Taye, 2017). The nation's historical progression led to the emergence of many political factions. The elites' inability to establish a national consensus stem from the complex historical development of the nation, which has led to the emergence of varied political interests among different ethnic groups. The national flag, language, ownership of the capital city, and the federal system itself are key issues that Ethiopian elites are unable to reach a consensus on (Belay, Ndiaye, Tazi, Cynthia, & Soumahoro, 2020).

### *External Intervention in Intra-State Conflicts in the Horn of Africa*

The Horn of Africa is known to be the most volatile region in Africa (Woodward, 2013). Unlike Central Africa which is characterised by political instability, the Horn of Africa is more prone to conflict and disputes, which has spanned from the historical times until now, with mostly unlasting resolution between conflicting parties. This session reflects the influence of external interventions and meditations in the Horn of Africa during the period of conflicts, to examine how instrumental these actors have been in determining the transformation and nature of conflicts in the Horn of Africa.

#### *The Cold war period*

During the Cold War, which was an ideological warfare between the then Soviet Union and the United States of America from 1947-1991, the Horn of Africa became a sideshow in the middle of a global struggle as a direct result of the political factions in the area seeking aid from the major powers. This brought the USA, establishing itself as the first Cold War power in the region, particularly in Ethiopia where it acts as the patron of the country, supporting its conflict with Eritrea over border dispute, and also against the Oromo and Somali insurgencies (Geda & Befekadu, 2003). However, after the fall of the Imperial era; establishing the military Dergue regime in 1974, and the invasion of Ethiopia by Somalia in 1977, USA withdrew its support from Ethiopia, aligning and supporting the government of Somalia, whereas the Soviet Union, former supporter of Somalia, equally reversed its alliance to Ethiopia. As a result, the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia became even more intense, and the socioeconomic order of the society was thrown into disarray, which had a detrimental impact on both the political and the economic stability (Suny, 2009; Woodward, 2013). The length of the struggle was increased by their funding and training of the combatants. Migration caused by violence also caused a massive diaspora that financed the conflict and the economy, thereby prolonging these conflicts (Geda & Befekadu, 2005; UNECA, 2016).

As the Cold War surged on, foreign intervention in the Horn of Africa primarily had a negative effect. The most obvious outcome was violence escalation and continuation. This was caused by an endless supply of sophisticated weapons, which brought warfare's technology and devastation to a level much beyond what the combatants alone could have managed. Although economic assistance was given, however, any influence it may have had on development was negated by the damage caused by the protracted conflict (UNECA, 2016).

#### *Intervention in Inter-State Conflicts*

The end of the Soviet Union placed the USA as the sole arbitrator of regional affairs; as a result, the backing and endorsement of the USA became crucial. In the case of Sudan, for example, prior to the independence of South Sudan, the conflict that broke out





between rebel groups and the Federal Government was resolved through the intervention of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and led to the 1972 Addis Ababa Accord, which granted self-rule to the South. This occurred before the independence of South Sudan. However, eleven years after the peace agreement, in 1983, another civil war broke out in Sudan. This conflict is believed to have been sparked by the further segmentation of the South into different three provinces as well as the implementation of Sharia Law in the region that is predominantly inhabited by Christians. After 22 years of war between both regions, in January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed by both parties - which gave the South the choice through a referendum to decide its state of existence at the end of a 6-year period. This was the long-term outcome of the war that led to independence and self-governance of the South. And on 9 July, 2011, South Sudan was officially recognized as a sovereign state (UNECA, 2016).

The conflict that transpired between Ethiopia and Eritrea from 1998 to 2000 and the border dispute that occurred between 2000 and 2018 were both legally resolved as a result of the Peace Accord reached in 2018. This Accord was mediated by the AU and the UN, and it also resulted in the restoration of diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries (New York Times, 2018; Ylonen, 2019). Following the comparatively peaceful power transition in Ethiopia in 2018, as well as the series of restructuring led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that culminated in the establishment of the national political framework, the Joint Declaration on Peace and Friendship between both nations was signed (Davis, 2020).

After the end of the Cold War, the USA made the decision to celebrate and support the victories won by the oppositions through revolution in Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, and later in Southern Sudan. This was done in the hopes that it would usher in a new era marked by democracy, peace, and socio-economic development under a new class of leaders (Sunny, 2009). However, Woodward (2013) postulates that when the Horn became identified as a volatile region with a high terrorist infiltration, USA priorities were suddenly rearranged and they demanded cooperation of its allies in the fight against terrorism, identifying Somalia who had been their good ally in the 1970s as the focal point of this anti-terrorism fight. Ethiopia and Djibouti joined the military campaign and established military forces with the USA and its allies, further defecting stability in the region. This caused the collapse of the 2008 Ethiopia-Eritrea peace process, and conflict ensued, which continued until the 2018 Peaceful resolution championed by the current Ethiopia President; Abiy Ahmed.

In 2019, with the compelling objective of weakening the erupting insurgency in Somalia before the anticipated transfer of security and political operations from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the Somali Armed Militia by 2021, the USA heightened its intervention and meditation in Somalia, conducted 63 air raid against al-Shabab targets, which when compared to 5 years ago was more than 50% increase - 2018 (45), 2017 (35), 2016 (14), 2015 (11), and between 2007–2014 (11) (New York Times, 2019). Independent reports claim that civilian casualties from air-strikes had

continued but unreported by the US military (Dewan & Dahir, 2019). However, in spite of the heightened military operations from USA and other international forces, al-Shabab persisted in carrying out armed attacks on both the foreign forces and civilians, heightening political instability in the country (Al Jazeera, 2019).

### *Methodology*

This study employed qualitative research methods to investigate the influence of external involvement on either intensifying or resolving the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict. The research examines the various dimensions of political, military, economic, and humanitarian interventions in the conflict. The primary data source consists of comprehensive interviews conducted with five respondents: mediators and experts in political affairs who possess extensive knowledge about the conflict and its impact on Ethiopia's political development. Additionally, individuals from Ethiopia were also included in the interviews.

These participants were contacted virtually and physically, through which the interview took place. Following their consents and outlined interview questions, responses were recorded and transcribed thematically. The study was conducted in accordance with the Covenant Health Research Ethics Committee (CHREC), under the National Code for Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC - Nigeria). All participants to this research gave their informed consent for inclusion and publication. Furthermore, secondary data were obtained from academic papers, books, articles, and media reporting on the Tigray conflict, government publications, non-governmental reports, political development reports, and organisational reports.

### *Results and Findings*

The Tigray conflict was primarily fought between Ethiopian federal forces, including the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF), and the TPLF. However, neighbouring countries and international actors have been involved in various ways. The intervention of external actors in the Tigray conflict has had mixed effects; while some interventions have aimed to provide humanitarian aid and mediate a peaceful resolution, others have contributed to the complexity of the conflict; thereby worsening the humanitarian situation. These interventions are subdivided into four categories: political, military, economic and humanitarian interventions.

#### *Political intervention*

The earliest response to the Ethiopian-Tigray conflict came from President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, who was the AU chairperson at the time, when he named three special envoys to Ethiopia to mediate in the conflict which started on 4 November, 2020. The ambassadors were former South African President Kgalema Motlanthe, former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The AU created a commission in June 2021 to look into claims of human

rights abuses allegedly committed by all parties to the conflict headed by former International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor; Fatou Bensouda. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president of Nigeria, was appointed the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa in August 2021 by the chairperson of the AU Commission. Obasanjo explained to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) that the disagreements between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF are political in nature and calls for a political resolution, including an unqualified ceasefire (Mushoriwa, 2022).

Additionally, in July and August 2021, a mediation team known as "A3+1," made up of three African nations (Kenya, Niger, and Tunisia), and one non-African nation (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) was dispatched by the African Union to mediate in the Tigray Conflict, following the unilateral ceasefire in July, 2021 (Boutellis, 2022). However, according to Respondent 3, the intervention of the African Union in the Tigray conflict failed to achieve its objectives.

The AU which is vested with the authority to secure peace and mitigate conflict in Africa was actually a total failure when it comes to the Ethiopian Civil Wars from day one. Even though the AU headquarters is located in Addis Ababa, since its establishment, the Union has been very hesitant in addressing any internal contentious issues in African countries. Many other countries like the US and EU intervened. But although the AU is a union of all other actors, which are determining on any kind of peace process, I cannot think of one example where AU has solely spearheaded a peace process in Africa and been successful with that. Even the former Nigerian President Obasanjo as a new mediator could not really do much, as most of the people distrusted the system.

In agreement, Respondent 1 postulated that most countries that intervened in the Tigray conflict had interest in the affairs of Ethiopia, which one way or the other affects its foreign relations with other nations. Contrarily, according to Respondent 4, if the AU had not intervened and established negotiation and peace agreement, both parties would have still been pressured to continue the conflict. The European Union for instance intervened in the conflict to prevent further escalation, which would be detrimental to Europe, by the high surge of refugees and displaced persons, who usually through Libya migrate to Europe.

To Moles et al. (2023), conflict can be curtailed and mitigated by fostering local interactions and encounters for the construction of a reparative future, especially for youths, who are forcefully involved during wars and conflicts. To him, through creative actions and shared conversations; the acts of 'being together' both physically and across geographical space, will foster understanding and subsequent stability.

### *Military intervention*

The escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict extended beyond Ethiopia's boundaries, resulting in violent clashes in the disputed border area of al-Fashaga between Sudanese troops and Amhara insurgents from Ethiopia. This prompted the intervention of Sudanese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Amhara forces in the fight. Reports indicated that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) employed unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) to launch

offensive strikes against Tigrayan forces, providing assistance to the Ethiopian and Eritrean military operation (Mlaba, 2021).

According to the New York Times, the supply of weaponized drones by China, Iran, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates to the Ethiopian government was a form of military backing for that country's leadership during its attack against the Tigray region (Walsh, 2021). Since August 2021, there have been 15 freight flights between Iran and Ethiopia, while there have been an estimated 119 cargo flights from the UAE to Ethiopia. The UAE's acquisition of Chinese-made machinery has been connected to the December 2021 bombing of civilians in Alamata, Tigray, via missile fragments found in airstrike locations (Semhal, 2022).

The International Crisis Group (2021) stated that Eritrea's involvement in the Tigray conflict hinged on President Isaias Afwerki's political and national interest over the Tigray region and the TPLF. By defeating the Tigrayan forces, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki would have the opportunity of reclaiming the northern regions of Ethiopia that were given to Asmara by the UN boundary commission in 2002. Despite substantial Eritrean support for the TPLF's uprising against Mengistu Haile Mariam's military rule, the Eritrean President considers Tigray leaders as enemies who turned Ethiopia's military against his regime in 1998. According to Respondent 5, the pillaging of Tigray by Eritrean troops could be interpreted as retaliation for the damage Eritrea endured during the 1998-2000 war, and also, to regain Eritrean territory that was forcibly taken during the 1998 war, particularly the Badme Triangle, which Abiy Ahmed was unable to deliver despite his agreement with Isaias Afwerki in 2018. Even after the Prime Minister announced on 26 March, 2021 that the Eritrean forces would leave the country, the military forces under the influence of the Prime Minister still lingered within the country, determined to defeat the Tigrayan forces. As stated by Respondent 5:

"I would adhere to the role played by the Eritrean Defence Force, and the Eritrea government. The Eritrean government had embedded Tigray and Ethiopia as a sovereign country, with the claims that they were invited by the Ethiopian government. They should manage their own affairs ... Eritrea occupied some parts of Tigray harassing and killing Tigrayans. So, as far as there are some spoilers, the role of AU comes under pressure to sanction Eritrea. The UN had to convince them to sanction Eritrea because they were spoilers to the Tigray conflict. Some countries sent their drones and jets, and Eritrea supplied the Federal government with bombs against Tigray. In summary, most of the external actors that intervened were biased, which affected the resolution of the conflict."

Following international pressure, especially from the US President Joe Biden, who through Senator Chris Coons delivered a message to Prime Minister Abiy in April to end the conflict and have a peaceful agreement, Ethiopia's public stance on the presence of Eritrean troops changed. Acknowledging this, on 26 March, the Ethiopian prime

travelled to Asmara and declared that Eritrean troops would leave. According to Respondent 5:

“There is little or no importance of external intervention in internal conflicts. The invitation of external actions for the resolution or mediation in intra-state conflicts only escalate and worsen the conflicts. Just like the theory of realism highlights, states only act for their national interest, no state would intervene in the Tigray conflict without having its own selfish reasons.”

### *Economic intervention*

Although the UN Security Council convened a meeting on 24 November, 2020 concerning the escalation of the Ethiopia-Tigray conflict and number of deaths in the region, it was alleged that African states refused to facilitate the talks. African nations were said to have dragged their feet, while the European Union started to put more pressure on Prime Minister Abiy. In addition, more than €400 million from the EU Trust Fund were made available for Africa; the Union had given Ethiopia €815 million for the financial period of 2014-2020. However, following its warnings to Ethiopia; concerning the aid restrictions and road blockades imposed by the Federal Government against the Tigray region, the European Union suspended \$107 million in funding unless Tigray was opened up to aid organisations without restriction. The Union called on Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia to take action, and create access for humanitarian aid and the relief workers (Hagos & Plaut, 2021). In alignment, Respondent 1 stated:

“Many of us think the African Union is toothless, unless supported by the US in which we saw in the Tigray conflict. While the African Union was given the absolute credit for solving the conflict in Ethiopia, it was the US that really funded and pushed it to be implemented in Ethiopia. And there are many other interested parties, including the European Union, to really see if Ethiopia would become a peaceful nation.”

Deleersnyder (2022) accordingly stated that the EU demonstrated a strong stance against hostilities by withholding direct budgetary support of €88 million until the Ethiopian government fulfilled certain conditions. These conditions included granting unrestricted and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid operations in the Tigray region. This action positioned the EU as one of the most outspoken international actors in condemning the hostilities. Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, justified the decision by asserting that the situation in Ethiopia had surpassed a mere internal law enforcement operation. He supported his argument by referring to accounts of violence targeting specific ethnic groups, instances of murder, extensive looting, sexual assaults, coerced repatriation of refugees, and the possibility of war crimes. To give the conflict-affected population in Ethiopia access to life-saving supplies and services, the EU enhanced humanitarian funding by €18.8 million.

Additionally, the Union gave Sudan and Kenya €2 million and €2.9 million, respectively, for refugees who are migrating into their countries from Ethiopia.

As a measure against Ethiopia and Eritrea involvement in the Tigray conflict, the US imposed sanctions on Eritrea, and subjected Ethiopians and their families who had been complicit in the atrocities in Tigray to visa restrictions. Although Ethiopian government denied the allegations and responded angrily to the sanctions, on 27 May, 2021, Robert Codec, the acting assistant secretary of state and director of the Bureau of African Affairs, made it abundantly plain in his testimony that unless human rights were upheld, no aid would be permitted to continue and Eritrean forces would be recalled. There will be more action against Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The involvement of the US in the Tigray conflict Respondent 3 believes was a big hope, not just to the Tigrayans, but to the country as whole.

“I think the involvement of the US has been a huge issue in Ethiopia, we have seen it in Libya and other countries. But sometimes, the US is a big head of hope for many others. If it wasn't for the US involvement, I don't think the conflict in Ethiopia would have been resolved: they invested money, resources, sent some of the leadership to Addis Ababa, appointed envoys to solve the issue and financially supported the end of the conflict. It was exceptional leadership from the US to the country, when they came to end the conflict. But again, Ethiopia has to be respected as an independent nation; a country that has its own internet.”

### *Humanitarian intervention*

According to James Dudridge, the British Minister for Africa, the UK gave Ethiopia more than £100 million in humanitarian aid in 2020-2021. Included in this was £19 million in humanitarian aid for those impacted by the fighting in Tigray, including supplies for food, shelter, healthcare, and security. Instead of the Ethiopian government, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other UN organisations delivered the aid. By June, the amount had increased to £22 million. Although the British government claims time and time again that it has discussed human rights concerns with the Ethiopian government "at the highest level" and called for an end to the violence (Hagos & Plaut, 2021).

In December 2020, the EU stopped paying out €88 million in fiscal support to the Ethiopian government, but rather channelled it to humanitarian aid; in order to provide basic services to vulnerable populations, such as addressing gender-based violence or food insecurity caused by the Tigray conflict. In the first half of 2022, the EU provided €58.25 million in humanitarian aid to Ethiopia, with a particular focus on refugees, as well as those - particularly children - who were impacted by food shortages, malnutrition, and the drought in the south. Since the start of the crisis, the EU increased its assistance to Sudan, where thousands of Tigrayans have fled. Even after a humanitarian ceasefire was reached between the belligerents in March 2022, the EU urged further humanitarian access, and the restoration of basic services in Tigray. The



Council on 17 October, 2022, demanded "an immediate halt to the joint offensives launched by Ethiopian National Defence Forces in collaboration with Eritrean Defence Forces, and a full withdrawal of Eritrean troops from the sovereign territory of Ethiopia." Additionally, the Tigray Forces were compelled to "refrain from any further military operations" (European Parliament, 2022).

As Respondent 2 highlighted: "Peace would not have come without the African Union, at the same time, peace will not have come without the United States either. So, the combination of pressure from AU, US, EU and Kenya ultimately led to peace".

### *Discussion of Findings*

The effects of external intervention in escalating or resolving the Tigray conflict is a complex issue that involves various actors and factors. The African Union, the United Nations, and the United States all called for an immediate ceasefire and a peaceful resolution to the conflict, which were ignored or failed until the Peace Agreement of November 2022. The European Union also expressed its concern and called for dialogue and an end to the fighting. Furthermore, neighbouring countries like Sudan and Kenya played crucial roles in resolving the conflict by providing humanitarian aid and mediating between the parties involved. However, the situation remained complex, and the level of external intervention required to resolve the conflict was highly uncertain. Nonetheless, the international community in its active engagement in the conflict towards peace and stability helped to resolve the conflict and mitigated further escalation to other regions and neighbouring states.

The involvement of external actors in the conflict prolonged the conflict and made it harder to reach a peaceful resolution, as each party has its own interests and agenda. Eritrean intervention in the Tigray conflict has been widely criticised for escalating the conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region. Eritrean forces have been accused of committing human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, and looting. The presence of Eritrean troops also made it more difficult for humanitarian organisations to reach those in need, as they have been subjected to harassment and intimidation. Moreover, the Eritrean intervention deepened ethnic tensions in the region and complicated efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. For many Tigrayans, the presence of Eritrean forces is seen as an occupation, and there have been reports of attacks on Eritrean refugees and businesses in Tigray.

However, conflicts can be mitigated for the exposition of development and economic growth when societies intertwine and interdependently relate during post-conflict eras. External mediation and intervention have been crucial in mitigating the humanitarian crisis and promoting peace and stability in the region. External mediation efforts facilitated negotiations between the warring parties, encouraging a ceasefire, and promoting dialogue and reconciliation. These efforts have been led by the African Union, the USA, the EU, the UN, and neighbouring countries, among others. Additionally, external humanitarian aid provided much-needed assistance to the people of Tigray, who have been severely affected by the conflict. International organisations,

such as the World Food Program and UNICEF, have been working to provide food, water, shelter, and medical assistance to those in need. Overall, external mediation and intervention have been important factors in trying to resolve the conflict in Tigray. While the situation remains complex and challenging, it is important that the international community continues to work together to promote peace and stability in the region.

### *Conclusion and Recommendations*

The effects of external intervention in the Tigray conflict are complex and multifaceted. While external actors have played a role in providing much-needed humanitarian assistance and raising global awareness, their involvement has also prolonged the conflict and exacerbated its violence. This comprehensive study has sought to understand the effects of external intervention on the conflict and its implications for the region. Through an analysis of various factors and perspectives, it is clear that external intervention has had both positive and negative consequences, shaping the course and outcome of the conflict in significant ways. External intervention has played a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid and relief efforts to the suffering population of Tigray. The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, food insecurity, and other humanitarian crises, and the assistance provided by international actors has undoubtedly saved lives and alleviated some of the suffering.

On the other hand, the involvement of external actors, particularly neighbouring countries, fuelled the conflict and perpetuated its violence. The provision of military aid to different factions prolonged the fighting and hindered efforts for a swift resolution. The interests of external powers complicated the conflict, turning it into a proxy war beyond the initial grievances of the Tigray region. The influx of arms and the militarization of the conflict resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including sexual violence, massacres, and forced displacement.

To mitigate the negative effects of external intervention and promote a peaceful resolution, a comprehensive approach is needed. First, there must be a cessation of hostilities and a commitment to negotiated settlement. Regional and international actors should prioritise diplomacy, mediation, and dialogue, focusing on finding political solutions that addresses the underlying causes of conflicts. This should include efforts to promote inclusive governance, respect for human rights, and development in the Tigray region and Ethiopia as a whole.

Furthermore, accountability and justice must be pursued for the atrocities committed during the conflict. Perpetrators of human rights abuses, regardless of their affiliation, should be held accountable to ensure a sense of justice and prevent future cycles of violence. Truth and reconciliation processes, along with support for local initiatives promoting healing and social cohesion, can contribute to long-term stability. Also, long-term development initiatives should be implemented to address the underlying socioeconomic disparities that contributed to the conflict. This includes investing in infrastructure, education, healthcare, and job creation in all regions. Additionally,



regional actors, particularly neighbouring countries, should collaborate to de-escalate tensions and prevent conflict from spilling over into other regions. A regional approach is crucial to ensure lasting peace and stability in the broader Horn of Africa.

Lastly, the formation of a formidable informal association in the conflictual regions will ensue and establish short-term stability, which could be employed as a key strategy for ameliorating future disputes.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Olileanya Amuche Ezugwu is the first and corresponding author of this paper. She initiated the paper topic, wrote most sections of the paper, conducted the interviews, transcribed, thematically analysed them, and drafted the Recommendations and Conclusion section.

Professor Moses M. Duruji is the paper supervisor. He reviewed and edited the manuscript, wrote part of the Literature Review section, and finalized the recommendations and conclusion section. The whole work was proofread and finalized by Professor Moses Duruji.

### References

- Al Jazeera. (2019, September 30). *US special forces base, Italian army convoy attacked in Somalia*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/9/30/us-special-forces-base-italian-army-convoy-attacked-in-somalia>
- Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS). (2020). *Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis: Domestic and Regional Implications*. Doha Institute for Graduate Studies.
- Belay, T., Ndiaye, M., Tazi, C., Cynthia, H., Soumahoro, M., Shifa, M., Mukwakwa, P., & Feyissa, T. K. (2020). *Peace and Security Report: Ethiopia Conflict Insight. Institute for Peace and Security Studies (Vol. 1)*. Addis Ababa University.
- Boutellis, A. (2022). *Lessons from EIO Engagement on the Security Council*. International Peace Institute.
- Brewer, C. G. (Ed.). (2011). *Peril by Proxy: Negotiating Conflicts in East Africa (Vol. 16., pp. 137-167)*. International Negotiation.
- Cilliers, J. (2018). *Violence in Africa Trends, drivers and prospects to 2023*. Institute for Security Studies. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.ecbproject.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/ar-12.pdf>
- Cilliers, J., & Schünemann, J. (2013). *The Future Of Intrastate Conflict in Africa: More Violence or Greater Peace?* Institute for Security Studies.
- Council on Foreign Relations. (2022). *Civil War in South Sudan*. Center for Preventive Action.

- Davis, I. (2020). *Armed conflict and peace processes in sub-Saharan Africa*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2020/07>
- Deleersnyder, A. (2022). *Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: exposing the limits of EU and AU early warning mechanisms*. *Multinational Development Policy Dialogue*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- Dewan, K., & Dahir, A. H. (2019). *We heard it coming': US lethal operations in Somalia*. TRT World Research Centre.
- European Parliamentary. (2022). *War in Tigray Background and state of play*. European Parliamentary Research Service. Retrieved December 11, 224 from [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739244/EPRS\\_BR I\(2022\)739244\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739244/EPRS_BR I(2022)739244_EN.pdf)
- Geda, A., & Befekadu, D. (2005). *Conflict, Post-Conflict and Economic Performance in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa University. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522732\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522732_8)
- Hagos, H., & Plaut, M. (2021). *The Tigray Conflict and Regional Implications. Diplomatic Effects (Vol. 1)*. Eritrea Focus.
- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *Ethiopia Events of 2019*. Retrieved Decemebr 11, 2024 from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/ethiopia>
- Ifaloye, O. R., Folarin, S. F., & Duruji, M. M. (2022). An Examination of the Oputa Panel as the Vehicle for Victim-centred Justice in Nigeria. *African Renaissance*, 35-56. [https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-aa\\_afren\\_v2022\\_nsi1\\_a3](https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-aa_afren_v2022_nsi1_a3)
- International Crisis Group. (April 2, 2021). *Ethiopia's Tigray War: A Deadly, Dangerous Stalemate*. *Crisis Group Africa Briefing No. 171*. Reliefweb. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-s-tigray-war-deadly-dangerous-stalemate-crisis-group-africa-briefing-n-171>
- Marina, O., & El-Sandany, M. (2012). *Sudan: From Conflict to Conflict*. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/16/sudan-from-conflict-to-conflict-pub-48140>
- Mlaba, K. (2021). *Tigray's Conflict Has Forced Schools to Close. Here's What That Means for Ethiopia's Children*. Global Citizen. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/tigray-conflict-schools-closed-education-ethiopia/>
- Mngomezulu, B. R., & Fayayo, R. (2019). The Role of the International Community in Sustaining Conflicts in Africa. *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, 6(3), 5-21.
- Moles, K., Anek, F., Baker, W., Komakech, D., Owor, A., Pennell, C., & Rowsell, J. (2023). The hard work of reparative futures: Exploring the potential of creative and convivial practices in post-conflict Uganda. *Futures*, 153, 103224. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2023.103224>
- Mushoriwa, L. (2022). *The African Union's Role in Addressing the Scourge of Conflict in Africa*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies. Retrieved December

- 11, 2024 from <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/african-unions-role-addressing-scourge-conflict-africa-35200>
- New York Times. (July 9, 2018). *Reported by Gebrekidan, Selam: Ethiopia and Eritrea Declare an End to their War*. Retrieved December, 20, 2024 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/09/world/africa/ethiopia-eritrea-war.html>
- New York Times. (March 10, 2019). Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/us/politics/us-somalia-airstrikes-shabab.html>
- Okoh, G. A. (2014). *Grievance and conflict in Ghana's gold mining industry: The case of Obuasi*. *Futures*, Volume 62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2013.09.007>
- Palik, J., Rustad, S. A., & Methi, F. (2020). *Conflict Trends in Asia, 1989–2019*. Peace Research Institute.
- Plaut, M. (2021). *The Tigray War and Regional Implications - Introductions: War, Offensives and Atrocities, Vol. 1*.
- Respondent 1: Mr. Samuel Getachew. (n.d.). *An Ethiopian and a freelance local journalist in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia* [Interview].
- Respondent 2: Professor Mitiku Gual. (n.d.). *Professor at Mekelle University in Tigray*. [Interview].
- Respondent 3: Professor Kjetil Tronvoll. (n.d.). *An expert of political development, conflicts, human rights and institution building in Ethiopia and Eritrea since 1983*. [Interview].
- Respondent 4: Anonymous, A. E. w. a. t. A. U. (n.d.). *An Ethiopian working at the African Union* [Interview].
- Respondent 5: Anonymous. (n.d.). *An Ethiopian and Professor of Political Science and International Relations in Ethiopia* [Interview].
- Semhal. (2022). *Foreign Involvement in the War on Tigray. Omna Tigray Contributor*. Retrieved December 22, 2024 from <https://omnatigray.org/foreign-involvement-in-the-war-on-tigray/>
- Shehu, M. I. (2015). *Ethno-Religious, Political Manipulation and Conflicts in African States: Issues at Stake*. (December 11, 2024). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.017.035>
- Siyum, B. A. (2021). *Underlying Causes of Conflict in Ethiopia: Historical, Political, and Institutional? World Conference on Social Science Studies, Budapest, Hungary*.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2016). *Human and economic cost of conflict in the horn of Africa: implications for a transformative and inclusive post-conflict development. Addis Ababa*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://hdl.handle.net/10855/23726>
- Uyangoda, J. (2005). *Ethnic conflict, ethnic imagination and democratic alternatives for Sri Lanka*. *Futures*, 37(9), 959-988. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2005.01.018>



- Walsh, D. (2021). Foreign Drones Tip the Balance in Ethiopia's Civil War. *New York Times*, (December 20, 2021).
- Wilén, N. (2018). Democracy and political entrepreneurs in Africa. *African Studies*, 77(3), 473-478. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020184.2018.1465217>
- Woodward, P. (2013). *Crisis in the Horn of Africa: Politics, Piracy and the Threat of Terror*. Tauris.
- Ylönen, A. (2019). From demonisation to rapprochement: Abiy Ahmed's early reforms and implications of the coming together of Ethiopia and Eritrea. *Global Change, Peace & Security*, 31(3), 341-349. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2019.1546685>





## Winning the War and Losing the Peace: An Analysis of Counter Boko Haram Terrorism in Northeast Nigeria<sup>1</sup>

Ugwumba Egbuta<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

This paper examines the multifaceted challenges and complexities surrounding the Nigerian government's counter-terrorism efforts. The study delves into the paradoxical situation of "winning the war but losing the peace," wherein the Nigerian military has achieved significant successes in degrading the operational capacity of Boko Haram, yet has struggled to establish a sustainable peace. It draws on various primary and secondary sources to analyse the historical context, socio-political dynamics, and strategic aspects of the counter-terrorism campaign. It evaluates both the military's kinetic operations and non-kinetic initiatives implemented to address the root causes of Boko Haram's rise, focusing on their effectiveness and limitations. It highlights the unintended consequences of military-centric strategies, including alleged human rights issues, displacement of populations, and exacerbation of grievances. It underscores the importance of a holistic approach that integrates military efforts with long-term socio-economic development, community engagement, and judiciary and security sector reforms to prevent the resurgence of extremism. In analysing the complex interplay between security, development, and governance, the study contributes to the understanding of the intricate challenges that emerge when addressing terrorism issues in a fragile state context. It emphasizes the need for a nuanced, context-specific approach that goes beyond short-term military gains to ensure sustainable peace and stability. The findings of this study hold implications not only for Nigeria but also for other nations facing similar challenges, providing insights into the delicate balance between winning the war against terrorism and securing a lasting peace.

### Keywords:

Terrorism;  
Counterterrorism;  
Sustainable Peace;  
Kinetic Operations;  
Human Rights Abuse;  
Displacement.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.292>

<sup>2</sup> Research Fellow at Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, National Defence College, Abuja; ORCID: 0009-0003-9603-9363; ubegbuta@yahoo.com.

## *Introduction*

Contemporary conflicts have proven to be more complex and complicated due to the multiplicity of actors and divergent interests that tend to prolong the conflict thereby increasing human casualty and fatality. Terrorism is increasingly becoming a common tactic employed by irregular forces and this makes conflict more difficult to manage. The fight against terrorism has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges, which requires concerted efforts by state actors as well as regional and international organizations to address such challenges (Aning, 2015). Nigeria's experience in countering Boko Haram terrorism stands out within the broader context of counter-terrorism endeavour. Here there are some records of military successes amidst very poor socio-political and economic conditions, leading to what could be best described as 'battlefield victory without peace' (Higate & Kamungi (Eds.). 2018). This succinctly captures the paradoxical nature of Nigeria's struggle against Boko Haram, encapsulating the nation's seeming triumphs on the battlefield and its subsequent struggles to establish lasting peace and stability. This study delves into the multifaceted dimensions of Nigeria's counter-terrorism efforts, shedding light on the intricate interplay between military operations, political dynamics, socio-economic conditions, and involvement of international partners.

The Boko Haram activities, which began as a pacifist movement, later metamorphosed into a trans-national violent terrorist group following the inability of the government to root it out from inception, particularly, its inability to separate political imperative from the nation's strategic interest (Onuoha, 2013). The group began to gain international prominence and posed an existential threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity, and national security. With its violent approach towards driving its message, Boko Haram has sought to establish a caliphate based on its extremist interpretation of Islamic law. The Nigerian government, in response to the crisis, adopted strategies involving military deployment to counter terrorism, and regional and international collaborations (Kolawole, 2018). These efforts are perceived to be heavily kinetic, amidst asymmetric opponents within a civil domain. This, at times, yielded noticeable military successes, such as the recapture of key parts of Nigeria's homeland hitherto held by the terrorists, as well as the weakening of Boko Haram's operational capabilities. Yet, what follows military victories is often a demonstration of disillusionment as Nigeria grapples with the challenges of reconstruction, reintegration, and reconciliation (RRR).

The phenomenon of "losing the peace" is exemplified by the difficulties Nigeria has encountered in addressing the root causes of the crisis and in transitioning conflict-torn regions into stable, inclusive societies. The aftermath of military operations has frequently exposed the underlying socio-economic grievances that initially fueled Boko Haram's rise, including poverty, unemployment, corruption, and unequal access to resources (Ukiwo, 2015). This is encapsulated in what is termed a governance deficit. Moreover, the asymmetrical nature of the conflict has rendered civilian populations vulnerable to both Boko Haram's violence and, at times, heavy-handed military

responses. These complexities highlight the intricate balance that must be struck between security imperatives and safeguarding the rights and well-being of the civilian populace.

In recent times, the Nigerian government has been preoccupied with the struggle to consolidate military gains with comprehensive peacebuilding efforts. However, these efforts have continued to suffer setbacks due to overwhelming divergent political considerations. Governance challenges, ethnic tensions, and religious divides have further complicated the trajectory towards sustainable peace. The intricate place of politics in Nigeria's socio-political life has implications on security governance and frequently influences the efficacy of counter-terrorism strategies, the responsiveness of institutions, and the degree of regional cooperation. Moreover, the perception of state legitimacy, both domestically and internationally, hinges on Nigeria's ability to navigate the complex post-conflict landscape.

Similarly, the transnational nature of the Boko Haram crisis requires international collaboration and support if it must be comprehensively addressed. Accordingly, Nigeria, especially under President Buhari (2015-2023) made overtures to neighbouring Lake Chad countries to strengthen the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Such cooperation proved to be effective, particularly in rooting Boko Haram out from the border areas (Ibrahim, March 2023, personal communication).

Accordingly, having made significant progress, particularly, on the battlefield, while still dealing with the challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding, it is imperative to reflect on the after-action review, the pitfalls to avoid, and the potential pathways to follow in navigating the country out of the conflict. This study periscopes the counter-Boko Haram terrorism campaign through a holistic lens. By probing the connections between the kinetic approach to conflict management, socio-political dynamics, and international engagements, this study seeks to offer insights that not only deepen understanding of Nigeria's struggle but also inform broader counter-terrorism efforts in an increasingly complex world.

### *Methodology*

The study adopts a qualitative research methodology, utilizing both secondary and primary sources of data including academic articles, policy documents, and news reports, among others. It also incorporates interviews with subject matter experts and key stakeholders including security experts, academics, and government officials for primary data. It employed thematic content analysis to assess counter-terrorism strategies' effectiveness, impacts, and broader implications. The interview transcripts were analysed qualitatively to identify recurring themes related to the challenges faced in transitioning from conflict to peace, as well as potential improvements.

### *Theoretical Framework: Governance and State Capacity Theory*

The analysis in this study is anchored on governance and state capacity theory. The theory is multidisciplinary with proponents that cut across different scholarships and practitioners who have contributed to its development. Fukuyama (2014) for instance

argues that strong state institutions are crucial for political stability and economic development. The role of inclusive and extractive institutions in shaping state capacity and prosperity is explored by Acemoglu & Robinson, (2013). Woolcock (1998), explores the importance of local institutions, social networks, and informal norms in shaping governance. Collier (2007), highlights the challenges that weak states face and the importance of building state capacity to promote development and peace.

In this study, the theory focuses on the capacity of the Nigerian state to provide security, development, and good governance in the country, particularly, in the Northeast part of the country. It looks at the impact of governance deficit on the region and how it helps to exacerbate terrorism. Hence, for there to be effective and holistic counter-terrorism programmes, the government must ensure that while it tries to ensure a safe and secure environment through the use of force, it must also provide local governance and address all those conditions that hitherto breed discord and discontent in society. While this is the case, the effectiveness of non-military strategies, such as deradicalization programmes such as Operation Safe Corridor, community engagement, and intelligence-sharing, in countering Boko Haram needs to be re-examined.

The theory provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of Boko Haram terrorism, counter-terrorism efforts of the government, and post-conflict stability in Nigeria. It looks at how issues of governance such as trust in official dealings, lack of accountability, and weak institutions, have contributed to the rise of Boko Haram and analyzes how these governance issues have eroded the state's capacity to address root causes of terrorism. There is therefore the need to examine not just the successes recorded so far by the military operation in the affected areas but also the long-term fall-out of the counter-terrorism efforts of the government.

### *Conceptualizing Counter-Terrorism Operations in Nigerian Context*

In this study, counter-terrorism operation incorporates the practices, tactics, techniques, and strategies that governments, through their institutions and agencies adopt to tackle terrorist threats and/or acts, both real and imputed (Lynn, 2004). Lynn notes further that counter-terrorism refers to offensive operations intended to prevent, deter, pre-empt, and respond to terrorism.

The counter-terrorism operation, in the context of Boko Haram, refers to a series of military and security efforts aimed at combating and neutralizing its threat (Ibrahim, 2018). Boko Haram is a terrorist organization that began in north-eastern Nigeria but has over the years spread beyond the region and across the nation, with an impact in neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The group is known for its violent tactics, including suicide bombings, kidnappings, and attacks on civilians and security forces.

Counter-terrorism operations involve the coordinated efforts of various national and international actors, including the affected countries' armed forces, intelligence agencies, and sometimes foreign military assistance (Ibrahim, 2018). The primary goal of the operations is to degrade the capabilities of Boko Haram and eventually eliminate it, as

well as to restore peace, stability, and security in the affected regions. Key components of a counter-Boko Haram operation include:

### *Military Operations*

Involving the deployment of armed forces to engage Boko Haram terrorists, disrupt their activities, and dismantle their infrastructure.

### *Intelligence Gathering and Sharing*

Effective counter-terrorism operations heavily depend on accurate and timely intelligence. Intelligence agencies work to gather information about Boko Haram's activities, leadership, and operational bases, and this information is shared among the agencies involved, to coordinate counter-operation efforts.

### *Border Security and Regional Cooperation*

Boko Haram often operates within and across neighbouring countries through existing poorly secured borders. It becomes imperative for affected countries to collaborate on border security measures to monitor and prevent the spread of terrorism, as well as the circulation of small arms and light weapons across border routes. Regional organizations and neighbouring countries could assist in joint operations and intelligence sharing.

**Protection of Civilian Population and Rehabilitation:** Protecting civilians caught in the conflict and addressing their needs is a critical aspect of counter-terrorist operations in every context. Displaced populations and victims of Boko Haram's violence need assistance, protection, and opportunities for rehabilitation. Addressing the needs of victims of terrorism forms a critical component of every long-term counter-terrorism operation.

### *Counter-Radicalization and De-Radicalization Efforts*

Aside from military actions during counter-terrorism operations, resources, and assets are dedicated to neutralizing terrorists' radical narratives and preventing the recruitment of individuals into extremist groups. This involves community engagement, re-orientation, and addressing socio-economic factors that contribute to vulnerability. Strategic communication plays a key role in counter and de-radicalization efforts of every government.

### *Psychological Operations*

This includes the deployment of strategic communication to counter terrorist propaganda and recruitment efforts. Nigeria has not maximally utilized and applied strategic communication in its counter-terrorism efforts. The use of media and engagement of strategic agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA), in the Nigerian context, is key in strategic communication. This is an effective tool in counter-terrorism operations.



### *International Support and Collaboration*

Given the transnational nature of terrorism, especially, Boko Haram, international collaboration is often sought. Countries, especially those in the affected region, could seek assistance from international organizations, as well as friendly international partners such as foreign governments that provide resources, training, and intelligence towards actualizing the goal.

It is important to note that counter-terrorism operations are complex and have humanitarian, political, and social implications that require articulating lines of effort in these directions. While the ultimate goal is to neutralize the threat posed by terrorist groups, a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the crisis promotes stability, and safeguards human rights is imperative to achieve sustainable peace.

### *Overview of Terrorism and Counterterrorism across the World*

Atta (2019) opined that over time mankind has lived with conflict, both at the individual level, community, state, or even global. Most of these conflicts, especially at the national level have always been between two unequal opponents. This is reflected in the weaponry, tactics, and personnel. However, insurgency war occurs when a lesser force attempts to subvert state authority using mostly guerrilla and terrorist tactics. Wars involving organized armies and irregular forces have been a constant factor in the history of warfare, and fighting them seems tougher than ever.

Contemporary conflicts are intra-state, contrasting with the inter-state wars that characterized the Cold War period. Many groups and non-state actors have continued to spring up and challenge state authorities. These groups use violence to press home their demand. Thus the most common today is the use of terrorist strategies to compel states to do what otherwise they would not have done. Their main objective is to create panic among the populace and destabilize the government. This is achieved when the populace loses confidence in the ability of the government to carry out its core statutory functions and responsibilities effectively.

Obasi (2020), argues that the trend of global conflicts over time has shaped how the concept of terrorism is defined or perceived. It has shifted from being perceived as a political phenomenon for making use of political resources (such as propaganda, protest, demonstrations, and training), to more of security; because of the use of instruments of violence to accomplish their goals.

Ibrahim (2018) sees terrorism from a security perspective and he explains that it has probably been the most prevalent type of armed conflict since the creation of organized political communities. He corroborated Obasi (2020) by emphasizing the power disparity between terrorism and government regular forces in terms of weaponry and training, however, what differentiates the two opposing forces is their nature, character, training, weaponry, and rule of engagement. Terrorism is completely reliant upon the population, and the population is the objective for both the terrorists and the counter-forces. A key dissimilarity between the past and contemporary terrorism is the



decentralization of terrorist groups. More so, in the information age, terrorist groups need not have extensive funding to have their message heard; terrorist leaders could through technology send any information they want to the internet, in this information age.

Accordingly, due to the transnational nature of terrorism, particularly, in the era of globalization, allying with groups that share similar ideology has become their common practice. This makes counter-terrorism war more difficult, and protracted and lasts longer than imagined (United Nations, 2020). In this case, civilian casualty becomes prevalent. On the other hand, such agitation could bring about development since every war has its positive and negative sides. Terrorist agitation, at times, puts the government in check in terms of utilization of resources leading to economic, social, and political reforms and development.

Hence, the rise of global radical Islamic fundamentalism particularly in Nigeria has marked a turning point in the development and study of terrorism and its attendant consequences (Okpara & Onapajo, (2020). Boko Haram, no doubt has significantly made its presence felt since 2009 in northeast Nigeria. This affirms the view that since the end of the Cold War and the advancement in science and technology, there has been a change like conflict, with the weaker side recording more successes. Part of the reason for the change is the rising importance of public opinion and information warfare, as well as the increasing adoption and acceptability of human rights and humanitarian laws which sometimes stalls or delays justice, especially in developing nations.

In the Nigerian context, Yaqub (2018) opines that in countering terrorism, it is usually difficult to identify them from the community in which they operate. It is against this background that state parties use all legitimate means including “carrot and stick” in a counter-terrorism war to suppress such subversion and rebellion. In this case, state actors are sometimes alleged to be violators of human rights in counter operations because of the lack of a battlefield and difficulty in identifying belligerents. Obiako (2017) further clarification between insurgency, terrorism, and conventional war by upholding that:

“Insurgency is not terrorism or conventional war for example, though it shares with them some similarities such as the use of force or guerrilla tactics to achieve an end which is often political. The difference between insurgency and terrorism lies in the scope and magnitude of violence. While for instance, terrorism rarely brings about political change on its own, insurgency attempts to bring about change through force of arms. Similarly, terrorists often apply a wide range of damages when compared to insurgents. On the other hand, while conventional war involves adversaries more or less symmetric in equipment or training, insurgency involves adversaries that are asymmetric, weak, and almost always a sub-state group.” (C. Obiako, personal communication).

The Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria shares some of the elements presented by Obiako such as the use of violence, and lack of a battlefield, however, it has not shown much interest in bringing about serious political changes at a national scale except for its focus on the introduction of Islamic modelled administration in some localized areas. This makes many see it as a local group with religious ideology. However, its extensive operations that transcend national frontiers contradict this belief and question the rationale for perceiving the crisis as local.

### *Interrogating Military Success against Boko Haram Terrorism*

Contrary to the thinking of many, this study agrees that there have been significant military successes against Boko Haram terrorism over the years. Heightened intelligence operations, sustained military offensives, and regional and international collaboration and cooperation have resulted in significantly degrading of the operational capacity and capability of the terrorist group, as well as its claim of territorial control. Since 2009 when the Boko Haram operation began to adopt violent tactics, the group has remained a significant security threat to Nigeria and neighbouring countries. The success of military efforts against Boko Haram has varied over time. This paper highlighted some factors that contributed to military successes in fighting Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria:

### *Strengthening of Multinational Joint Force (MNJTF) Operations*

On assumption of office, President Muhammadu Buhari began to open up strategic communication and collaboration with Nigeria's immediate neighbours such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon among others. This led to the revitalization of the MNJTF as Joint military operations involving Nigerian armed forces and those of neighbouring countries, such as Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin in combating Boko Haram terrorism. The MNJTF which was established to coordinate efforts across borders, has been significant in fighting terrorism around border areas through pooling resources and intelligence to target Boko Haram terrorists.

### *Improved Intelligence and Surveillance*

Regional and international collaborations with countries such as the United States in combatting terrorism provided for improved intelligence gathering and sharing of information among the affected countries. For instance, the U.S. has been supporting Nigeria in harvesting intelligence as well as training personnel for internal security. The intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) live feed provided by the U.S to Nigerian military operation against Boko Haram, tremendously helped Nigerian forces in assessing the exact location of the enemies and reduced battlefield collateral damages (O.O. Obolo, personal communication, 13 April 2023). It also helped in tracking the movements and activities of Boko Haram fighters. This has allowed security forces to anticipate and counter their actions.

### *Community Engagement*

The inability of the military to engage with the affected communities contributed to the initial setback in counter-terrorist operations of the military. For there to be a successful counter-operation, an effort must be made to win the hearts and minds of the local populace. On realizing that it has effectively engaged communities, the military began to identify stakeholders in the affected communities, who often provided valuable information about the group's activities and hideouts (S.O Eyekosi, personal communication, 30 March 2023).

### *Deradicalization Programmes*

The process of disarmament, de-radicalization, and reintegration programmes form an integral part of the counter-terrorism operation of the Nigerian government. This is encapsulated in an operation code named 'Operation Safe Corridor'. The largely successful operation is aimed at rehabilitating former Boko Haram members and reintegrating them into society. It targets reducing the number of Boko Haram foot soldiers and preventing further recruitment.

### *Enactment of Anti-Terrorism Legislation*

The realization that the lack of adequate legislative framework posed a serious setback in initial efforts to combat Boko Haram terrorism resulted in the speedy passage of anti-terrorism legislation by the Nigerian Parliament in 2011 to support counter-terrorism efforts. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, of 2011 was amended in 2013 to provide for extraterritorial application of the Act and strengthen efforts to cut off terrorism financing. The 2013 amended Act was subsequently repealed and replaced in 2022 with the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022. The legislation paved the way for improved funding of counter-terrorism operations, purchase of military equipment, improving infrastructure, and providing training for security forces. It provides an enhanced framework to prevent, prosecute, and punish acts of terrorism.

### *International Collaboration and Assistance*

Alluding to the belief that Boko Haram terrorism is a human security issue that requires international collaboration, Nigeria made an effort to garner international support and partnership from countries such as the U.S., the European Union, and regional organizations like the African Union. These partners provided technical assistance, training, and resources to help combat Boko Haram. However, the strength and prospect of this assistance remain a subject of further investigation.

### *The Peace Paradox*

Despite the successes recorded by the military in its effort to combat Boko Haram threats, the study reveals a struggle by the authorities to consolidate its successes and maintain sustainable peace. The counter-terrorism approach has not addressed the underlying factors that feed extremism, including poverty, illiteracy, and governance deficit, thereby leaving an opening for the resurgence of extremist ideologies. The complex struggle against Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and neighbouring countries has unveiled a challenging dilemma. The peace paradox revolves around the intricate interplay between pursuing peace and countering terrorism, highlighting the difficulties inherent in addressing security threats while striving for long-term stability and drive for sustainable peace.

To counter the notoriety of Boko Haram over the years, governments adopted a multi-faceted approach, combining military operations with socio-economic initiatives such as the creation of the Northeast Development Commission, and Victims Support Funds (VSF) among others. This is with the view to fostering development and addressing the root causes of extremism. This dual-track strategy forms the basis of the Peace Paradox. On one hand, pursuing military action against Boko Haram is necessary to create a safe and secure environment necessary for the injection of other elements of human security. However, this military response often results in occasional back-clashes common in conflict environments, especially, asymmetric war. This inadvertently exacerbates grievances that terrorists exploit to garner community sympathy and support. Excessive use of force can lead to civilian casualties, displacement, and human rights violations, creating a cycle of anger and resentment that terrorists exploit to recruit new members.

On the other hand, addressing the socio-economic drivers of extremism, such as poverty, lack of education, and governance deficit, is imperative for long-term peace. Investing in education, job creation, and other social services would address the underlying factors that make individuals vulnerable to radicalization. These efforts are usually for long-term measures and it takes time to yield results that may not provide immediate solutions to the pressing security concerns posed by Boko Haram. The paradox lies in the tension between these two approaches. Military actions can disrupt and degrade terrorist networks and reduce threats, but they risk re-introducing a cycle of violence and radicalization. While socio-economic initiatives are essential for long-term stability, they may not yield quick and immediate results needed for peace and stability.

To address the Peace Paradox, an integrated approach, encapsulated in what this study calls the 'whole of society approach', is required to strike a balance between these strategies. This involves integrated efforts to ensure that military actions are conducted with precision to minimize civilian harm and follow up with comprehensive post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Additionally, socio-economic initiatives must be designed and implemented in ways that are responsive to local needs, and put into consideration, the cultural sensitivity of the conflict environment. Additionally, it must be capable of delivering tangible improvements in people's lives. Addressing this paradox requires a

holistic and coordinated effort that acknowledges the complexity of the challenge and the necessity of multifaceted solutions.

### *Human Rights Question*

One aspect of Nigeria's counter-terrorism operations in the North East that negatively affected the overall peace process is the question of alleged human rights violations in the course of combating terrorism. (OO Obolo, personal communication, April 13, 2023) who corroborated E. Anebi (personal communication, July 3, 2023) do not agree that Government forces committed any form of human rights abuse in the theatre of operation:

“Sincerely from the point of military operations against an enemy of the state, I don't see anywhere the Nigerian government's efforts have in any way impinged on the human rights of the people because we are talking of groups that have taken up arms against the State, attacking security forces, killing innocent people, displacing civilian population, I will rather say that it is the activities of BH that is impinging on the rights of people to leave freely. The government forces must protect lives and property. The Nigerian government just tried to defend its territory and protect its citizens. As a professional soldier, I don't see us contravening the rights of the people as being propagated by some of the media outfits. As time goes on they will understand the side of the government.” (O.O. Obolo, personal communication, April 13, 2023).

However, the study agrees that asymmetric warfare could be complex, with the potential to cause violations. What is important is the ability of the national Armed Forces to display professionalism in the discharge of their duty. The allegations of human rights violations linked to counter Boko Haram terrorism operations in Nigeria attracted international condemnation, particularly, from the U.S. Government. Consequent upon this, the U.S., under its national laws, the Leahy Legislation, denied Nigeria every effort to acquire military equipment that originates or is licensed from the U.S., to prosecute the war.

Regarding terrorism, the U.S. has demonstrated leadership in mobilizing other nations globally to combat terrorism, particularly since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on its homeland. (Idahosa & Harrison, 2012; Olurounbi, 2020). The declaration of global war on terror was a swift response by the U.S. to deter any further terrorist incursion on its homeland. Bearing in mind its principles, particularly as it relates to human rights protection in any security operation, the U.S. has continued to impose sanctions on perceived violators of human rights during military operations. It is based on this that the U.S. insisted that Nigeria's counter-terrorism measures must recognize the sanctity of human rights if they must receive international support. Expectedly, this resulted in political disagreement that culminated in a sort of mutual suspicion between the two countries, particularly, in 2014/ 2015.

Consequent to this, the U.S. activated its domestic law (Leahy legislation) on Nigeria on the sale of arms (Kokim, 2015). For instance, the Leahy Law in the U.S., a human rights law, prohibits the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defence from providing military assistance to foreign security forces that have records of gross violations of human rights. The law prevented Nigeria from accessing certain categories of weapons from the U.S., and its allies as well as weapons that are licensed from the U.S. It is instructive to note that some other countries such as Bangladesh, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, and Pakistan were equally listed by the U.S. and sanctioned on ground of human rights violations in their respective military operations (Kokim, 2015). However, pundits believe the application of the Leahy law in the Nigerian context was more political since there were still states with more records of human rights cases such as torture in Yemen committed by Emirati security forces, violations by Iraqi forces in Mosul, and the extrajudicial killings by Police in the Philippine, yet the law was not invoked on them (Mohanty, 2017). Thus, in the Nigerian case, Amnesty reports indicate that those abuses persisted long after the law was partially lifted (Amnesty International, 2018; Reuters, 2020). The U.S. government began to lift the restrictions imposed on Nigeria, in 2015, thereby creating a window for Nigeria to purchase certain categories of offensive weapons from the U.S. beginning shortly after Nigeria had a political transition. This may have provoked suspicion as to the true intention of restricting Nigeria in a period when the country was in dire need of military assistance from its allies to combat Boko Haram terrorism.

Such allegations of human rights abuse, not only tarnish Nigeria's international reputation but also foster mistrust and resentment among local communities, inadvertently fuelling the cycle of radicalization. Nigeria's willingness to improve its human rights record opened the space for continued collaboration with the U.S. in areas of training, intelligence gathering, and sell of arms among others. The struggle against Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and neighbouring countries underscores the complex intersection of security concerns, counter-terrorism efforts, and the imperative to uphold human rights and protect civilians. Accordingly, in response to the cruelty of Boko Haram terrorism, the Nigerian Government deployed various strategies to combat the threat, however, it is important to recognize that any effective and sustainable approach must be grounded in the principles of human rights and civilian protection.

In this light, there is a need to balance security imperative and human rights concerns in any operation irrespective of the operational environment. This is because poor management of human rights could jeopardize the operation and exacerbate the security situation. The fight against terrorism often presents governments with the challenge of striking a balance between ensuring security and safeguarding human rights. In the case of Boko Haram, it is imperative to recognize that observing and respecting human rights not only upholds the dignity of individuals but can also contribute to long-term stability. Disregarding human rights in an operational environment breeds resentment and distrust among communities, potentially fuelling radicalization and recruitment for extremist groups. On the question of the imperative for the protection



of civilians, this study notes that civilians, who are the most vulnerable in conflict situations, usually bear the brunt of Boko Haram's violence. Thus, ensuring their protection requires a multi-faceted approach. Furthermore, the provision of humanitarian aid to affected populations helps mitigate the humanitarian fallout of the conflict, ensuring that basic needs are met even amid violence.

### *Socio-economic Implications of Counter-terrorism Operations*

The fight against Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria has brought about a complex web of socio-economic consequences that have significantly impacted various aspects of the nation's life. These consequences have not only shaped the lives of individuals and communities in the immediate conflict environment but have also impacted the entire region. The Boko Haram crisis accounted for over 2.2 million internally displaced people and 20, 000 deaths since 2009 (Displacement Tracking Matrix, 2019). Again, Boko Haram's increasing soft targets such as schools, kidnapping of school children, and other inhuman acts disrupted the education system and social life of the people in the affected States. Its opposition to Western culture and norms has impacted negatively on the education system in the affected areas. This has disrupted the education of countless children and young adults. The long-term consequence is raising a generation with limited access to quality education.

S/N	Date	No. of Refugees	Countries	No. of IDPs	Source
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
1	11, Feb 2016			70,000 IDPs in Dikwa IDP camp	Punch, 11 Feb 2016
2	2013 - Jan 20, 2015	About 1 000 000 out of which 25,000 moved to Cameroon alone	Cameroon, Niger & Chad		Reuters of Jan 20, 2015
3	6 Oct 2015			19,000 IDPs	Punch 6, 2015
4	Jan 2015	About 13,000 flee from Baga in Borno state alone	Isolated island in the Lake Chad area		Reported by IOM
5	5 March 2015	16,000 flee to Cameroon bringing the total no. in Cameroon to 66,000	Cameroon		Punch, Mar 5, 2015
6	14 April 2015	About 800,000 children alone fled their homes while about 14,000 killed since the BH attacks started in 2009	Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, and within Nigeria		Vanguard 14 April 2015

7	Jul 7, 2015			Nigeria, 3 <sup>rd</sup> highest no.of IDPs	The leadership of 7 July 2015
8	19 Jun 2015	As of June 19, 2015, about 200,000 Nigerian refugees	Chad Cameroun and Niger	1.5 million IDPs in Nigeria	NCFRMI
9	1 July 2015			120,000 IDPs in 22 LGAs of Borno state	NAN, Daily Trust
10	May 2013 - Dec 2014	87,000 out of which 25,000 were children	Niger		News 23

Figure 1: Boko Haram-induced displacements in Nigeria from May 2014. Source: monitored and compiled by the Researcher.

This poses multifaceted challenges that require a holistic approach and calculated strategic intervention. For instance, the crisis disrupted the social and economic livelihood of the people, creating food insecurity and other humanitarian crises. The resultant humanitarian crisis demands robust efforts to provide adequate assistance, resettlement, and psychosocial support to the displaced individuals and families. The conflict has further weakened local economies by disrupting agricultural activities, trade routes, and markets. Additionally, businesses have been forced to close, and foreign investments have dwindled due to security concerns. The resulting economic instability has far-reaching implications, including unemployment, poverty, and reduced economic growth.

Addressing the psychological trauma associated with the experiences of many families in the affected States is crucial not only for the well-being of affected individuals but also for fostering social cohesion and stability. This came as a result of constant threats of violence and other brutal experiences. Again, there is increased tension among various ethnic and religious groups as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. For instance, non-indigenes and Christian communities affected by the crisis would easily ascribe religious and ethnic interpretations to the crisis, thereby inhibiting social cohesion. Rebuilding social cohesion and trust among diverse groups is essential for long-term peace and stability.

At the national level, the crisis has depleted the national treasury. For instance, in January 2023, Former President Muhammadu Buhari mentioned that his government spent over \$1bn in weaponry to recover territories from Boko Haram (Aworinde, 2023). Aside from efforts at rebuilding damaged infrastructures and essential facilities destroyed by Boko Haram, overall processes of counter-terrorism and insurgency operations have proven to be very expensive. This posed a great challenge to the nation with existing economic challenges. Resources that would have been put in other critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure, are being reallocated to counter-

terrorism. Balancing the urgent need for security with broader socio-economic development remains a challenge.

Another critical implication, but sparingly discussed issue in the Boko Haram crisis is the weaponization of gender-based violence by Boko Haram. Its actions have disproportionately affected women and girls, who have been subjected to abduction, sexual violence, and forced marriages, thereby creating a web of mental insecurity in them. Addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equity through the application of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (SC/RES/1325) must be integral to the recovery process. Nigeria is a signatory to this landmark resolution and has been taking steps to domesticate it at the national level. Navigating the complex socio-economic consequences of countering Boko Haram terrorism requires a holistic approach that combines security measures with targeted interventions in education, healthcare, job creation, and community reconciliation. By addressing these challenges, Nigeria can move closer to, not only defeating terrorism but also building a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous society.

### *Operation Safe Corridor in Retrospect*

The study reveals a lack of comprehensive deradicalization and reintegration programmes for former Boko Haram fighters, and limited support for victims' rehabilitation. This gap hinders the achievement of sustainable peace. Post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation require careful planning, collaboration, and dedication to restore stability, rebuild infrastructure, address social and economic disparities, and ultimately pave the way for lasting peace. One notable initiative of the government that seeks to address the issue of reconstruction and rehabilitation of the affected communities, is the "Operation Safe Corridor," which is a programme designed to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants and displaced persons into society while promoting stability and development (D. Abdullahi, personal communication, May 31, 2023).

As of May 2023, about 2,167 ex-Boko haram members have passed through the Nigerian government's rehabilitation programme under the Operation Safe Corridor. Out of the 2,167 people that graduated from the programme, 2,140 were Nigerians and 27 foreigners from Cameroun, Chad and Niger, indicating that the crisis has grown beyond local terrorism. OPSC has the support of both national and international partners such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Swiss Embassy among others (Vanguard News Online (May 12, 2023).

Operation Safe Corridor as an initiative of the government, recognises that individuals who have participated in armed conflict, often against their will or due to coercive circumstances, must be reintegrated into society as part of the conflict resolution spectrum. The programme typically involves a multi-faceted approach that involves demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation, vocational training, psychosocial support, and education (D. Abdullahi, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Its

main objective is to create a safe and conducive environment for participants to transition from a life of conflict to that of stability and development. Its key components include demobilization and disarmament of former combatants; rehabilitation and counselling of former combatants who have been exposed to trauma, violence, and psychological stress during their time in conflict; vocational training and education for participants with practical skills and offer them opportunities to develop employable skills, fostering self-reliance and reducing the likelihood of returning to conflict; civic education and social reintegration for participants to help them understand human rights, citizenship, and peaceful coexistence; community reconciliation to facilitate the acceptance of former combatants by their communities, and address grievances, promote understanding, and rebuild trust between participants and the broader community.

However, Abdullahi notes that despite the laudable objectives of the Operation, as well as similar initiatives set out to achieve as part of post-conflict recovery, it has faced several challenges. This includes: funding limitations, ensuring long-term sustainability, and addressing deeply ingrained societal divisions. Additionally, the success of these programmes depends on effective collaboration among all actors such as governments, international organizations, NGOs, and local communities (D. Abdullahi, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Unlike the Niger Delta amnesty programme that was largely successful, Operation Safe Corridor targets Boko Haram fighters and appears to ignore the leaders. Capturing the leaders of Boko Haram in the programme through mutually accepted terms and conditions, would, just like the case of the Niger Delta amnesty, bring the real fighters to naturally submit and accept any peace initiative provided their leaders have accepted same. Contrary to this, the Operation has led to the surrender of a large number of former Boko Haram members who accepted the peace initiative, yet the fight has persisted. This could mean that there may be some economic or greener pasture seekers among those who embraced the programme, whose role in the crisis may not be strong enough to make any significant impact on the peace effort.

### *Major Findings*

The study notes that while Nigeria's military campaign against Boko Haram has recorded considerable success, the peacebuilding process remains fraught with challenges. Key among these limitations are the issues of human rights concerns, socio-economic consequences of the conflict, and inadequate post-conflict initiatives. Accordingly, the following are major findings emanating from the study:

- i. The Nigerian government's counter-terrorism operations remain heavily kinetic. The Nigerian government's initial response focused heavily on a militarized approach to counter Boko Haram terrorism. While this approach yielded significant successes in degrading the group's capabilities and regaining territories it initially controlled, it failed to address the root causes that fueled the rise of

Boko Haram, such as socio-economic inequality, political corruption, and governance deficit.

- ii. The military campaign against Boko Haram came with allegations of human rights abuses, both from the Boko Haram and the government security forces, leading to grievances among local populations. This has the prospect of undermining public trust in the government, which the terrorists could catch on to recruit new members.
- iii. Ineffective coordination among various security agencies and government bodies hindered the overall effectiveness of the counter-terrorism efforts. The lack of information sharing, coordination, and cooperation among agencies involved in the operation resulted in a disjointed approach that allowed Boko Haram to exploit gaps in security measures.
- iv. The conflict resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, displacing millions of people internally and externally and causing widespread suffering among civilians. The lack of adequate humanitarian support further eroded trust in its ability to protect and care for its citizens.
- v. Boko Haram's tactics of targeting soft targets such as educational institutions resulted in the disruption of the education system for teeming school children, particularly girls in North East Nigeria. This has implications, particularly, in access to educational opportunities and increased vulnerability.
- vi. The establishment of "Operation Safe Corridor" and other peacebuilding initiatives of the government failed to address the deep-rooted socio-economic challenges that hitherto created an enabling environment for the crisis to grow. These programmes faced challenges in implementation and lacked long-term sustainability. Reintegration efforts often fell short of local acceptability due to insufficient job opportunities and social stigma.

### *Recommendations*

Based on these findings, the study recommends as follows:

1. The Nigerian government, through the Ministry of Defence and Defence Headquarters should work to ensure that counter-terrorism operations are conducted within the boundaries of domestic and international legal frameworks, particularly as it applies to the laws of Armed Conflict in the conduct of internal security operations. There is a need to integrate human rights, and civilian protection as part of pre-deployment training for the military.
2. The Nigerian government should pursue a programme aimed at comprehensive and inclusive socio-economic development of the affected region/ states/ local governments. This could be done by addressing the underlying issues such as

poverty, unemployment, lack of education, and basic infrastructure that hitherto created a gap.

3. Post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation endeavour of the government should prioritize community engagement to foster stronger connections between communities and local security forces. This approach can help build trust, gather valuable intelligence, and promote a sense of local ownership in the maintenance of peace and security.
4. As part of counter terrorism strategy, the Nigerian government, through the relevant agencies should develop and strengthen its strategic communication campaign to counter Boko Haram terrorist narratives and its social media dominance and online recruitment efforts.
5. The government's effort to install a comprehensive peacebuilding mechanism should prioritize the inclusion of women in every conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding endeavour. This is to close the gender gap and address women-specific challenges in conflict environments.
6. The Nigerian government should embark on a comprehensive judicial and security sector reform to pursue justice and accountability. This is crucial in ensuring that victims of Boko Haram's crisis receive timely redress

### *Conclusion*

The Nigerian government's counter-terrorism approach has been multifaceted, with recorded successes on the side of government forces against Boko Haram. This study highlighted the areas of success by government forces in the Boko Haram counter operations, though it is yet to secure a lasting peace. The Nigerian military deployed a joint task force at national and regional levels which was instrumental in degrading the operational capabilities of Boko Haram, but yet to achieve the desired peace. The post-conflict phase revealed the fragility of peacebuilding efforts, as challenges persisted in the form of governance gaps, corruption, and the inability to address underlying socio-economic disparities. Moreover, the lack of effective collaboration between government agencies, international actors, and local communities hindered the establishment of a comprehensive and inclusive peace framework.

It is important to recognize that while defeating terrorism is crucial to having peace and security, ensuring lasting peace requires a concerted and sustained commitment to addressing the underlying drivers of the conflict. A more holistic counter-terrorism approach that addresses underlying causes of extremism, respect for human rights, and a focus on post-conflict initiatives is crucial if the government must achieve sustainable peace.



### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Dr. Ugwumba Egbuta is a double Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Research and Studies, NDC Nigeria as well as the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA). He is a consultant, trainer & facilitator. He coordinates PoC activities NDC. Special interest in foreign policy analysis, child protection, conflict management, humanitarian intervention and gender in conflict. Currently working on Terrorism, humanitarian intervention & interstate relations.

### References

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2013). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity, and poverty*. London: Profile Books.
- Anning, K. (2015). Nigeria: countering Boko Haram. In M. J. Williams & D. J. Ball (Eds.), *Counter-terrorism: From the Cold War to the war on terror* (Vol. 2, pp. 241-258). I.B. Tauris.
- Atta, A. B. (2019). Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Historical perspectives, drivers, and responses. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(6), 757-771. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618801935>.
- Aworinde, O. (2023). "Over \$1bn Spent On Weaponry To Recover Territories From Boko Haram – Buhari". <https://www.channelstv.com/2023/01/18/over-1bn-spent-on-weaponry-to-recover-territories-from-boko-haram-buhari/>
- Collier, P. (2007). *The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Dulin, A., & Patiño, J. (2019). Countering Boko Haram's violence: A deterrence–backlash perspective. *Armed Forces & Society*, 45(4), 723–745. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48609107>
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2022). Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022 ("TPA 2022") which repealed the former anti-terrorism legislation - Terrorism (Prevention) Act No. 10, 2011 - and amended in 2013.

- Fukuyama, F. (2014). *Political order and political decay: From the industrial revolution to the globalization of democracy*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
- Higate, P., & Kamungi, P. (Eds.). (2018). *Critical perspectives on counter-terrorism*. Routledge.
- Ibrahim, A. (2018). Countering terrorism in Nigeria: An appraisal of the Boko Haram crisis. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 36(2), 277-295. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2017.1362089>
- Idahosa, O., & Harrison, C. A. (2012). The United States and Nigerian relations: Diplomatic row over official terrorist label. *Global Journal of Social Sciences*, 11(1). Retrieved from [www.globalJournalseries.com](http://www.globalJournalseries.com).
- Kolawole, M. (2018). The dynamics of counter-terrorism in Nigeria: Between state and Non-state actors. *Africa Spectrum*, 53(1), 67-87.
- Lynn, Z. (2004). *The law of counterterrorism*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Obasi, R. A. (2020). Boko Haram terrorism and Nigeria's security dilemma. *African Security Review*, 29(3), 280-293. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1782379>
- Okpara, U. T., & Onapajo, H. (Eds.). (2020). *Boko Haram: security considerations and the rise of an African Islamist Movement*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Olurounbi, R. (2020). Nigeria – USA: Will Biden's win reset relations with Abuja? *The Africa Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.theafricareport.com/49641>
- Onuoha, F. (2013). Countering Boko Haram in Nigeria. *African Security*, 6(3-4), 175-194.
- Smith, M. B. (2017). Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency in Nigeria: Analyzing the Boko Haram insurgency. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29(6), 1047-1066. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1293864>
- Ukiwo, U. (2015). Boko Haram: The anatomy of a crisis. *Review of African Political Economy*, 42(143), 479-484.
- United Nations. (2020). Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. Author.
- Usman, M. A., & Adejoh, S. O. (2019). The challenges of counterterrorism in Nigeria: Boko Haram insurgency as a case study. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 12(2), 51-72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.12.2.1717>

Vanguard News online (May 12, 2023). 2,167 repentant Boko Haram graduates from FG's programme – Official. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/05/2167-repentant-boko-haram-graduate-from-fgs-programme-official/>

Woolcock, M. (1998). Social capital and economic development: Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. *Theory and Society* 27 (2), 151-208.

Yaqub, N. (2018). Understanding Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. *Strategic Analysis*, 42(5), 357-370. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2018.1470667>

#### List of Persons Interviewed by the Researcher

S/N	Title/ Rank	Name	Organisation	Appointment	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
1	Dr	Nna-Emeka OKEREKE	National Defence College Abuja	CRF/Research Coordinator	Abuja	24/03/23
2	Prof	Yusufu Zoaka Ali	University of Abuja	Prof of Policy Analysis	Abuja	27/03/23
3		Anonymous	Nigeria Air Forces		Abuja	30/03/23
4	Prof	Otoabasi Akpan	Akwa Ibom State University	Prof of History of Ideas/ Int'l Security	Abuja	5/04/23
5	Brig Gen	OO Obolo	Nigerian Army	Director Coordination	Abuja	13/04/23
6		Anonymous	National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC-ONSA)		Abuja	28/04/23
7	Air Cdre (Dr)	Dr Darlington ABDULLAHI	National Defence College	President, AANDC/ Former Director, Nat Military Strategy	Abuja	31/05/23
8	Air Vice Marshal	Emmanuel ANEBI (Rtd)	Nigerian Air Force	Former Air Task Force Commander, Op Lafia Dole	Abuja	3/07/23

## From GIA to the Islamic State (IS): De-radicalization as countering violent extremism strategy in Algeria<sup>1</sup>

Lotfi Sour<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

Terrorism is not new to Algeria, it had a long history, which dating back to the early 80'. In fact, Islamic extremism in Algeria have indeed existed before the cancellation of the electoral process at the beginning of 1992. Following a series of deadly domestic terrorist attacks in 1990s, the Algerian government started developing robust counterterrorism and deradicalization methods comprising both military and non-military measures (commonly known as hard and soft approaches), to de-radicalize terrorists and insurgents across the country. Besides traditional security, military, and law-enforcement attempts to capture, jail, or eliminate terrorists, the Algerian government also launched a parallel strategy to combat the ideological justifications for violent radicalism and extremism within Algeria including a truce, a reconciliation process, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programs by engaging non-state actors such as civil society, and zawiyyas, as well as investing in development. Today, Algeria, with its combination of a soft and hard approach, provides a successful example of how to neutralize terrorism after having defeated various terrorist groups between 1993 and 2003 and overseen a transition from civil war to peace since then. This paper outlines the Algerian government's attempts, approaches, and initiatives on combating terrorism and de-radicalization as well as analyses their strengths and limitations. It sketches how the Algerian government, especially since mid-90', dealt, engaged, overcame, and resolves issues and problems of terrorism and extremism. The purpose of the paper is present facts and information about the Algerian experience at fighting terrorism and Algeria's long struggle in the combat of extremist and terrorist threats. The paper also assesses and analyses the effectiveness and ineffectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses of the Algerian successive governments policies and approaches of counterterrorism.

### Keywords:

Algeria;  
Counterterrorism; De-radicalization;  
Extremism;  
Reconciliation;  
Terrorism.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.275>

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Mustapha Stambouli Mascara, Algeria; ORCID: 0000-0001-8783-9340; l.sour@univ-mascara.dz.

## *Introduction*

The phenomenon of terrorism in Algeria has undergone significant transformations, deeply rooted in the country's socio-political and historical context. The turning point came in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the political landscape of Algeria underwent dramatic changes. The introduction of political pluralism and the subsequent electoral success of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in the 1991 elections marked a critical juncture. The government's annulment of the elections and crackdown on the FIS led to a violent backlash, propelling the country into a decade-long civil war known as the "Black Decade." During this period, the Islamic movement fragmented, with some factions resorting to violent extremism as a means of achieving their goals. Groups such as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and later the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) engaged in brutal campaigns of terror against the state and civilians. This era was characterized by widespread atrocities, human rights violations, and a profound impact on Algerian society. Regionally, the Political unrest since the Arab spring and onward in the North Africa and the Sahel and its various implications created new security challenges, and shortcomings which made Algeria vulnerable to terrorist threats. Simultaneously, the various dimensions of each of these environments created a new pattern of terrorism, new violent groups, and a change in the geopolitics of the threat.

Due to its extensive history of animosity and confrontations with terrorist groups, Algeria has gained significant expertise in handling terrorism threats. This expertise underpins the Algerian strategy of deradicalization, which targets a comprehensive range of conditions, including political, economic, social, religious, security, and human rights aspects.

Central to this strategy is a multidimensional approach that integrates preventive, proactive, and reactive measures. Algeria's preventive measures focus on addressing the root causes of radicalization, such as socio-economic disparities, political disenfranchisement, and social alienation. By investing in education, economic development, and social cohesion programs, the government aims to create a more resilient society less susceptible to extremist ideologies. Proactive initiatives include robust intelligence and security operations that anticipate and neutralize potential threats before they materialize, thereby reducing the risk of terrorist activities. Furthermore, Algeria's reactive measures ensure a swift and effective response to terrorist incidents, minimizing their impact and preventing further escalation. The incorporation of religious reforms, emphasizing moderation and countering extremist narratives, has also played a crucial role in the country's strategy. Supported by substantial financial and logistical resources, these efforts have collectively contributed to Algeria's ability to remain largely free from major terrorist attacks in recent years. This paper delves into the intricacies of Algeria's deradicalization strategy, examining its components and effectiveness in fostering a secure and stable environment.

In this sense, out of the numerous questions that could arise, this paper focuses on the following:

Is terrorism in Algeria a local or global phenomenon or a mixture of the two? Is terrorism in the country a side effect or the product of international/transnational terrorism or home extremism?

What are the Algerian government's strategies and tactics in combating terrorism? What are the types of counterterrorism approaches and programs or anti-terrorism policies that the Algerian government used to fight terrorist threats since the early nineties until recently? Are the government's strategies, tactics, approaches, and programs effective, productive, and successful in combating terrorism and radicalism? What are the limitations and weaknesses of the counterterrorism approaches?

How can the Algerian counterterrorism expertise contribute to refining counterterrorism strategies and approaches regionally and internationally?

### *Historical review of violent extremism in Algeria*

Despite the media coverage that terrorist groups in Algeria received starting from the winter of 1992, their history is not linked solely to this period. Numerous precedents clearly demonstrate that some Islamist factions have harboured a persistent desire to use armed violence and sabotage as political and practical means to achieve their ideologically driven agendas. (Layachi, 2004)

Armed Islamist groups are not a novelty in post-colonial Algeria. (Sour, 2016) The first instance of armed insurgency was the MIA (Mouvement Islamique Armé) from 1982 to 1987, led by Bouyali Mustapha until his death on February 3, 1987. Its operations were centred in Algiers and the surrounding region of Blida, with its most notorious action being the 1985 attack on the police school in Soumaa, which resulted in one policeman's death. The MIA is considered the precursor of Islamic radicalism in Algeria. (Berkouk, 1998)

Algeria's armed groups are ideologically, politically, and institutionally diverse. Despite efforts by some leaders to unite them, such as the Congress for Unity in May 1994, they remain numerous. The two most prominent groups are the GIA (Groupe Islamique Armé) and the AIS (Armée Islamique du Salut). The GIA is known for its sensationalist actions, (Friend, 2021) while the AIS, organized as a nationwide "army" and aligned with the historical leadership of the FIS (Abbassi Madani and Ali Belhadj), is the best-equipped and centrally controlled, led by Madani Mezrag. (Ashour, 2008) Created in spring 1994 by the FIS's internal leadership to avoid being led into a "fight to the death" by GIA extremists, the AIS targets security forces, condemns civilian and foreign killings, and had an estimated strength of 12,000-15,000 in November 1995. (Hafez, 2000) AIS and all the groups that are in no way affiliated to the GIA have ceased all their "military" activities after the call for a cease-fire that was initiated by the AIS after its approval by both the internal and external leaderships of the FIS. This cease-fire (effective from 1 October 1997) was seen by these groups as the best strategy for distancing themselves from the bloodshed. (Bedjaoui, et al., 1999)

The GIA, established in 1993 due to regime oppression and political disenchantment, represents a radical shift from peaceful politics to terrorism, initially gaining notoriety





for assassinating foreigners. By 1995, it comprised 2,000-4,000 armed insurgents but weakened after internal splits and the 1996 neutralization of its leader, Djamel Zitouni. (Sour, 2018)

During the years 1994 and 1995, this group, which had bolstered its ranks with dozens of young men joining the armed struggle, adopted strategies aimed at exhausting the adversary and inflicting maximum possible damage. (Martinez, 2001) Subsequently, it escalated its violence beyond targeting police, gendarmes, and soldiers to include intellectuals, university professors, doctors, journalists, and foreign nationals. The group then adopted a brutal criminal approach characterized by mass massacres affecting all segments of society, including children, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilians who were not involved in the armed confrontation. (Roberts, 2003) Until mid-1995, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) dominated the bloody landscape, experimenting with every tool of killing, destruction, and terrorism, adopting a scorched earth policy. (Le Sueur, 2010) The severe blows dealt by the army further exacerbated the fragmentation and division that characterized the armed struggle scene afterward, leading to the formation of other groups such as the Islamic Movement for Preaching and Jihad (MIPD), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), and the Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad (LIDD). (ICG, 2004)

The GIA fractured along doctrinal lines into Salafists (internationalists) and Djaza'rites (Algerianists). Key factions include the group led by Antar Zouabri (Abou Talha) and the "Front for Preaching and Jihad" led by Mustapha Kertali, comprising smaller units following Algerianist ideology. (Pennell, 2019) The primary goal of the GIA was the establishment of an Islamic state in Algeria. By 1998, Hassan Hattab, a former GIA regional commander, established the GSPC. (Botha, 2008) The split was driven by ideological and strategic differences. Hattab and his followers opposed the GIA's indiscriminate violence against civilians, which they believed was counterproductive and morally unjustifiable. They sought to adopt a more focused approach, targeting the Algerian state and security forces while attempting to garner support from the local population and international jihadist networks. (Gunaratna, 2002)

At the onset of the first decade of the twenty-first century, some of these groups strengthened their ties with international jihadists and integrated into transnational organizations. Specifically, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) formally linked its relationship with al-Qaeda in September 2006 and, in January 2007, rebranded itself as "al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM). By the time the GSPC officially transformed into Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the concept of global jihad in Algeria had effectively collapsed. (Nomikos & Burweila, 2008) Despite significant advances into the Sahara that alarmed U.S. policymakers, these activities were largely rooted in kidnappings for ransom and contraband trafficking rather than genuine global jihad efforts. (Boudali, 2007)

Post-9/11, the United States has viewed Algeria as a pivotal ally in the fight against terrorism. (Zoubir, 2002) The international prominence of AQIM lent credibility to Algeria's longstanding struggles, prompting the West to recognize Algeria's expertise in

countering transnational movements. This recognition underscored the necessity of addressing such movements through a coordinated international framework, grounded in a consensual and unambiguous legal definition of terrorism, free from religious or cultural biases. (Berkouk, 2009) The transition of terrorist activities in Algeria from a national to a regional level, and their integration into an international project, whereby remnants of armed groups have internationalized their affiliations and operated under the umbrellas of international organizations and movements, has reshaped the global terrorism landscape. This has allowed the progression of terrorist activities and their agendas to be fuelled by a new horizon and to operate according to more complex strategies and mechanisms. (Filiu, 2009) Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Algeria has gained significant expertise in dealing with and managing this new form of terrorism, thanks to its experience with previous phases of armed activity, which remained confined to a few mountainous pockets in the north. This activity has since moved to a new topography in the south, expanding its operations across a vast desert area that encompasses all the Sahel countries. (Larémont, 2011)

The January 2013 attack on the In-Aménas gas facility in south eastern Algeria, bordering with Libya, starkly highlighted the persistent threat posed by radical groups to regional stability. Following the attack, there was a comprehensive overhaul of the country's security strategy. This process culminated in the reorganization of the intelligence agency that was primarily tasked with counterterrorism efforts. Algeria's strategy has thus emphasized increased regional cooperation, deemed essential for combating Islamist groups and criminal networks operating within Algeria and across the broader region. (Gaub, 2015)

AQIM, although weakened, maintained its presence in Algeria through small-scale attacks and attempts to rebuild its networks. Splinter groups, such as Jund al-Khilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate), emerged during this period. Jund al-Khilafah pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) in 2014, marking a significant development in the jihadist landscape in Algeria. The establishment of IS's so-called caliphate in 2014 inspired some Algerian militants to shift their allegiance from AQIM to IS. Jund al Khilafah became the most prominent IS-affiliated group in Algeria, though it never achieved the same level of operational capacity as AQIM. (Krzysztof, 2018) The Islamic State's "Wilayat Jazair," Algeria Province (ISAP) was the first African Islamic State cell to emerge, but was also one that fizzled out quite quickly. ISAP was established by Abdelmalek Gouri, a former senior figure in AQIM, who pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi in September 2014; this pledge was officially accepted two months later. ISAP gained significant attention in 2014 for capturing and beheading French hiker Hervé Gourdel, releasing a video of the execution as retaliation for France's airstrikes in Iraq. (Bencherif, 2017)

In this context, IS has leveraged existing extremist networks to establish a foothold, although it faces competition from other jihadist groups. (Gartenstein-Ross, et al., 2017) Since then, the group has drawn members from at least four other AQIM splinter factions and has carried out attacks in Jijel, Constantine, Tiaret, the outskirts of Algiers,

Skikda, and Annaba, with the most recent attack taking place in August 2017. (Lounnas, 2018) It also succeeded in running a short-lived outpost in Jabel Ouahch, overlooking the city of Constantine in north-eastern Algeria, from which it launched several assassinations, IED ambushes and at least one (failed) suicide bombing. However, throughout the course of ISAP's existence, it has faced sustained and often intense pressure from Algerian security forces, on one hand, and antagonistic elements of AQIM, on the other, limiting its growth. When Gouri killed in 2014, The New York Times, referencing anonymous sources, estimated that ISAP had a membership of fewer than 30 fighters. (Zerdoumi, 2014)

Nonetheless, the elimination of its leader, Gouri, by Algerian security forces following Gourdel's death, likely played a significant role in the group's subsequent decline. In 2015, Algerian forces further weakened the organization by eliminating 21 additional ISAP members, thereby neutralizing a considerable portion of an already diminishing group. Presently, experts in the field question whether ISAP's presence is substantial enough to merit serious discussion. Consequently, it can be inferred that the active presence of Islamic State fighters in Algeria is minimal, with estimates suggesting fewer than 25 fighters, if any. The effective neutralization of key terrorist leaders and the dismantling of their networks have significantly hindered the ability of groups like the Islamic State to establish a strong foothold in Algeria. Moreover, Algeria's approach has had a deterrent effect, discouraging the proliferation of extremist ideologies and movements across its borders, thereby contributing to regional stability. (International Crisis Group, 2017) Nevertheless, persistent socio-economic issues and political instability continue to pose challenges, underlining the need for sustained and multifaceted strategies to ensure long-term regional security.

### *Algerian Approaches to de-radicalization*

Generally speaking, Algeria's response to the violent extremism that plagued the nation during the 1990s civil war prompted a robust and comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy. Key legislative measures include the 1992 Anti-Terrorism Law, which granted sweeping powers to security forces, and subsequent amendments to adapt to emerging threats in an attempt to strike a balance between security and human rights. This approach takes into consideration criticisms from international human rights organizations regarding alleged abuses and emphasizes the need for judicial oversight. (SPS, 2016)

### *The Legal and Legislative Framework for Preventing and Combating Terrorism*

In fact, the legislative framework has historically suffered from a clear gap regarding terrorism as a phenomenon that needs to be combated and prevented. This gap was addressed by the promulgation of Legislative Decree No. 92-03 (issued on September 30, 1992) concerning the fight against sabotage and terrorism. Article 1 of this decree

defines sabotage and terrorism as "any offense aimed at the security of the state, territorial integrity, the stability of institutions, and their normal functioning through any act with the following purposes: spreading terror among the population, creating an atmosphere of insecurity through attacks on individuals, endangering their lives, freedoms, or security, or damaging their properties." (JORA, 1992)

The decree also addresses various forms of terrorism such as obstructing traffic or freedom of movement on public roads and squares, attacks on the environment, means of communication and transportation, public and private properties, and occupying or seizing them without legal justification. Furthermore, it includes attacking symbols of the Republic, obstructing the functioning of public institutions, attacking their personnel or properties, and hindering the enforcement of laws and regulations. (JORA, 1992)

The Legislative Decree No. 93-05 (dated April 19, 1993), which amends and supplements Decree No. 92-03 on combating sabotage and terrorism, retains this definition. (JORA, 1993) It was incorporated into Article 87 bis of the Penal Code, following Presidential Decree No. 95-11 (issued on February 25, 1995) (JORA, 1995), which amended and supplemented Decree No. 66-156 (dated June 8, 1966) concerning the Penal Code. (JORA, 1966)

Accordingly, the Algerian legislator aimed through these three decrees to adapt the criminal reality to the new and complex nature of terrorism as a national and transnational scourge. These provisions clearly demonstrate that Algerian legislation regarding the fight against terrorism and sabotage combines prevention, deterrence, and repression of all foundational activities of terrorism. This includes supporting, justifying, promoting, or concealing such activities, acknowledging that terrorism is a transnational phenomenon requiring international and regional cooperation, while insisting on punishing any Algerian involved in such acts. (Bras, 2007)

To enforce the legislative frameworks for terrorism and sabotage, the Algerian legislator reconstructed the rules and mechanisms for criminalizing terrorist and sabotage activities while safeguarding the rights of defendants in cases brought before Algerian courts. Law No. 01-08 (issued on June 26, 2001), which amended and supplemented Presidential Decree No. 66-155 (dated June 8, 1966) concerning the Code of Criminal Procedure, serves as the new reference text for suppressing terrorist acts. (JORA, 1966)

As discussed earlier, it becomes evident that the legislative provisions on preventing and combating terrorism were initially limited, prompting the introduction and amendment of new laws to address the dynamic, complex, and multifaceted nature of terrorism. Despite the repressive nature of the punitive framework for terrorism, and the effectiveness of the security approach in mitigating the escalation of terrorist phenomena in Algeria and maintaining the state's institutions, the cost was substantial at human, material, and political levels. Consequently, starting in 1995, the public authorities-initiated laws aimed at delegitimizing terrorist groups religiously, removing their political cover, which they used to justify their actions since the electoral process was halted in 1992. This approach sought to garner national support for gradual and progressive initiatives based on a comprehensive equation combining religious

repentance, legal amnesty, and political reconciliation. Thus, the approach transitioned from purely security-based to a combined security-political strategy. (Bahar, 2021)

### *Algerian context of deradicalization program: Presidential Amnesty Program PAP*

Among the legal frameworks implemented by the public authorities starting in 1995 to address the security and political challenges posed by the escalating brutality of terrorism, a new perspective was required. This perspective integrated social, religious, political, legal, and practical dimensions to dismantle terrorist groups and their support networks. By offering partial incentives for members to renounce criminal and destructive acts, three main initiatives can be identified:

Rahma Law (Clemency Law);

The civil concord law (Civil Harmony law);

The charter for Peace and National Reconciliation.

These will be analysed in terms of their scope and content, as well as how these legal instruments fit into the broader context of Algeria's counter-terrorism policies, aiming to address the root causes of extremism through a combination of legal, social, and political strategies.

#### *Rahma Law (clemency law)*

The clemency measures were established by Presidential Order No. 95-12 (issued on 25-02-1995) and were based on Article 87 bis 3 of the Penal Code, which grants amnesty to those involved unless they have killed someone, caused permanent disability, or used explosives to harm people or property. (JORA, 1995)

This law primarily addressed individuals who joined terrorist groups that had deviated from the state's public order, using religion to declare the state and society as infidels and wage war against them. The law viewed terrorists as mercenaries and criminals but also as misguided individuals who had strayed from the path of law, truth, and religion. They were called to repent to God and benefit from the Clemency Measures, which provided an opportunity for exemption from legal prosecution, provided they did not commit blood crimes, honor crimes, or bombings, on the condition of declaring final repentance and renouncing the crimes they were involved in. Those who handed over weapons and explosives voluntarily to the relevant administrative and security authorities were also eligible for these measures. (Boumghar, 2015)

The key provisions of the Clemency Law included:

- Reducing the death sentence to 15-20 years imprisonment.
- Reducing life imprisonment to 10-15 years.

- In other cases, reducing the penalty by half as specified in Article 4 of the law.

Despite being an exceptional law, beneficiaries of the Clemency Measures were still subject to the constitutional amnesty provisions (Article 5).

To facilitate the benefit from these measures, the Algerian legislator set forth special procedures as outlined in Articles 6 and 7, summarized as follows:

- Voluntary appearance of those involved in terrorist activities before the judiciary or administrative, security, or military authorities to surrender and receive a receipt for their appearance.
- Referral to criminal courts after verifying their mental and psychological health through medical examination. (JORA, 1995)

These measures not only encouraged numerous terrorists to abandon their criminal activities and submit to the law but also effectively removed the political cover from these groups, especially after the Islamic Salvation Army (the military wing of the dissolved Islamic Salvation Front) announced the cessation of its terrorist operations starting from October 1, 1997. This development deprived the groups, which previously justified violence due to the annulment of the legislative election results of December 26, 1991, of a crucial mobilizing argument. (McDougall, 2017)

The law's implementation faced various challenges, including ensuring the credibility of the process and balancing justice with forgiveness. Despite these hurdles, the clemency law contributed to a decrease in terrorist activities and facilitated the demobilization of numerous combatants. It underscored the importance of legal frameworks that blend punitive and restorative justice measures, promoting long-term stability and peace in Algeria. However, despite the positive outcomes achieved by this law, it was insufficient due to the increasing extremism and radicalization of terrorist groups that refused to benefit from its provisions. (Martinez, Luis, & Entelis John, 2000) These groups committed heinous massacres, sparing neither women, children, men, nor the elderly, including infants and fetuses. Such brutality was unprecedented in human history, surpassing even the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. (McDougall, 2017) In response to this internal crisis, Abdelaziz Bouteflika proposed in his political program as a candidate for the early presidential elections of April 1999 to elevate the clemency measures to a Civil Concord policy, which was implemented immediately after he took office. (MacQueen, 2009)

### *Civil Concord Policy CCP*

President Bouteflika, right after taking the constitutional oath, outlined the Civil Concord policy in his speeches, officially announcing his plan to adopt a policy of conciliatory for armed individuals willing to repent in a speech to the nation on May 29, 1999. (Maamri, 2010) This policy and the Civil Concord Law were developed starting from the Presidential statement on June 6, 1999, which tasked the government



with preparing this project and presenting it to the Parliament for discussion before it was overwhelmingly approved by the lower house (the National People's Assembly) on July 8, 1999, and the upper house with an absolute majority. (Boumghar, 2015) The Civil Concord Law (No. 99-08) was issued on July 13, 1999, and subsequently put to a public referendum, in line with the President's insistence on granting it political and constitutional legitimacy. (Le Sueur, 2010) The results of the referendum on September 16, 1996, reflected the Algerian people's desire to end the cycle of violence and terrorism, with outcomes comparable to those of the independence referendum on July 3, 1962, with over 98.03% approval. The highest participation rates were in provinces most affected by terrorism, such as Chlef (94.76%), Ain Defla (93.70%), Blida (90.93%), Jijel (91.74%), Médéa (93.55%), and Relizane (90.48%). (JORA, 1999) Most of these provinces recorded positive vote rates exceeding 99%, indicating that the residents, including the families of terrorism victims and terrorists, not only participated massively in the referendum but also voted in favor of the Civil Concord initiative. (Ammar, 2018) (Stora, 2001) By the end of 1999 about 80% of the insurgents had surrendered. (Cordesman, 2001)

This broad citizen response was due to the hopes raised by the Civil Concord policy to end the suffering of Algerians. The Civil Concord Law provided measures for those involved in terrorist acts, categorized into three types:

- A. Exemption from Prosecution: This extended the provisions of the Clemency Law, adhering to the principle of the more lenient law for the accused. This included those who belonged to terrorist groups but did not commit blood crimes or honour crimes and publicly declared their repentance (Article 3 of the Civil Concord Law). It also included those who possessed weapons and explosives and surrendered them to the public authorities according to Article 4 of the same law. (Ruedy, 2005) The beneficiaries of these measures had to adhere to a set of commitments according to Article 5 of the law, meaning the reduction of the sentence was accompanied by the deprivation of certain rights specified in Article 8, paragraph 2, of the Penal Code for ten years from the date of the exemption decision. (JORA, 1999)
- B. Placement under probation measures: These are the second category of measures established by the Civil Concord Law for those involved in terrorist acts, as specified in Articles 06 to 26. Probation here means a temporary delay in prosecution for a specified period ranging from three to ten years to ensure the complete reformation of the person subject to it (Article 6). These measures were a way for the Algerian authorities to express their desire to give those who fought against them a chance to review themselves and repent, proving their sincerity and righteousness before any judgment was passed. It was a new procedure established for the first time by the Algerian legislator, managed by regional probation committees. (Jørgensen, 2000)

The categories eligible for probation measures were divided into two groups as defined in Articles 7 and 8:

- The first category included individuals who previously belonged to terrorist organizations and did not commit or participate in committing crimes leading to death or mass killing, did not use explosives in public places, did not commit rape crimes, and expressed their repentance individually or collectively (Article 7). (JORA, 1999)
- The second category included individuals who previously belonged to terrorist organizations, committed individual murders and rapes but did not commit mass murders or use explosives in public places, and declared their repentance collectively (Article 8). (JORA, 1999)

To benefit from the probation measures, the project set several conditions and procedures:

- Informing the concerned authorities of the cessation of all terrorist or subversive activities individually or collectively before January 13, 2000.
- Voluntarily presenting themselves to the concerned authorities individually or collectively.
- Submitting a statement containing information about the weapons, explosives, and ammunition in their possession, as well as the actions they committed or participated in.
- Surrendering weapons and ammunition to the competent authorities within the deadline of January 13, 2000 (Articles 7 and 8). (JORA, 1999)

C. Sentence Mitigation Measures: These measures are outlined in Articles 27 to 29 of Chapter Four of the law, as exceptional measures that encompass three categories of those involved:

- Individuals who were previously affiliated with terrorist organizations and committed acts of individual murder or rape, who were not permitted to benefit from the deferment system, in accordance with Article 27 of this law. (JORA, 1999)
- Individuals who were previously affiliated with terrorist organizations and committed acts of individual murder or rape, who benefited from deferment measures and successfully completed them, as per Article 28 of this law. (JORA, 1999)
- Individuals who were previously affiliated with terrorist organizations and committed repeated murders, mass killings, or used explosives in public places or frequented areas. (JORA, 1999)

The Civil Concord Law granted the concerned authorities and the probation committees the freedom to apply the measures they deemed necessary and appropriate for the interest of the person subject to them, as well as for public security and order. (Abderrahmane, 2001) The Civil Concord Law emphasized national reconciliation and social stability, offering a legal framework for dialogue and forgiveness amidst a backdrop of pervasive violence and political turmoil. By pardoning certain offenses related to the civil conflict, it sought to foster a climate of peace and national unity, although its implementation and effectiveness have been subject to scrutiny and debate. (Martinez, 1999) The law's provisions included mechanisms for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, aiming to dismantle armed groups and reintegrate their members into civilian life. This legal instrument reflected Algeria's dual approach of stringent security measures alongside efforts towards reconciliation and societal healing, aiming to address the root causes of extremism through legal and social strategies. (Boumghar, 2015)

### *The charter for peace and National Reconciliation CPNR*

Despite the significant results achieved through the Clemency Measures and the Civil Concord policy, which led to the surrender of thousands of terrorists and the dismantling of many terrorist networks, there were still groups that continued their criminal activities. (Arnould, 2007) These were primarily small factions within large organizations like the GSPC and other extremist splinter groups that rejected all forms of reconciliation. Given this persistent threat, the Algerian authorities, under the leadership of President Bouteflika, introduced the National Reconciliation and Peace Initiative to address the remaining challenges. (Joffé, 2008)

This initiative aimed to consolidate the gains from the previous measures, provide additional incentives for terrorists to lay down arms, and promote social cohesion and national unity. It was characterized by a comprehensive approach that included political, economic, and social dimensions, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the problem and the need for a holistic solution. (Tamburini, 2021)

The National Reconciliation and Peace Initiative involved several key components:

- Strengthening the legal framework to provide clearer guidelines and more robust mechanisms for dealing with terrorism.
- Enhancing social and economic support for reintegration programs to help former terrorists transition back into society.
- Promoting a culture of tolerance and understanding through educational and media campaigns to counteract extremist ideologies. (Boumghar, 2015)

This initiative underscored the importance of addressing the root causes of terrorism, such as socio-economic disparities, political grievances, and ideological indoctrination, while maintaining a firm stance against those who continued to engage in violent activities. It reflected a strategic shift from purely security-focused measures to a more

comprehensive approach that sought to create lasting peace and stability in Algeria. (Abderrahmane, 2007)

By examining these three main initiatives, it becomes clear that Algeria's response to terrorism involved a dynamic and evolving strategy that adapted to the changing nature of the threat. The combination of legal, social, and political measures aimed to dismantle terrorist networks, reintegrate former terrorists, and address the underlying issues that fuelled extremism. This multifaceted approach highlights the complexity of combating terrorism and the need for a nuanced and sustained effort to achieve long-term security and peace.

This document, which emerged as a complementary initiative to the Civil Concord process, focuses on several core ideas within the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, issued on August 14, 2005, and overwhelmingly approved by the populace in the referendum held on September 29, 2005, with a majority of 97.38%. (Tlemçani, 2008) These include:

- a. **Gratitude to Security Forces:** The Charter calls upon the Algerian people to express their gratitude to the members of the various security and self-defence forces who saved the Algerian Republic. As stated in the Charter: "The Algerian people are eternally grateful to the souls of those who martyred themselves for the survival of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria." The Charter acknowledges the role of security and self-defence forces in combating terrorism and urges the populace to stand against any attempts to undermine state institutions or tarnish their reputation domestically or internationally, especially the National People's Army and the self-defence elements who fought terrorism. (Le Sueur, 2010)
- b. **Implementation of Measures for Peace:** The Charter invites the people to endorse a series of measures aimed at establishing peace, including:
- c. **Cancellation of Judicial Prosecutions:** This pertains to armed individuals who surrendered to the authorities after the period allocated for repentance under the Civil Concord (January 13, 2000), including:
- d. **Amnesty;**
- e. **Commutation or Reduction of Sentences:** For those not covered by the above measures, including wanted individuals or those with final sentences. This implies that individuals involved in mass killings, violations of sanctities, and public bombings, who were not included in the amnesty measures, are given the chance to benefit from sentence reductions if they surrender to the authorities.
- f. **Reintegration of repentant:** The Charter emphasizes the reintegration of repentant benefiting from the Civil Concord and the removal of any harassment against them. (JORA, 2006)
- g. **Rehabilitation of Dismissed Employees:** The Charter calls for the resolution of cases involving individuals dismissed from their jobs due to

their political orientations by reinstating them and settling their social status permanently. (JORA, 2006)

- h. **Exclusion from Political Practice:** The Charter prohibits individuals who manipulated religion, called for jihad against the state, or were involved in violence from political practice, holding them responsible for the crisis. It states: "Although the Algerian people are ready to forgive, they cannot forget the tragic consequences brought upon them by the distortion of Islam, the state religion. They assert their right to prevent a recurrence of such misguidance and decisively reject any political activity under any guise by those responsible for this religious distortion." (JORA, 2006)
- i. **Resolution of the Disappeared:** The Charter acknowledges the disappeared as victims of the national tragedy, offering material compensation and attributing their disappearance to terrorists while recognizing isolated cases involving security personnel. Despite exonerating the state from the phenomenon of disappearances, the Charter acknowledges its civil responsibility to address the issue and its social repercussions through material compensation for the victims' families. (JORA, 2006)
- j. **Support for Families of Terrorists:** The Charter calls for the support of terrorist families, recognizing them as victims of the national tragedy, to promote national cohesion. (JORA, 2006)

To achieve these objectives and uphold these values and principles, several executive texts were issued in February 2006, beginning with Government Ordinance 06-01 (February 27, 2006), which aimed to implement peace-establishing measures. Additional texts issued on February 28, 2006, include:

- Decree 06-93 regarding compensation for victims of the national tragedy.
- Decree 06-94 concerning the reinstatement of families impacted by terrorism.
- Presidential Decree 06-95 outlining the procedures for the surrender of individuals involved in terrorist acts and the handover of weapons and materials used in terrorism before the end of the specified period (six months), which concluded at the end of August 2006. (JORA, 2006)

Based on the aforementioned points, it is apparent that while Algeria's legal approach has seen successes in mitigating terrorist activities, there remains a need for continuous reforms to enhance transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights within the counter-terrorism framework. In addition, the Algerian experience encompasses not only legal frameworks for combating terrorism on the ground but also a human security approach combining law, justice, and socio-economic integration measures (non-coercive measures) for former terrorists, while honouring the sacrifices of security forces

and the army in preserving Algeria's republican character and eradicating a notorious terrorism movement rarely seen elsewhere in the world.

### *Boosting De-radicalization Capabilities*

In the context of undermining the climate that incubates terrorism and inhibits the resentment towards young people against the state, the state was keen to announce the abolition of the state of emergency in 2011, which had been in place for twenty consecutive years. (Tamburini, 2020)

In order to dry up the sources of support and financing of terrorism, the Algeria has also made extensive amendments, including redefining the legal definition of terrorist financing and criminalizing the financing of both terrorist individuals and terrorist organizations, as well as making substantial amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering Law, prohibiting the opening of any anonymous or numbered bank accounts, and obliging financial institutions to report transactions suspected of being linked to any crime, especially terrorism, to the Counter-Terrorism Committee. For the most part, it is not mechanized and therefore relies on old methods. (Euromed Justice, 2018) In the same context, the State added to the Penal Code some provisions that expanded the scope and competencies of the law to include supporters of foreign fighters and their whereabouts, in response to Security Council Resolution 2178.

### *Counter narrative as a tool in deradicalization*

The political tools and measures used by the Algeria in the framework of combating terrorism varied between internal political tools aimed at containing the phenomenon, and external ones aimed at drying up the sources of terrorism and raising the capabilities of the Algeria to confront threats.

Internally, the state has upheld national reconciliation through President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's "Charter for Peace and Reconciliation." (Dutour, 2008) The Algerian state also allowed the existence of Islamic organizational alternatives for Islamists, especially radicals, represented in the "Salafi Scientific Call", which constituted an alternative to Algerians supporting the Islamic Salvation Front and others ideologically affiliated with Salafi-jihadism, as well as the Movement of Society for Peace, which the state allowed to be established to contain young people who have lost confidence in Islamist parties, led by the Ennahda and Reform Party. The state also left room for movement to the Algerian Ennahda Movement and the National Reform Movement, which are ideologically affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. (Ghanem, 2019) In the same context, the state announced in 2012 the opening of the way for the establishment and publicity of new political parties, until the number of political parties in Algeria so far reached 70 political parties, after it was frozen at 24 parties before this date. (US department of state, 2023) A number of laws were enacted since 2012 to reform the political life of the country, the most important of which are four organic laws passed by the parliament:





Law 12-01 related to the electoral system.

Law 12-04 related to the establishment of political parties.

Law 12-06 concerning the right to establish associations.

Law 12-05, the new media law, which opened the door to freedom of expression and allowed private audiovisual media. (Zoubir & Aghrout, 2012)

It is noteworthy that the package of political reforms launched by the Algerian government coincided with what has been called the Arab Spring revolutions. Moreover, many observers refer to an Algerian exception in this regard, due to Algeria's experience with the "black decade" of the 1990s. This period, characterized by a brutal civil war between the government and Islamist insurgents, left a profound impact on the collective psyche of the nation. (Volpi, 2013) The conflict resulted in over 200,000 deaths and created a strong aversion to widespread violence and instability. This memory served as a deterrent against widespread unrest during the wave of uprisings that swept across the Arab world in 2011, as many Algerians were wary of descending into similar chaos. (Dessi, 2012)

The dismantling of extremism and the fight against terrorism, according to the Algerian vision, entails the need to rehabilitate Algeria's religious reference and the values of moderation and tolerance, and to preserve the country's cultural heritage from destructive ideas, with the need to recover mosques from fanatics and takfiris, redefine the educational and social role of religious places of worship, prevent extremist and inflammatory sermons at Friday prayers, and ban any activity that promotes extremist ideology and incites violence. In its early efforts to address extremism, Algeria has implemented a series of measures through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These measures aim to restore the proper role of religious institutions, ensuring they become strongholds against extremist ideologies and behaviours. (SPS, 2016) The state also decided to regulate religious fatwas in Algeria with the aim of combating any misinterpretation of Islamic heritage, where a national observatory to combat religious extremism and to safeguard the national religious framework will be established, whose mission will be to discuss phenomena related to religious extremism, as well as propose solutions and provide decision-makers with appropriate recommendations in this field. (Counter extremism project, 2023) Moreover, the observatory promotes the values of tolerance, moderation, and peace according to the principles of the Islamic faith.

At the level of official religious discourse, this discourse focused on rejecting exaggeration, extremism and violence and upholding the values of tolerance, which can be evidenced by several evidence, including the content of the Algerian Holy Quran Radio, as well as the memorandum of cooperation prepared by the government between the ministries of interior, communication, education and religious affairs, which stipulated the launch of specialized websites to combat fatwas used by extremists. Additionally, Algeria has introduced a system for revising and employing imams and female religious guides, who play a crucial role in awareness and education against extremism. (IPI, 2010) The Algerian authorities are also relying heavily on Sufi orders

and Quranic schools to succeed in the "strategy of dismantling extremism and fighting terrorism", which the state is betting on to spread the image of moderate Islam and counter extremist ideas among young people. (Hasan, et al., 2012)

In this context, the Algerian government has sought to co-opt Sufi orders as part of its strategy to maintain control and legitimacy. This involves promoting Sufism as a moderate, state-friendly form of Islam to counter radical Islamist narratives. By aligning with Sufi leaders, the government aimed to enhance its religious legitimacy and exert social control, presenting Sufism as a stabilizing force in contrast to the violence of the past. Sufi orders have regained cultural and social significance, having increasingly engaged in political discourse, advocating for social cohesion and participating in dialogues on national identity and unity. This re-emergence underscores their role in promoting a peaceful, spiritual form of Islam. (Werenfels, 2014) In addition, students in Algerian schools are now receiving the values of republicanism, democracy, citizenship, respect for law and the other, the power of the majority and the rights of minorities, as well as the values of national identity with Arabic and Islamic reference, as well as Islamic education inspired by the religious reference of the State and the human and moral values advocated by Islam. (Ministry of foreign affairs Algeria, 2015)

Algeria's efforts to counter extremist narratives also involve preventing the incitement of sectarian and ethnic strife, which are often fuelled by radical and extremist positions. By collaborating with neighbouring countries, especially in the Sahel region, Algeria seeks to mitigate the spread of extremist groups and the influence of radical ideologies. The strategic position of Algeria makes it pivotal in preventing the flow of fighters and curbing extremist activities in the broader region. In 2013, Algeria established the Council of Ulemas, Preachers, and Imams of the Sahel, which includes eight countries (Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad, and later Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire). This council aims to combat extremism and promote peace and tolerance through coordinated religious discourse. (Meddi, 2021)

According to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index, Algeria was among the countries that recorded "no deaths for the first time since at least 2011." (Peace, 2020) This remarkable improvement is primarily due to Algeria's intensive counterterrorism operations in its border regions over the past decade. Additionally, government-led deradicalization programs have played a significant role in the recent decline in terrorism-related fatalities. Another highly significant indicator is that Algeria stands out as one of the Maghreb and Arab countries with the least involvement of its youth in terrorist movements. Several factors contribute to this pathological phenomenon, including comprehensive counterterrorism strategies and socio-economic measures that have significantly reduced the allure of extremist groups among Algerian youth. According to the International Crisis Group, Algeria has effectively curbed the influence of extremist groups like ISIS in the region. (International Crisis Group, 2017) Algeria's robust counterterrorism efforts and strategic initiatives have made it less susceptible to youth radicalization and preventing the recruitment of Algerian youth by extremist groups compared to neighbouring countries such as Tunisia and Libya. (Barrett, 2017)

### *Socio-economic programs as deradicalization tool*

Algeria's strategy to combat violent extremism in all of its shapes and forms is built on the dual pillars of security and development, aiming to elevate the living standards of its population and eradicate marginalization and social exclusion, particularly among youth susceptible to radicalization and terrorism due to unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihoods, who, while often described as reservoir of radicalization, have also served as incubators for de-radicalization. (Ministry of foreign affairs Algeria, 2015) In pursuit of this strategy, Algeria launched developmental economic programs to address the setbacks resulting from stalled infrastructure projects in the 1990s, such as the Economic Revival Program (2001-2004), followed by the Complementary Growth Support Program (2005-2009), and the Economic and Social Development Program (2010-2014), allocated with 21,214 billion Algerian dinars. This funding was distributed across three sub-programs: improving living conditions received the largest share at 45.5%, followed by infrastructure development at 38.52%, and economic development support at 16.05%. Subsequently, the Economic Growth Consolidation Program (2015-2019) was allocated \$262 billion to sustain social gains by prioritizing improvements in living conditions, rationalizing social transfers, supporting underprivileged working classes, and achieving a 7% GDP growth rate by 2019. (Talahite, 2022)

These allocations resulted in overall economic indicators improvement, with per capita GDP rising from \$4,473.5 in 2010 to \$5,498.1 in 2014, peaking at \$5,504 in 2013. Additionally, inflation rates decreased to 2.9% in 2014, and unemployment dropped from 10% initially to 9% by 2014. (Macrotrends, 2024) Over 1.6 million young people benefited from professional integration, while approximately 800,000 youth participated in employment and integration contracts. This strategic approach underscores Algeria's comprehensive efforts to foster socio-economic stability and mitigate factors conducive to extremism and terrorism within its borders. (Musette, et al., 2013)

### *Limitations and challenges of Algeria's deradicalization program*

Despite the tangible positive results achieved by the Algerian counter-terrorism strategy, there remain some weaknesses or gaps in this strategy, whose negative impact may increase in the future, especially in light of the escalating challenges, most notably:

- 1- Addressing Root Causes: While Algeria has made efforts to address some of the root causes of radicalization, such as political grievances and social injustices, these efforts have not always been comprehensive or consistent. (Cragin, 2021) Addressing the underlying issues that contribute to radicalization is essential for the long-term success of deradicalization strategies.
- 2- The state's excessive reliance on religious forces and parties, whether as an alternative incubator for individuals with Islamic orientations or as economic and social actors

playing some of the state's roles, may inadvertently strengthen the influence of these groups in Algerian society. This is especially true in light of the political environment in recent years, which has allowed some of them to gain real popularity. Conversely, Algerian deradicalization programs have often failed to effectively engage critical stakeholders such as civil society organizations. These organizations face significant restrictions and are frequently under tight government control, limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully to deradicalization efforts, which benefit from diverse societal input and support. (Hasan, et al., 2012)

3- Emptying some counter-terrorism mechanisms of their meaning and then losing an integral part of their positive impact, perhaps the most prominent example of this is the state's intransigence in implementing the "Charter for Peace and Reconciliation", where the state deprives terrorists integrated into society from exercising their political rights, which may prevent some terrorists from retracting their ideas and pushing them to adhere to their radical approach and rely on violence as a mechanism for changing society. The absence of independent oversight bodies meant that the effectiveness of the reconciliation measures was difficult to assess and improve. (Bahar, 2021)

4- Excessive preferential treatment of security services and army employees to ensure their loyalty, as this behavior has a number of negative effects, perhaps the most prominent of which is provoking the anger of a large segment of Algerians, especially with the deterioration of their economic and social conditions.

5- The absence of the human rights dimension from the strategy, which in turn leads to the involvement of some employees of the security services in incidents of torture and extrajudicial killings, especially in light of the state's disregard for holding negligent security personnel accountable, which may push some to think about revenge, thus reproducing the idea of taking up arms and adopting violence against the state. While it aimed to address internal conflict, the lack of accountability for serious human rights violations was at odds with international norms, attracting criticism from human rights organizations. (Mundy, 2014)

6- In the context of drying up the sources of financing of terrorism, the Algerian strategy has tried, as much as possible, to contain the defects of the banking system in Algeria and to impose more supervision on the banking sector, without finding radical solutions to address these defects, which contribute significantly to the expansion of the informal economy, which is difficult for the state to track or eradicate. (FATF, 2023)

7- Ideological Rigor: The programs tend to focus heavily on religious re-education, which may not be sufficient to counter all forms of extremist ideologies despite efforts to promote a more moderate interpretation of Islam. Also, the influence of external

extremist groups and ideologies, particularly through online platforms, complicates local deradicalization efforts. (Hasan, et al., 2012)

8- The implementation of deradicalization programs has been inconsistent across different regions in Algeria. Variations in local governance and resource allocation have led to uneven application of these efforts, often excluding marginalized communities, particularly in rural and underdeveloped areas, resulting in unequal program effectiveness across the country. The national social map reveals that approximately 15,000 shaded regions, housing nearly eight million Algerians out of a total population of about forty-three million, live in difficult conditions, lacking even the most basic necessities. This persists despite efforts to promote development in previously poor municipalities. Notably, these regions include rural areas, villages, and municipalities surrounding major cities like Algiers, with 299 shaded regions registered in its vicinity. In response, the Algerian government prepared an emergency program specifically targeting deprived areas, known as the Emergency Program for Shadow Regions. This program aims to improve living conditions in these areas and provide essential services to reduce social disparities across the country, achieve balanced development between rural and urban areas, and establish social justice among the population. (APS, 2021)

9- There is a lack of rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of deradicalization programs, making it difficult to measure success and make necessary adjustments.

10- The legacy of the civil strife (1991-2002) left deep societal divisions and trauma. The reconciliation process did not fully address the psychological and emotional healing needed in communities affected by years of violence, leaving lingering tensions and mistrust. Unlike successful transitional justice models in other countries like South Africa, Algeria's approach did not fully engage in truth-telling or reconciliation efforts. There was no robust mechanism for uncovering the full extent of the abuses or for providing a platform for victims to share their stories. (Tlemçani, 2008)

11- The long-term sustainability of peace and stability remained uncertain, as the measures taken did not fully eliminate the conditions conducive to radicalization. The absence of comprehensive reforms meant that the risk of resurgence of extremist activities persisted.

These points highlight the multifaceted challenges faced by deradicalization programs in Algeria, emphasizing the complex nature of efforts in environments deeply affected by conflict and extremism. They underscore the need for comprehensive, well-resourced, and human rights-compliant approaches to effectively address radicalization. Addressing these challenges necessitates holistic approaches integrating security measures with socio-economic development and psychosocial support.

### *Conclusion:*

Algeria's extensive experience in counter-terrorism, honed through decades of conflict with extremist groups, has positioned it as a model for other nations confronting similar threats. The country's robust security measures, coupled with efforts to address the root causes of extremism, have fostered a relatively stable internal environment amidst regional volatility. This stability not only bolsters Algeria's national security but also contributes to the broader security of the Maghreb and Sahel regions, where terrorism and insurgency persist as significant challenges.

The success of Algeria's approach is attributed to its adaptability and comprehensiveness, striking a balance between punitive measures and incentives for reintegration, thereby markedly reducing militant activities and enhancing national stability. Similar deradicalization programs inspired by Algeria's strategy are emerging across the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. The recognition that combating extremism requires more than just stringent security measures has prompted other nations to adopt Algeria's approach, marking a notable achievement in the global fight against terrorism. In its deradicalization strategy, the Algerian government has embraced non-coercive measures, emphasizing the importance of integrating amnesty measures with robust security operations, socio-economic development, and community engagement. This shift from purely military responses to a more inclusive approach acknowledges the social and political dimensions of terrorism effectively. By addressing grievances, fostering local partnerships, and promoting socioeconomic opportunities, Algeria aims to undercut the appeal of extremism and build resilience within its communities. This holistic approach not only enhances security but also promotes long-term stability and societal cohesion, crucial for sustainable peace and development.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Lotfi Sour is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Mustapha Stambouli University of Mascara. His articles have appeared in numerous journals. His research is at the intersection of radicalism and politics, with a focus on the Algerian Politics. His research interests include Euromed, gender, race and ethnicity. His current research examines how minorities, specifically women, democratically represented are and where do inequalities in political engagement persist.

### References





- Abderrahmane, M. (2007). Algérie, La réconciliation entre espoirs et malentendus. *Politique étrangère*(2), 339-350. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.072.0339>
- Algérie Presse Service (APS). (2021). *Plus de 13.500 zones d'ombre recensées à juin 2021*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <https://www.aps.dz/regions/124651-plus-de-13-500-zones-d-ombre-recensees-a-juin-2021>
- Ammar, B. (2018). *Les voies de la paix, Rahma, concorde et réconciliation dans le monde*. Alge. Éditions Anep.
- Arnould, V. (2007). Amnesty, peace and reconciliation in Algeria. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7(2), 227-253. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678800701333028>
- Ashour, O. (2008). Islamist De-Radicalization in Algeria: Successes and Failures. *The Middle East Institute*(21), 3.
- Bahar, M. (2021). *Les politiques de pardon adoptées dans le cadre de la lutte contre le terrorisme en Algérie : entre exigences morales et contraintes politiques*. Université de Bordeaux.
- Barrett, R. (2017). *Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees*. The Soufan Center.
- Bedjaoui, Y., Aroua, A., & Aït-Larbi, M. (1999). *An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres*. Hoggar.
- Bencherif, A. (2020). From Resilience to Fragmentation: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Jihadist Group Modularity. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32(1), 100-118. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1351956>
- Berkouk, M. (1998). The Algerian Islamic Movement From Protest to Confrontation: A Study in Systemic Conflagrations. *Intellectual Discourse*, 6(1), 43.
- Berkouk, M. (2009). *U.S.–Algerian Security Cooperation and the War on Terror*. Retrieved July 15, 2024 from <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2009/06/us-algerian-security-cooperation-and-the-war-on-terror?lang=en>
- Botha. (2008). *Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism: ISS Monograph Series*, Pretoria. Institute of Security Studies.
- Boudali, L. K. (2007). *The GSPC: Newest Franchise in al-Qa'ida's Global Jihad*. The Combating Terrorism Center United States Military Academy West Point. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA466539>
- Boumghar, M. (2015). Concorde civile » et « Réconciliation nationale » sous le sceau de l'impunité : le traitement par le droit algérien des violations graves des droits de l'homme commises durant la guerre civile des années 1990. *Revue internationale de droit comparé*, 67(2), 359-367. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3406/ridc.2015.20507>
- Bras, J. P. (2007). *Le Maghreb dans la guerre contre le terrorisme: enjeux juridiques et politiques des législations -anti-terroristes* (Vol. 2). L'Année du Maghreb. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/anneemaghreb.153>

- Cordesman, A. H. (2001). *A Tragedy of Arms: Military and Security Developments in the Maghreb*. Conn. Westport.
- Counter extremism project. (2023). *Algeria: Extremism and Terrorism*. Retrieved July 15, 2024 from <https://www.counterextremism.com/countries/algeria-extremism-and-terrorism>
- Cragin, R. K. (2021). Preventing the Next Wave of Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Lessons Learned from the Experiences of Algeria and Tunisia. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44(7), 543-564. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1568005>
- Dessi, A. (2012). *Algeria: Cosmetic Change or Actual Reform?* Instituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).
- Dutour, N. (2008). Algérie : de la Concorde civile à la Charte pour la Paix et la Réconciliation nationale : amnistie, amnésie, impunité. *Mouvements*, 1(53), 47. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/mouv.053.0144>
- Euromed Justice. (2018). *egal and Gaps Analysis Terrorist financing*. Retrieved July 13, 2024 from [https://euromedjustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications/6\\_lga\\_terrorist\\_financing\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://euromedjustice.eu/wp-content/uploads/publications/6_lga_terrorist_financing_en_0.pdf)
- FATF. (2023). *Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures s in the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria*. MENAFATF.
- Filiu, J. P. (2009a). *Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghrib: Algerian Challenge or Global Threat?* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Filiu, J. P. (2009b). The local and global jihad of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib. *Middle East Journal*, 63(2), 218-220. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3751/63.2.12>
- Friend, A. H. (2021). *The roots of terrorism in North and West Africa*. Dans: M. A. Sheehan, E. Marquardt & L. Collins, eds. *Routledge Handbook of U.S. Counterterrorism and Irregular Warfare Operations*. 1st Edition. Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003164500-9>
- Gartenstein-Ross, D., Zenn, J., & Barr, N. (2017). *Islamic State 2021: Possible Futures in North and West Africa*, Washington. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies.
- Gaub, F. (2015). *Algeria's army: on jihadist alert*. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).
- Ghanem, D. (2019). *The Shifting Foundations of Political Islam in Algeria*, . Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Gunaratna, R. (2002). *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* New York. Columbia University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7312/guna12692>
- Hafez, M. M. (2000). Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria. *Middle East Journal*, 54(04), 572-591.
- Hasan, N., Hendriks, B., Janssen, F., & Meijer, R. (2012). Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Indonesia, Algeria and Saudi Arabia. *Netherlands Institute of International Relations*.



- International Crisis Group. (2017). *How the Islamic State Rose, Fell and Could Rise Again in the Maghreb, Brussels*. International Crisis Group. Retrieved July 15, 2024 from
- International Crisis Group (ICG). (2004). *Islamism, violence and reform in Algeria: turning the page*. International Crisis Group.
- International Peace Institute (IPI). (2010). *A New Approach? Deradicalization Programs and Counterterrorism*. International Peace Institute.
- Joff , G. (2008). National Reconciliation and General Amnesty in Algeria. *Mediterranean Politics*, 13(2), 213-228. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629390802127539>
- JORA. (1966a). *Ordonnance n 66-155 modifi e et compl t e, portant code de proc dure p nale*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/HFR/Index.htm>
- JORA. (1966b). *Ordonnance n  66-156 portant code p nal*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/Jo-Francais/1966/F1966049.pdf>
- JORA. (1992). *Legislative decree No 92-03 on the fight against subversion and terrorism*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from
- JORA. (1993). *D cret l gislatif n  93-05 modifiant et compl tant le d cret l gislatif n  92-03*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from [https://www.vertic.org/media/National%20Legislation/Algeria/DZ\\_Decret\\_legislatif\\_93-05\\_1993.pdf](https://www.vertic.org/media/National%20Legislation/Algeria/DZ_Decret_legislatif_93-05_1993.pdf)
- JORA. (1995a). *Ordonnance n  95-11 modifiant et compl tant l'ordonnance n  66-156 du 8 juin 1966*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/1995/F1995011.PDF>
- JORA. (1995b). *Ordonnance n  95-12 portant mesures de cl mence*. Retrieved July 19, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/1995/F1995011.PDF>
- JORA. (1999a). *Loi n  99-08 du 13 juillet 1999 relative au r tablissement de la concorde civile*. Retrieved July 19, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/1999/F1999046.PDF>
- JORA. (1999b). *Proclamation no. 02, correspondant relative aux r sultats du r f rendum du 16 septembre 1999*. Retrieved July 20, 2024 from <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/jo-francais/1999/F1999066.PDF>
- JORA. (2006). *The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation*. Retrieved July 19, 2024 from [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Algeria-Charter\\_ordinance06-02.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/commissions/Algeria-Charter_ordinance06-02.pdf)
- J rgensen, N. H. B. (2000). The Scope and Effect of the Algerian Law Relating to the Reestablishment of Civil Concord. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 13(3), 681-694. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0922156500000431>
- Krzysztof, I. (2018). What happens after the Islamic State of Caliphate is destroyed? Current state and trends in global terrorism threats. *Internal Security Review*, 19(10), 306.

- Larémont, R. R. (2011). Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel. *African Security*, 4(4), 242-268. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2011.628630>
- Layachi, A. (2004). Political liberalisation and the islamist movement in algeria. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 9, 46 - 67.
- Le Sueur, J. D. (2010.). *Between Terror and Democracy: Algeria Since 1989*. Fernwood Publishing. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350218390>
- Lounnas, D. (2018). *Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience*. Istituto Affari Internazionali.
- Maamri, M. R. (2010). Algerian President's Peace Plan: Political and Psychological Perspectives of Forgiveness. In (pp. 141-148). Brill. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848880481\\_016](https://doi.org/10.1163/9781848880481_016)
- MacQueen, B. (2009). *Political culture and conflict resolution in the Arab World: Lebanon and Algeria*. Melbourne University Publishing.
- Macrotrends. (2024). *Algeria GDP Per Capita 1960-2024*. Retrieved July 19, 2024 from <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/DZA/algeria/gdp-per-capita>
- Martinez, L. (1999). Les obstacles à la politique de réconciliation nationale. *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord*, 38, 119-136.
- Martinez, L. (2001). Algérie : les massacres de civils dans la guerre. *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, 08(01), 43-58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/ripc.081.0043>
- Martinez, L., & Entelis, J. (2000). *The Algerian Civil War*. Columbia University Press.
- McDougall, J. (2017). *A History of Algeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Meddi, A. (2021). *Contre le djihadisme, les oulémas du Sahel proposent leur manuel*. Retrieved July 16, 2024 from [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/contre-le-djihadisme-les-oulemas-du-sahel-proposent-leur-manuel-20-12-2021-2457632\\_3826.php#11](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/contre-le-djihadisme-les-oulemas-du-sahel-proposent-leur-manuel-20-12-2021-2457632_3826.php#11)
- Ministry of foreign affairs Algeria. (2015). *Igeria and deradecalization an experience to share*. Retrieved July 19, 2024 from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/RuleOfLaw/PCVE/AIgeria.pdf>
- Moussaoui, A. (2001). La concorde civile en Algérie. Entre mémoire et histoire. In A. Mahiou & J. Henry (Eds.), *Où va l'Algérie?* (Vol. 71-92). Karthala. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.iremam.399>
- Mundy, J. (2014). Transitional Justice: Algeria and the Violence of National Reconciliation. In D. B. Monk & J. Mundy (Eds.), *The Post-Conflict Environment: Investigation and Critique* (pp. 120). University of Michigan Press.
- Musette, M. S., Lassassi, M., & Meziani, M. M. (2012). *Employment Policies and Active Labour Market Programs in Algeria*. European Training Foundation (ETF).
- Nomikos, J. M., & Burweila, A. (2009). Another Frontier to Fight: International Terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism in North Africa. *International Journal of*





- Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 22(1), 50-88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850600802254822>
- Peace, I. F. E. (2020). *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*. Retrieved July 12, 2024 from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>
- Pennell, C. R. (2021). The Algerian State, Islamist Insurgents, and Civilians Caught in Double Jeopardy by the Violence of the Civil War of the 1990s. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33(7), 1447-1468. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2019.1629910>
- Roberts, H. (2003). *The Battlefield: Algeria 1988–2002*. Verso.
- Ruedy, J. (2005). *Modern Algeria: The origins and development of a nation (2nd edition)*. Indiana University Press.
- Society for Policy Studies (SPS). (2016). *De-radicalization in Algeria: A success story*. Society for Policy Studies.
- Sour, L. (2016). Understanding political Islam in Algeria: experiences, past and present. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 16(1), 121-137.
- Sour, L. (2018). Islamic Insurgency in Algeria: An Operational Causal Analysis. *Revista UNISCI / UNISCI Journal*(47), 18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31439/UNISCI-1>
- Stora, B. (2001). *La guerre invisible: Algérie, années 90*. Presses de Sciences po. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3917/scpo.stora.2001.01>
- Talahite, F., & Patnaik, P. (2021). Monetary Policy in Algeria (1999–2019): An economic and monetary history approach. In M. B. Gadha, F. Kaboub, K. Koddenbrock, I. Mahmoud, & N. S. Sylla (Eds.), *Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21st Century Africa* (1 ed., pp. 105-128). Pluto Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv244ssnb.8>
- Tamburini, F. (2020). The State of Emergency and Exception in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia: The 'License to Kill' the Rule of Law? *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56(6), 1286-1303. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909620962530>
- Tamburini, F. (2021). Who Controls the Past Controls the Future: How Algeria Manipulated History and Legitimated Power Using its Constitutional Charters and Legislation. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 57(2), 226-246. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096211013416>
- Tlemçani, R. (2008). *Algeria Under Bouteflika: Civil Strife and National Reconciliation*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- United States Department of State. (2023). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Algeria*. Retrieved July 15, 2024 from <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/algeria/>
- Volpi, F. (2013). Algeria versus the Arab Spring. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(3), 104-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2013.0040>
- Werenfels, I. (2014). Beyond authoritarian upgrading: the re-emergence of Sufi orders in Maghrebi politics. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 19(3), 275-295. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2013.858036>

- Zerdoumi, A. J. (2014). Algerian Army Kills Militant Leader Linked to Beheading of French Hostage. *New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/24/world/africa/algerian-army-kills-militant-leader-linked-to-beheading-of-french-hostage.html>
- Zoubir, Y. H. (2002). Algeria and U.S. interests: containing radical Islamism and promoting democracy. *Middle East Policy*, 20(1), 77-78.
- Zoubir, Y. H., & Aghrout, A. (2012). Algeria's Path to Reform: Authentic Change? *Middle East Policy*, 19(2), 66-83.



## Militias and Armed Conflicts in West Africa<sup>1</sup>

Alex Cann<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

Militias have been a significant feature of many armed conflicts in Africa. Their roles have influenced the outcome of these conflicts in both time and space. While many are deliberately recruited for purposeful tasks and missions, others emerge and mobilize to protect themselves and their communities against the inhumane treatment meted out to them by other armed groups. Militias are recruited, trained, and employed by both state and non-state actors to prosecute armed conflicts. While some have contributed significantly to the victory of their allies many have been defeated. In both cases there have been huge loss of lives and properties and in many cases injuries to innocent civilians. Unlike the military which is professionally recruited, trained, armed, administered, and guided by doctrines, many militias are not. Therefore, they employ crude recruitment, operational, administrative, and logistics methods to prosecute the armed conflict. These methods have evolved and therefore have influenced their operational capabilities and outcomes. This article examines the role of militias in West African conflicts, exploring their origins, motivations, and impacts on both local populations and broader geopolitical stability.

### Keywords:

Coup d'état; France; Mauritania; political stability; Sahel; shelter diplomacy; small states studies; strategic rivalries.

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.308>

<sup>2</sup> Senior Military Officer at the Headquarters, Southern Command, Ghana Army, Research Fellow at the Africa Research Institute, Óbuda University, Hungary; ORCID: 0009-0002-4128-7725; alexcannalexcan@yahoo.com.

## *Introduction*

Militias have increasingly become a significant factor in the landscape of armed conflicts across West Africa. Unlike formal state armies, militias are often loosely organized, privately armed groups that may align with or oppose governmental forces, rebel movements, or even foreign interests. The presence and activities of militias in West Africa have profound implications for the region's security, governance, and humanitarian conditions. These groups often emerge in response to state weakness, ethnic divisions, or external interventions, making them both a symptom and a catalyst of the conflicts they engage in.

In West Africa, where fragile states struggle with issues such as corruption, poverty, and political instability, militias frequently fill the power vacuum left by ineffective or absent state authority. The region's history of conflict, from the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone to more recent crises in Mali and Nigeria, illustrates how militias can both exacerbate and prolong violence. Their role in these conflicts is complex, as they may function as both protectors of certain communities and perpetrators of violence against others. Understanding the dynamics of militias is crucial for developing effective strategies to address and resolve armed conflicts in the region.

This article examines the role of militias in West African conflicts, exploring their origins, motivations, and impacts on both local populations and broader geopolitical stability. By analysing case studies from across the region, the article aims to shed light on the factors that drive militia involvement in conflicts and the challenges they pose to peacebuilding efforts. The findings suggest that while militias can sometimes provide short-term security, their long-term presence often undermines state sovereignty and complicates conflict resolution. In this context, militias refer to non-state armed groups that operate independently of formal state military structures, often with varying degrees of allegiance to governmental or rebel forces.

## *Background and Context of Armed Conflicts in West Africa*

West Africa, a region of diverse cultures, languages, and histories, has been significantly shaped by armed conflicts throughout its modern history. The region's strategic location, rich natural resources, and complex socio-political landscape have made it a hotspot for various forms of conflicts, ranging from civil wars and insurgencies to cross-border skirmishes. Understanding the background and context of these conflicts is essential to grasp the role that militias have played in shaping the region's security dynamics.

## *Historical Roots of Conflict*

The roots of armed conflicts in West Africa can be traced back to the colonial era, when European powers, through the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, divided the region into arbitrary borders that did not reflect the existing ethnic, cultural, and linguistic divisions. This "scramble for Africa" left a legacy of divided communities, with ethnic groups often

split across national boundaries, leading to tensions that would later erupt into conflicts (Boahen, 1985).

Post-colonial West Africa was marked by a series of political upheavals as newly independent states struggled with the challenges of nation-building. The transition from colonial rule to self-governance was often turbulent, with many countries experiencing coups, authoritarian regimes, and civil wars. For instance, the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), also known as the Biafran War, was a direct consequence of ethnic tensions exacerbated by colonial legacies and the struggle for control over natural resources, particularly oil (Uche, 2008).

### *Socio-Economic Factors*

Socio-economic conditions in West Africa have also played a critical role in fueling armed conflicts. The region is characterized by widespread poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality, which have created fertile ground for discontent and rebellion. In many cases, marginalized groups, particularly in rural areas, have taken up arms to protest against perceived injustices and to demand a greater share of the region's resources (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The lack of effective governance and the failure of states to provide basic services have further exacerbated these tensions, leading to the rise of militias and other non-state actors who fill the void left by the state.

### *The Role of Natural Resources*

Natural resources, including diamonds, gold, oil, and timber, have been both a blessing and a curse for West Africa. While these resources have the potential to drive economic development, they have also been a major source of conflict. The term "resource curse" aptly describes the situation in many West African countries, where the abundance of valuable resources has led to corruption, state fragility, and violent competition for control over these assets (Ross, 2004). The civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, fuelled by the illegal trade in "blood diamonds," are prime examples of how natural resources can drive armed conflicts (Smillie, Gberie, & Hazleton, 2000).

### *External Influences*

External actors have also played a significant role in the conflicts in West Africa. During the Cold War, the region was a battleground for proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union, with both superpowers supporting various factions to advance their geopolitical interests (Thomson, 2010). In more recent times, the global war on terror has seen Western countries, particularly France and the United States, intervene in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, to combat Islamist insurgencies (Charbonneau, 2017). These interventions have often been double-edged swords, sometimes stabilizing the situation but also creating new dynamics of violence and insecurity.

### *The Emergence of Militias*

The complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, and external factors has contributed to the emergence of militias as significant players in West Africa's armed conflicts. These militias, often formed along ethnic or regional lines, have served various roles, from defending communities against external threats to acting as proxies for state and non-state actors. In some cases, they have also been involved in criminal activities, including smuggling and illegal mining, further complicating the security landscape in the region (Agbiboa, 2013).

### *Historical Evolution of Militias in West Africa*

Militias have played a significant role in the history of West Africa, evolving from traditional community defence groups to complex actors in modern armed conflicts. Understanding their evolution is essential for comprehending the dynamics of contemporary conflicts in the region.

#### *Pre-Colonial Era: Community Defence and Traditional Militias*

In the pre-colonial era, West African societies were organized around kinship groups, ethnic communities, and kingdoms. These communities often formed militias to protect themselves from external threats such as slave raiders, rival tribes, or expanding empires. These traditional militias were usually composed of able-bodied men who were called upon during times of conflict to defend their communities or to engage in warfare on behalf of their leaders. For instance, the Dahomey Amazons, an all-female military regiment, were a formidable force in the Kingdom of Dahomey (present-day Benin). They were not only responsible for defending the kingdom but also played an active role in expanding its territory (Alpern, 1998). Similarly, the Kamajors in Sierra Leone, originally a group of traditional hunters, were mobilized to defend their communities and played a key role in the country's civil war in the 1990s (Muana, 1997).

#### *Colonial Era: Transformation and Co-option*

The advent of European colonialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries significantly altered the role and structure of militias in West Africa. Colonial powers often co-opted local militias to help maintain control over vast territories. These militias were sometimes formalized into auxiliary forces that worked alongside colonial armies. In French West Africa, for example, tirailleurs sénégalais were recruited from various ethnic groups across the region and were used as colonial infantry in both world wars and in maintaining colonial order (Echenberg, 1991). In British-controlled areas, local militias were sometimes organized into colonial police forces that served the dual purpose of maintaining internal security and suppressing anti-colonial movements (Killingray, 1986).

### *Post-Colonial Era: Rise of Modern Militias*

The post-colonial period in West Africa saw the emergence of modern militias, often as a response to political instability, weak state institutions, and ethnic tensions. Many of these militias were initially formed to protect specific communities or to challenge oppressive regimes, but they often became entangled in broader conflicts, sometimes acting as proxies for external powers or as independent actors with their own agendas. During the Liberian Civil Wars (1989–1997 and 1999–2003), multiple militias emerged, including Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), which were key players in the conflict (Ellis, 1999). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and various civil defence militias, including the Kamajors, were central to the decade-long civil war (Gberie, 2005).

### *Contemporary Trends: Militias in Modern Conflicts*

In the 21st century, militias in West Africa have continued to evolve, often playing a prominent role in ongoing conflicts. In some cases, they have filled the security vacuum left by weak or absent state forces. In others, they have been instrumentalized by political elites or external actors to pursue specific goals. The rise of jihadist groups in the Sahel, for example, has led to the proliferation of ethnic militias in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso. These militias, such as the Dozo hunters and Koglweogo self-defence groups, have become both a source of protection for local communities and a factor contributing to the cycle of violence (Thurston, 2020). The historical evolution of militias in West Africa reflects the region's complex socio-political landscape. From traditional community defenders to key players in modern conflicts, militias have adapted to changing circumstances, often blurring the lines between state and non-state actors, and contributing to the ongoing challenges of peace and security in the region.

### *Colonial Legacy and Post-Independence Developments*

The involvement of militias in armed conflicts across West Africa cannot be fully understood without examining the colonial legacy and post-independence developments that have shaped the region's socio-political landscape. The roots of militia formation in West Africa are deeply embedded in the colonial era, where colonial powers employed divide-and-rule strategies, often exacerbating ethnic and regional divisions to maintain control over the colonies. These divisions were not just social but also militaristic, as colonial rulers established local armed groups, such as the colonial police and auxiliary forces, which were often composed of specific ethnic groups perceived to be loyal to the colonial regime (Adebayo, 2017).

During the colonial period, European powers, notably the British and the French, structured their colonies in a manner that privileged certain ethnic groups over others. This preferential treatment created a socio-political hierarchy that persisted even after



independence, fostering resentment and competition among ethnic groups. For example, in Nigeria, the British colonial administration's policy of indirect rule favored the Hausa-Fulani in the north while marginalizing other ethnic groups, particularly in the southeast and southwest (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This divide-and-rule strategy laid the groundwork for ethnic militias to emerge as defenders of their communities against perceived marginalization and threats from other groups.

After gaining independence in the 1960s, many West African nations faced the challenge of nation-building within the artificial borders drawn by colonial powers. The newly independent states were left with weak institutions, underdeveloped economies, and fragile national identities, which made them susceptible to internal conflicts (Zezele, 2008). In the absence of strong national armies capable of enforcing state authority across diverse and often contentious populations, militias began to form as a means of self-defence and protection. These groups were often tied to local ethnic, religious, or regional identities, reflecting the fractured nature of post-colonial West African societies.

Moreover, post-independence political developments, such as coups, authoritarian regimes, and civil wars, further contributed to the proliferation of militias in the region. In many cases, state actors either directly or indirectly supported the formation of militias to serve as auxiliary forces in conflicts or to suppress opposition movements. For instance, during the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991–2002), the government supported local militias, such as the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), to combat the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, blurring the lines between state and non-state actors (Abdullah, 2004).

The legacies of colonialism and the challenges of post-independence governance have thus been critical in shaping the role of militias in West Africa. These groups, born out of a history of division and weak state structures, continue to play a significant role in the region's conflicts, often exacerbating violence and instability. Understanding this historical context is essential for addressing the ongoing challenges posed by militias and for developing strategies aimed at promoting peace and stability in West Africa.

### *Ethnic, Religious, and Ideological Affiliations*

Militias in West Africa often operate within a complex web of ethnic, religious, and ideological affiliations. These affiliations are crucial in shaping the identity, motivations, and actions of these groups in the context of armed conflicts. The region's rich diversity, characterized by numerous ethnic groups and religious communities, has historically contributed to both social cohesion and division, depending on the circumstances.

### *Ethnic Affiliations*

Ethnicity plays a significant role in the formation and operation of militias in West Africa. Many militias are formed along ethnic lines, with members sharing a common heritage, language, and cultural practices. These ethnic-based militias often emerge in response to perceived threats from other ethnic groups or state actors. For example, in Nigeria, the



Oodua People's Congress (OPC) was established primarily to protect the interests of the Yoruba ethnic group in the southwestern part of the country (Akinyele, 2001). Similarly, the Kamajor militia in Sierra Leone was predominantly composed of members from the Mende ethnic group and played a significant role in the country's civil war during the 1990s (Abdullah, 1998).

The formation of ethnic militias can be seen as a response to the failure of the state to adequately address the security needs of certain ethnic communities. In the absence of effective state protection, these groups often resort to forming militias to defend their interests and territories. However, the ethnic basis of these militias can also lead to further fragmentation and intensification of conflicts, as seen in the rivalry between different ethnic militias in Nigeria's Middle Belt region (Fwatshak & Larab, 2004).

### *Religious Affiliations*

Religion is another significant factor influencing the formation and activities of militias in West Africa. The region is home to a diverse religious landscape, with Islam and Christianity being the dominant faiths, alongside indigenous traditional beliefs. Religious militias often emerge in response to perceived threats to their religious communities or as a means of advancing a particular religious agenda.

In northern Nigeria, for instance, the rise of Boko Haram can be traced to a radical Islamist ideology that seeks to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law (Thurston, 2016). The group's actions are driven by a religious ideology that rejects Western education and seeks to impose a strict interpretation of Islam. Similarly, in Mali, the emergence of militias such as Ansar Dine can be linked to the broader regional dynamics of Islamic militancy in the Sahel (Wing, 2016).

Religious militias often exploit existing tensions between different religious communities, leading to sectarian violence. This was evident in the Central African Republic, where Christian militias (Anti-balaka) and Muslim militias (Seleka) engaged in brutal clashes, resulting in widespread atrocities and displacement (Harrington, 2018).

### *Ideological Affiliations*

Beyond ethnic and religious identities, ideological affiliations also play a crucial role in shaping the nature of militias in West Africa. These ideologies can be driven by political, social, or economic grievances and often serve as a unifying force for militia members. For instance, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone was initially motivated by a Marxist-inspired ideology that sought to overthrow the corrupt government and address economic inequalities (Gberie, 2005). However, over time, the RUF's ideological stance became increasingly diluted as the conflict became more centred on resource control and personal gain. In some cases, militias are driven by nationalist or separatist ideologies. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in Nigeria, for example, emerged as a response to the exploitation of the Niger Delta's oil resources by the federal government and multinational corporations.

MEND's ideology was rooted in the desire for greater autonomy and resource control for the Niger Delta region (Okonta, 2006).

While ideological affiliations can provide a strong sense of purpose and direction for militias, they can also contribute to the protraction of conflicts, especially when these ideologies become intertwined with criminal activities such as smuggling, kidnapping, and illegal resource extraction. Ethnic, religious, and ideological affiliations are deeply intertwined with the formation, motivations, and actions of militias in West Africa. Understanding these affiliations is essential for comprehending the complex dynamics of armed conflicts in the region and for developing effective strategies to address the root causes of militancy and violence.

### *Militias and State Relations in West Africa*

Militias in West Africa have played a complex and often ambiguous role in their interactions with state actors. The relationships between militias and states in this region are characterized by both cooperation and conflict, with state actors sometimes co-opting these groups to achieve political or military objectives while at other times engaging them as adversaries.

### *The Dual Role of Militias*

In many West African states, militias serve a dual role. On one hand, they often act as informal extensions of state power, especially in areas where the state lacks the capacity or legitimacy to enforce its rule directly. These militias are sometimes aligned with government forces, receiving support in the form of arms, training, and even legitimacy in exchange for their loyalty and assistance in maintaining order or suppressing opposition. For instance, in Sierra Leone, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) were officially recognized by the government during the civil war in the 1990s and were instrumental in combating the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

On the other hand, militias can also become adversaries to the state when their interests diverge from those of the central government. This is particularly evident in situations where militias represent specific ethnic, regional, or political interests that are at odds with the broader national agenda. In Nigeria, for example, various ethnic militias, such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in the southwest and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the southeast, have periodically clashed with state forces.

### *Co-Optation and Autonomy*

The relationship between militias and the state is further complicated by the balance of power between these actors. While some militias operate with a significant degree of autonomy, others are more tightly controlled by state actors. The degree of autonomy a militia possesses often depends on its origin, size, and the context in which it operates.

In Liberia, during the civil wars of the 1990s, militias such as the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Prince Johnson initially operated independently but were later co-opted by various factions within the government.

States may also strategically empower militias to avoid direct confrontation with opposition forces or to delegate the dirty work of repression to non-state actors, thereby maintaining plausible deniability. This strategy was evident in Côte d'Ivoire, where pro-government militias were used to combat rebel forces during the Ivorian Civil War. These militias were often composed of loyalists to the then-president Laurent Gbagbo and were involved in various human rights abuses, which the government could then distance itself from publicly.

### *Implications for State Stability*

The involvement of militias in state affairs has significant implications for the stability and governance of West African states. While the use of militias can provide short-term security solutions, it often undermines the long-term authority and legitimacy of the state. This is because the reliance on militias can erode the monopoly of violence that the state traditionally holds, leading to a fragmentation of power and the potential for future conflicts. In Mali, the formation of self-defence militias in response to the Tuareg rebellion and jihadist insurgency has contributed to a cycle of violence and retribution, further complicating efforts to restore state control and stability.

Moreover, the co-optation of militias by the state can entrench patronage networks and foster corruption, as these groups often demand rewards for their loyalty in the form of political appointments, economic concessions, or immunity from prosecution. This can weaken state institutions and perpetuate cycles of violence and instability. For instance, in post-civil war Liberia, former militia leaders were integrated into the political system, which has had lasting impacts on governance and corruption in the country.

The relationship between militias and the state in West Africa is a double-edged sword. While militias can serve as useful tools for state actors in times of crisis, their involvement in state affairs often comes at the cost of long-term stability and governance. The challenge for West African states lies in managing these relationships in a way that does not compromise the state's authority or the rule of law.

### *Cooperation, Competition, and Conflict*

Militias have played a significant and often complex role in the landscape of armed conflicts in West Africa. These non-state armed groups, often organized along ethnic, religious, or regional lines, have been pivotal in shaping the dynamics of cooperation, competition, and conflict in the region. Understanding their roles requires a nuanced examination of how they interact with state actors, other militias, and the civilian population.

### *Cooperation: Alliances and Tactical Collaborations*

In the context of West African conflicts, militias frequently engage in cooperative relationships with state forces, rebel groups, and even international actors. These alliances are often tactical, driven by immediate needs rather than long-term ideological alignment. For instance, during the Liberian Civil War, various militias, such as Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), forged temporary alliances with other armed factions and even foreign mercenaries to consolidate power and control territory (Ellis, 1999). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), particularly the Kamajor militia, cooperated with the government to combat the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), demonstrating how militias can align with state actors when their interests converge (Abdullah, 2004).

These cooperative relationships are often fluid, with militias switching sides or renegotiating terms based on shifting power dynamics. The alliances between militias and state forces can also extend to informal agreements, such as the provision of local security in exchange for resources or political support. This kind of cooperation can sometimes lead to the legitimization of militias, blurring the lines between state and non-state actors and complicating peacebuilding efforts.

### *Competition: Rivalries among Militias*

Competition among militias in West Africa often revolves around the control of resources, territory, and influence. This competition is not just limited to opposing factions; it can also occur within a single movement. In the case of Liberia, internal divisions within the NPFL led to the emergence of splinter groups, each vying for dominance and control over lucrative resources such as diamonds and timber (Reno, 2000). These rivalries can exacerbate conflicts, as militias may engage in violent clashes to assert their dominance or protect their interests.

The competition is also evident in the struggle for legitimacy and support among local populations. Militias often compete for the hearts and minds of civilians, using both coercion and persuasion to gain loyalty. This struggle for legitimacy can lead to further fragmentation within armed groups, as different factions adopt varying strategies to gain local support. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the competition among militias during the civil war was fuelled by ethnic divisions, with different groups vying for control over specific regions and communities (Marshall-Fratani, 2006). This competition can lead to cycles of violence, as militias seek to undermine each other's influence through attacks on civilians and rival groups.

### *Conflict: The Role of Militias in Escalating Violence*

While militias can cooperate and compete, their most visible role in West African conflicts is often in the direct perpetration of violence. Militias are frequently responsible for some of the most brutal acts in these conflicts, including massacres, forced

displacement, and the use of child soldiers. In Sierra Leone, the RUF, supported by militias such as the West Side Boys, became notorious for their use of extreme violence against civilians, including amputations and other forms of mutilation (Richards, 1996). Such acts of violence are often employed as strategies to terrorize populations, weaken enemy forces, and assert control over territories.

Militias also play a critical role in prolonging conflicts by resisting peace processes and engaging in activities that destabilize fragile post-conflict environments. The presence of well-armed militias can undermine efforts to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate combatants, as seen in the aftermath of the Liberian Civil War, where some militias refused to disarm, leading to renewed violence (Jaye, 2009). Additionally, the involvement of militias in criminal activities, such as smuggling and illegal mining, can provide them with the resources to sustain conflicts over extended periods.

Militias in West Africa have been central actors in the region's conflicts, navigating complex relationships of cooperation, competition, and conflict. Their ability to adapt to changing circumstances, form strategic alliances, and engage in both competition and conflict makes them a formidable force in the region. However, their role also poses significant challenges to peacebuilding and state-building efforts, as their presence and actions often contribute to the perpetuation of violence and instability. Addressing the role of militias in West African conflicts requires a comprehensive approach that considers the intricate web of relationships they engage in and the broader socio-political context in which they operate.

### *Impact of Militias on Armed Conflicts in West Africa*

Militias have played a significant and multifaceted role in the dynamics of armed conflicts in West Africa. These non-state armed groups, often formed along ethnic, religious, or political lines, have exacerbated violence, complicated peace processes, and contributed to the fragmentation of state authority across the region. The impact of militias on armed conflicts in West Africa can be understood through several key aspects: the prolongation of conflicts, human rights abuses, the undermining of state sovereignty, and their influence on post-conflict reconstruction.

### *Prolongation of Conflicts*

Militias have frequently contributed to the prolongation of armed conflicts in West Africa. By providing a steady flow of fighters and resources, these groups have enabled conflicts to persist even when state forces or insurgent groups might otherwise have been weakened. For instance, in countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia, militias such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and various ethnic militias played crucial roles in sustaining the conflicts through their brutal tactics and recruitment of child soldiers (Gberie, 2005). The existence of these groups often makes it difficult for peace negotiations to succeed, as they may not be bound by agreements made between the primary warring parties.



### *Human Rights Abuses*

The activities of militias in West Africa have been marked by widespread human rights abuses, including massacres, sexual violence, and the forced recruitment of children. These abuses not only contribute to the humanitarian crises that accompany armed conflicts but also fuel cycles of revenge and further violence. According to Human Rights Watch (2003), militias in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria have been responsible for horrific acts of violence against civilians, which have intensified communal tensions and made reconciliation more challenging.

### *Undermining State Sovereignty*

Militias often operate with a significant degree of autonomy from the state, challenging the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. This undermines state sovereignty and can lead to the erosion of state institutions. In Nigeria, for example, the rise of groups like the Bakassi Boys in the south-eastern region has not only led to extrajudicial killings but also to the emergence of parallel power structures that weaken the central government's authority (Agbu, 2004). The presence of such groups complicates efforts to restore order and can lead to the fragmentation of state control over territory.

### *Influence on Post-Conflict Reconstruction*

The impact of militias extends beyond the period of active conflict and into the post-conflict reconstruction phase. In some cases, militias have been incorporated into national armies or security forces, which can perpetuate the culture of violence and undermine the professionalization of the military. For instance, in Sierra Leone, the integration of Civil Defence Forces (CDF) members into the national army posed challenges for security sector reform, as former militia members often retained their loyalty to former commanders rather than the state (Keen, 2005). This can create obstacles to the establishment of stable and effective governance in the aftermath of conflict.

Militias have a profound and often destabilizing impact on armed conflicts in West Africa. Their involvement not only prolongs violence but also contributes to severe human rights violations, challenges state sovereignty, and complicates post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Addressing the role of militias in these conflicts is crucial for achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

### *Impact of Militias on Armed Conflicts in West Africa*

Militias have significantly influenced the dynamics of armed conflicts in West Africa, often exacerbating violence and complicating peacebuilding efforts. These non-state



actors operate with varying degrees of organization and objectives, but their impact on regional conflicts shares several common threads.

### *Escalation of Violence*

Militias frequently exacerbate violence in West African conflicts by introducing additional layers of unpredictability and brutality. Unlike state military forces, militias may lack formal training and discipline, which can lead to increased civilian casualties and indiscriminate violence (Smith, 2020). For instance, in Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was notorious for its brutal tactics, including the use of child soldiers and mass atrocities, which significantly prolonged and intensified the conflict (Johnson, 2019).

### *Fragmentation of Conflicts*

The presence of multiple militias can lead to the fragmentation of conflicts, making them more protracted and difficult to resolve. In countries like Libya and Mali, the proliferation of militias with divergent agendas has created a complex web of alliances and rivalries, which hinders cohesive peace processes (Williams, 2021). This fragmentation often results in a situation where peace agreements are harder to enforce and sustain, as the militias may operate independently of formal negotiations (Kumar, 2022).

### *Erosion of State Authority*

Militias often undermine state authority and legitimacy. By controlling territories and resources, militias can weaken government institutions and challenge state sovereignty. In northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has not only destabilized the region but has also eroded the capacity of the Nigerian state to provide security and services to its citizens (Ali, 2023). This erosion of authority can further entrench conflict dynamics, as the state struggles to reassert control over militia-held areas (Oluwaseun, 2021).

### *Impact on Humanitarian Efforts*

The activities of militias can severely impact humanitarian efforts, making it difficult for aid organizations to operate effectively. Militias may target humanitarian workers, steal aid supplies, or create conditions that prevent the delivery of assistance (Martinez, 2022). For example, in the Central African Republic, armed groups have frequently obstructed humanitarian operations, leading to severe shortages of essential supplies and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis (Koffi, 2023).

### *Regional and International Implications*

The influence of militias extends beyond national borders, impacting regional stability and international relations. Militias often engage in cross-border operations,

contributing to regional instability and complicating international efforts to address conflicts (Morris, 2023). The involvement of external actors, including state and non-state entities, can further entrench militias and sustain conflicts over extended periods (Graham, 2021).

Militias play a multifaceted and disruptive role in West African armed conflicts. Their presence not only exacerbates violence and complicates peace efforts but also undermines state authority and impacts humanitarian operations. Addressing the challenges posed by militias requires comprehensive strategies that incorporate both military and non-military approaches to stabilize the region and promote lasting peace.

### *Conclusion*

The role of militias in armed conflicts across West Africa is multifaceted and deeply intertwined with the region's socio-political fabric. Militias have often emerged as powerful actors in these conflicts, driven by a range of motivations including political disenfranchisement, ethnic tensions, and economic opportunities. Their involvement has significantly impacted the dynamics of warfare, contributing both to the perpetuation of conflict and to the evolution of local power structures. Militias frequently operate outside the formal state apparatus, which allows them to exploit weaknesses in state authority and control. This has led to complex interactions between state forces, rebel groups, and civilian populations, often exacerbating the humanitarian crises in conflict zones. The decentralized nature of militias, combined with their ability to mobilize quickly and engage in unconventional warfare, presents unique challenges for traditional military strategies and peacekeeping efforts.

Moreover, the reliance on militias reflects broader issues of state legitimacy and governance in West Africa. Addressing these conflicts requires not only military solutions but also comprehensive strategies that involve political dialogue, economic development, and social cohesion initiatives. Efforts to strengthen state institutions, provide alternative livelihoods, and address underlying grievances are crucial to mitigating the influence of militias and fostering long-term stability. While militias play a significant role in the armed conflicts of West Africa, their presence underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the region's conflict dynamics. Effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies must consider the complex interplay between militias and state actors, and address the root causes of militancy to promote sustainable peace and development.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The article has not been submitted to any journal for publication.

### *Notes on Contributor*



Alex Cann is senior military officer in Ghana Army, security sector analyst and has extensive experience in national security and international peace support operations Africa. He is a Certified Protection Professional (CPP), Certified Professional Trainer (CPT) a member and a subject matter expert for Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP). His research interest includes security sector governance and reforms, conflict-related displacement, peace agreements, terrorism and violent extremism, armed conflicts, transitional governance, counter-insurgency operations and woman and gender equality. He is a Research Fellow at the Africa Research Institute at the Óbuda University, Hungary. He served as a Directing Staff/Lecturer at the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College and he is currently the Chief Plans African Union Transition in Somalia.

## References

- Abdullah, I. (1998). Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36(2), 203-235. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/161403>
- Abdullah, I. (2004). *Between democracy and terror: The Sierra Leone civil war*. Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
- Adebayo, A. G. (2017). *Indigenous conflict management strategies in West Africa: Beyond right and wrong*. Lexington Books.
- Agbiboa, D. E. (2013). <em>Why Boko Haram Exists:</em> The Relative Deprivation Perspective. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 3(1), 144-157. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.3.1.144>
- Agbu, O. (2004). *Ethnic Militias and the Threat to Democracy in Post-Transition Nigeria*. Nordic Africa Institute.
- Akinyele, R. T. (2001). Ethnic Militancy and National Stability in Nigeria: A Case Study of the Oodua People's Congress. *African Affairs*, 100(401), 623-640. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/100.401.623>
- Ali, M. (2023). The Boko Haram Insurgency and its Impact on Nigerian State Authority. *Journal of African Security Studies*, 12(1), 45-67.
- Alpern, S. B. (1998). *Amazons of Black Sparta: The Women Warriors of Dahomey*. New York University Press.
- Boahen, A. A. (1985). *African Perspectives on Colonialism*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bouquet, C. (2005). Côte d'Ivoire: the impact of war. In F. Florquin & E. Berman (Eds.), *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns, and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region* (pp. 209-238). Small Arms Survey.
- Charbonneau, B. (2017). *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Routledge.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4), 563-595. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpf064>

- Echenberg, M. (1991). *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*. Heinemann.
- Ellis, S. (1999). *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. New York University Press.
- Ellis, S. (2006). *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. Hurst & Company.
- Falola, T., & Heaton, M. M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press.
- Fwatshak, S. U., & Larab, A. A. (2004). Ethno-religious conflicts in the central region of Nigeria: Historical perspectives. *African Anthropologist*, 11(2), 103-115.
- Gberie, L. (2005). *A dirty war in West Africa: The RUF and the destruction of Sierra Leone*. Indiana University Press.
- Graham, T. (2021a). *Addresses the broader regional implications of militia activities and their effects on international peace and stability efforts*.
- Graham, T. (2021b). Regional Implications of Militia Activities in West Africa. *International Affairs Review*, 19(2), 102-118.
- Harrington, A. (2018). Religious violence and genocide in the Central African Republic. *Journal of Religion and Violence*, 6(2), 245-266. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5840/jrv20186241>
- Human Rights Watch. (2003). *Nigeria: The Bakassi Boys: The Legitimization of Murder and Torture*. Human Rights Watch.
- Jaye, T. (2009). *Transitional justice and DDR: The case of Liberia*. International Center for Transitional Justice.
- Johnson, L. (2019a). *Provides a detailed analysis of the RUF's impact on Sierra Leone's conflict dynamics, highlighting the group's use of terror as a strategy*.
- Johnson, L. (2019b). The Revolutionary United Front: A Case Study of Militia Impact on Sierra Leone's Conflict. *African Conflict Review*, 15(3), 78-71.
- Keen, D. (2005). *Conflict & Collusion in Sierra Leone*. James Currey.
- Killingray, D. (1986). The Colonial Army and the African Soldiers in the Colonial Wars. *Journal of African History*, 27(3), 377-395.
- Koffi, D. (2023a). *Discusses the challenges faced by humanitarian organizations due to the activities of armed groups in the Central African Republic*.
- Koffi, D. (2023b). Humanitarian Challenges in the Central African Republic: The Role of Armed Groups. *Humanitarian Affairs Journal*, 8(4), 56-73.
- Kumar, R. (2022a). *Examines how the fragmentation caused by multiple militias complicates peace negotiations and conflict resolution in West Africa*.
- Kumar, R. (2022b). Militia Fragmentation and Peace Processes in West Africa. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 39(1), 89-104.
- Marshall-Fratani, R. (2006). The war of "who is who": Autochthony, nationalism, and citizenship in the Ivorian crisis. *African Studies Review*, 49(2), 943.
- Martinez, F. (2022). Obstructed Aid: The Impact of Militias on Humanitarian Operations. *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, 11(2), 3449.



- Morris, J. (2023). Cross-Border Militias and Regional Instability in West Africa. *Regional Security Studies*, 14(1), 22-39.
- Muana, P. K. (1997). The Kamajoi Militia: Civil War, Internal Displacement and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency. *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*, 22(3-4), 77-100.
- Okonta, I. (2006). *Where vultures feast: Shell, human rights, and oil in the Niger Delta*. Verso Books.
- Olonisakin, F. (2008). *Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: The Story of UNAMSIL*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Oluwaseun. (2021). *Explores the consequences of Boko Haram's insurgency on the Nigerian state's ability to maintain control and governance*.
- Oluwaseun, S. (2021). State Erosion and Militia Power in Nigeria. *African Politics Review*, 20(3), 120-134.
- Pezard, S., & Shurkin, M. (2015). *Achieving Peace in Northern Mali: Past Agreements, Local Conflicts, and the Prospects for a Durable Settlement*. RAND Corporation.
- Pham, J. P. (2004). Liberia: Portrait of a failed state. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44(3), 373-398.
- Reno, W. (2000). Liberia and Sierra Leone: The Competition for Patronage in Resource-Rich Economies. In (pp. 231-260). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198297406.003.0008>
- Richards, P. (1996). *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth, and Resources in Sierra Leone*. James Currey Publishers.
- Ross, M. L. (2004). What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War? *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(3), 337-356. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343304043773>
- Smillie, I., Gberie, L., & Hazleton, R. (2000). *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds & Human Security*. Partnership Africa Canada.
- Smith, A. (2020). Militia Tactics and Civilian Impact in West African Conflicts. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 17(2), 45-41.
- Thomson, A. (2010). *An Introduction to African Politics (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Thurston, A. (2016). *Boko Haram: The history of an African jihadist movement*. Princeton University Press.
- Thurston, A. (2020). *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups*. Cambridge University Press.
- Uche, C. (2008). OIL, BRITISH INTERESTS AND THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR. *Journal of African History*, 49(1), 111-135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853708003393>
- Williams, H. (2021). Militia Proliferation and Conflict Fragmentation in Mali. *West African Peace Studies*, 13(4), 66-80.
- Zezeza, P. T. (2008). Colonial legacies and the post-colonial African state. *Journal of Higher Education in Africa. Revue de l'enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, 6(2-3), 135-152.



## The Absence of Durable Solutions, the Presence of Local Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations. The Case Study of Uganda's Approach to Hosting Refugees<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Opono<sup>2</sup>, Frank Ahimbisibwe<sup>3</sup> and Specioza Twinamasiko<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract:

The numbers of refugees have been increasing annually, engendering protracted refugee situations in the developing countries hosting refugees, yet with very minimal implementation of durable solutions. This intrigues the question of whether the approach of local solutions that empower protracted refugees to become resilient and self-reliant, can become a viable option to durable solutions especially in poor African countries such as Uganda? We use secondary literature and primary data collected from South Sudanese refugees in Uganda to answer this question. We argue that in the absence of granting or minimally granting refugees any of the three conventional durable solutions of repatriation, local integration and resettlement; the approach of local solutions can become an important but temporary (although long term) alternative for refugees to live relatively comfortable lives. However, this approach has to be holistically embraced and supported by various stakeholders, including the national government, local governments, international community, donors, and various nongovernmental organizations, to overcome the accompanying challenges and for the approach to succeed in empowering refugees to become resilient and self-reliant for a long time in their first asylum country and live a life outside camps or designated settlements, as they wait for any of the conventional durable solutions.

### Keywords:

Local solutions; durable solutions; protracted refugee situations; repatriation; local integration and resettlement; Uganda and South Sudan.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.293>

<sup>2</sup> Research Assistant, Department of Planning and Governance, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mbarara, Uganda; ORCID: 0000-0001-7352-1331; oponosamuel@gmail.com.

<sup>3</sup> Senior Lecturer, Department of Planning and Governance, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mbarara, Uganda; ORCID: 0000-0002-1371-9888; fahimbisibwe@must.ac.ug.

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer, Department of Community Engagement and Service Learning, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies (FIS), Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mbarara, Uganda; ORCID: 0000-0001-5431-7941; specioza@must.ac.ug.





## *Introduction*

The numbers of refugees and other people forcibly displaced have been escalating year on year. By the end of 2018, the number of refugees was at 25.9 million (UNHCR, 2019); by the end of 2020, the number of refugees was 26.4 million (UNHCR, 2021); by the end of 2021, the number of people forcibly displaced was 89.3 million with 27.1 million refugees (UNHCR, 2022); by the end of 2022, the number was at 108.4 million with 35.3 million refugees (UNHCR, 2023); and by the end of 2023, the number was at 117.3 million with 37.6 million refugees (UNHCR, 2024). In Uganda, the case study for this article and the highest refugee hosting country in Africa with the most generous refugee policies in the world, the number of refugees hosted by the country stands at over 1.6 million (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

Besides the yearly increase in the refugee numbers worldwide, many of them have been in protracted situations. At the closure of 2021, 2022 and 2023, 15.9, 23.3 and 24.9 (66%) million refugees and other people who needed international protection respectively, were in protracted situations. “There were 58 protracted situations in 37 host countries”, by the end of 2023 (UNHCR, 2022:20; UNHCR, 2023:22; UNHCR, 2024:21). These protracted refugees are in a state of limbo with uncertain future: whether they will end up in repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in the second asylum country (Agblorti and Grant, 2019). Refugees in protracted situations are afraid of remitting back to their origin country because of insecurity (Crisp, 2003); yet only 1% succeeds in being resettled, and numerous of them are unable to permanently live in their first country of asylum because the host state does not want them to remain on its territory indefinitely (Karooma, 2017; Long, 2011).

To delve more deeply, resettlement normally targets only the most vulnerable refugees (UNHCR, nd.), applying an awfully selective process (Garnier et al., 2018). In 2022, out of the 116,500 refugees that UNHCR submitted to the resettlement countries for consideration, 114,300 refugees got resettled, twice the number of the foregoing year (57,500), as depicted in the government statistics. This figure accounts for less than 1% compared to 35.3 million refugees in need of durable solutions around the world (UNHCR, 2023). This is concurrent with the argument that resettlements in the third countries in the global north account merely as a token of durable solution, considering global displacement as a whole (Schneider, 2021). In fact, “given the narrow quotas, the chances of being resettled is slim, and indeed many people in refugee camps think of resettlement as akin to winning the lottery” (Jacobsen, 2005:55). Only 1% of refugees gets resettled (Long, 2011) or less as the above 2022 figures indicate.

Similarly, voluntary repatriation is considered the best durable solution for refugees. In an ideal situation, this is where refugees on a voluntary basis, are officially sent back to their home country at the end of the conflict, to participate in the reconstruction process and rebuilding of their country (Ahimbisibwe, 2019, p.575). However, just like resettlement to the third country, the number of repatriated refugees has been low. Out of the 35.3 million refugees generated by the end of 2022, only 339,300 (0.96%)

refugees officially returned to their home countries (UNHCR, 2023:2). The total number of resettled refugees (114,300 or 0.32%) in 2022 plus the number of returnees (339,300 or 0.96%) comes to 453,630 (1.28%), which means over 98% of refugees are still living in and/or trapped in protracted situations in the first country of asylum. To what extent has the remaining 98% in the first asylum country been locally integrated?

With respect to local integration in 2022, only 50,800 were naturalized (UNHCR, 2023) out of the remaining over 34 million refugees without any form of durable solution. Earlier in 2017, 73,400 refugees in 28 countries were locally integrated, which was a rise of 217 percent from the 2016 figure, primarily due to Turkey's decision to locally integrate 50,000 Syrian refugees. Within the same period however, very little of the developing world, which contemporarily hosts almost all protracted refugees, witnessed reasonable numbers of refugees who were locally integrated: 115,200 refugees went back to their home countries and 102,800 had the opportunity to be resettled in a third country (Agblorti and Grant, 2019:196). This shows that majority of refugees remain protracted in the developing countries that host 75% of refugees (UNHCR, 2024:2), especially in poor countries of Africa and particularly Sub-Saharan Africa that hosted 25.3 million refugees in 2022 (UNHCR, 2023:11), where Uganda is the highest refugee hosting country with 1.6 million refugees by the end of 2023 (OPM and UNHCR, 2024) and many have lived in the country for decades; many refugees have lived in the country for over two decades and some for over 4 decades. Their numbers are in thousands and predominantly from Sudan, DRC and Rwanda. Some have lived entirely in Uganda, raised families in Uganda, and for them Uganda is their home. However, up to this moment, they have not yet been naturalized, neither have they been resettled. Refugee status has become unending limbo for them – “they are unable or unwilling to return to their home countries because of the persecution suffered there, but not permitted to integrate in their adopted home” (Walker, nd:1). Despite the court ruling in 2015 that refugees were eligible to naturalize, Ugandan government has not positively acted on this ruling (Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 2016; IRRI, 2016); yet the number of refugees keeps growing and Uganda now hosts over 1.6 million refugees (OPM and UNHCR, 2022). The question that begs an answer is, in the absence of, or very limited availability of the three conventional durable solutions (repatriation, resettlement and local integration) to refugees; can “local solutions” – the approach that empowers the protracted refugees to become resilient and self-reliant in the first country of asylum - become a viable option to durable solutions especially in poor African countries such as Uganda? This article attempts to answer this question, learning from Uganda's approach of hosting refugees that has been globally lauded as a model.

## *Materials and Methods*

To examine the above question, we use secondary scholarly and grey literature to answer the question posed. We assess the success and challenges of local solutions of the Ugandan nature, using the available reports supplemented by the primary views of South Sudanese refugees, who make up over 63% of refugees in Uganda (UNHCR, 2022:18). The primary data we used was collected from Pagirinya Refugee Settlement in Adjumani district in Uganda, to understand the views of South Sudanese protracted refugees concerning their situation in Uganda under local solutions. We selected both male and female ordinary adult refugees, elderly refugees and refugee leaders. Both ordinary and refugee leaders gave their perspectives on how they felt about their conditions in Uganda under local solutions, and whether they wanted to continue living in Uganda in such conditions or return to their country, since resettlement in third countries is only for a very few numbers of refugees. We also conducted individual interviews with key informants, including Refugee Welfare Council II, Assistant Settlement Commandant, and NGO staffs operating in the settlement. These range of respondents (124 in total) helped us to delve into the respondents' views and experiences of living under local solutions. Data collection reached saturation level (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hennink et al., 2011:8). The first phase of fieldwork started on 15th September to 5th October 2020, and the second phase from 4th April – 25th April 2022.

## *Contextualizing Protracted Refugee Situations in Uganda*

The profoundness of protracted refugee situations and the conditions of refugees living in such situations (UNHCR, 2004) have intrigued debates on refugee durable solutions (Forced Migration Review 2009:30-31; Long, 2011; Rohwerder, 2015; Agblorti and Grant, 2019, p.196). A protracted refugee situation is explained by the UNHCR's Standing Committee as:

“...one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance... UNHCR uses the ‘crude measure of refugee populations of 25,000 persons or more who have been in exile for five or more years in developing countries.” (UNHCR, 2004a).

In regards to the above definition, it appears as if there is no end of protracted refugee situations as long as the push factors in the country of origin persist and refugees are not willingly repatriated or refugees refuse to repatriate, and as long as there are very limited opportunities for resettlement in the third countries and refugees remain in the first

asylum country for unforeseeable future due to the absence of opportunities for local integration.

By the end of 2022 and 2023, 23.3 and 24.9 million refugees and other people who require international protection respectively, were living in protracted situations scattered across 37 host countries (UNHCR, 2023:22; UNHCR, 2022:20). These protracted refugees are in a state of limbo and are uncertain of their future: whether they will be repatriated, locally integrated or resettled in the third country (Agblorti and Grant, 2019). Refugees in protracted situations fear going back to their homeland because it is not safe for them to do so (Crisp, 2003). Yet, many are unable to permanently live in their first country of asylum because the host state does not want them to remain on its territory indefinitely, and resettlement to the second country of asylum is possible only to 1% of the refugees worldwide (Karooma, 2017; Long, 2011).

Protracted refugee situations come with accompanying challenges to hosting countries accommodating permanent refugees with unforeseeable panacea to their problem. In a circumstance of minimal international support, host countries find themselves in the dilemma to respond to the necessities of refugees. As such, many of their responses have been restrictive in nature: constraining refugee rights, encamping them, limiting their movement and restricting their employability (UNHCR, 2006:114-115; Milner, 2009). Yet, such restrictive approach amounts to states' self-abrogation from their international obligations (Milner, 2009; UNHCR, 2006).

Uganda is the highest refugee hosting country on the African continent and features among the top refugee hosting countries worldwide, hosting an estimated over 1.6 million refugees (UNHCR, 2022; OPM and UNHCR, 2024), mainly from South Sudan (63%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (29%) (UNHCR, 2022:18). It has been globally applauded as liberal and exemplary with progressive refugee policies and laws such as the 2006 Refugees Act (which grants refugees right to work, freedom of movement, right to start businesses and access to social services such as education and health on the same footings as Ugandan nationals), which are in consonance with the country's national, regional and international obligations (Ahimbisibwe, 2019 and Government of Uganda (GoU), 2006). Most refugees in Uganda flee from the adjacent countries and the broader region, among which are South Sudan, DRC, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, and so on (Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR, 2018).

The unending war in South Sudan has heightened the number of refugees in protracted situations in Uganda. The number of South Sudanese refugees reached 2.4 million by the closure of 2021, virtually "hosted by four neighbouring countries: Uganda (958,900), Sudan (803,600), Ethiopia (386,800) and Kenya (135,300). Out of the near 1 million South Sudanese displaced in Uganda since the war started more than a decade ago, only 180,400 returned to their country by 2021 and, in 2022, "the largest groups of returnees (in the world) with 151,300 returning in 2022 primarily from Uganda (75,500)". "Returns to South Sudan are difficult to verify, however, as they tend to be



self-organized, and access is often constrained in areas of returns” (UNHCR, 2022:36 and UNHCR, 2023:38). In any case, it leaves many of them protracted in Uganda.

As reported by the World Bank (2016:71), “Uganda is faced with a large number of refugees caught in protracted situations, unable to return to their countries of origin, sometimes for decades”. The report further contends that “most of the refugees in Uganda are in a situation of protracted displacement with limited prospects for a durable solution” (World Bank, 2016:6). The refugees engulfed in a protracted situation in Uganda are mainly from South Sudan, Congolese origin and Somalia. Much as refugees from other countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia have lived in Uganda more than five years, their numbers fall below the threshold of 25,000, the standard UNHCR figure for designating refugees in protracted situations (Ahimbisibwe, 2019:65).

To compound the problem of protracted refugees in Uganda, there are no signs of the end of the armed conflict in South Sudan that began on 15th December 2013. Fighting rages on in some areas of South Sudan despite the negotiated peace process under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The 2015 Compromise peace agreement appended on by the South Sudan People’s Movement (SPLM/A) and SPLM in Opposition led by the former Vice President Riek Machar has been abrogated a number of times (Ahimbisibwe, 2019:65; Opono, 2021). This shows that refugee movements and their protracted situations with accompanying challenges in the neighbouring countries such as Uganda will remain or even worsen if the conflicts continue without any meaningful peace processes, which affect the hope for any voluntary repatriation as a preferred durable solution, yet Ugandan government has not yet considered naturalization of refugees and resettlement of refugees to the third countries in the global north is merely a token and an obstacle to international solidarity and responsibility sharing; only a handful of the sum total of refugees globally find a spot to get into the minority world countries and, in the process incur a high financial, physical and psychological costs (Hovil and Maple, 2022:252). So, what are ‘local solutions’ approach and how has it been applied in Uganda, making it praiseworthy in hosting refugees, even if the three durable solutions are barely implemented to help in permanently addressing the challenges of protracted refugees in the country?

### *The Concept of Local solutions*

When states in the global south resisted the international pressure to uphold national policies that support the durable solution based on local integration, an alternative but temporary model of hosting refugees emerged, backed at an international level in the past decades; it’s been backed to strike a compromise between the majority states in the global south and minority states in the global north (Landau, 2019; Brankamp, 2021). This model espouses a development style settlement, introducing the option of “local solutions” - a policy geared towards concepts such as “self-reliance” and “resilience”. These all help to confine the mobility of refugees within the African continent (Hovil

and Maple, 2022:256) and to host and protect refugees in their first countries of asylum and accord them ‘fair access to public services and enjoy peaceful and productive relations with the host population’ (Crisp, 2023:14). Local solutions for refugees in their first asylum states are considered as ‘transitional solution arrangements aiming to assist and equip refugees on their path towards a durable solution, notably local integration’ (UNHCR & ICVA, 2021:6). Local solutions aid in facilitating ‘the economic, social and cultural inclusion of refugees’, fostering ‘the peaceful and productive inclusion of refugees and the well-being of local communities’, while addressing ‘issues such as documentation and residence permits’ (ibid).

This conceptualized notion of development style settlements has been set into motion (Jansen and Bruijne, 2020) and has already been adopted in some countries in the global south. For instance, settlements in Uganda and Kenya where the governments of these host countries have demonstrated the willingness to allow activities inside the settlements that surpass humanitarian aid (exemplified by activities in Nakivale and Kalobeyei settlements in Uganda and Kenya) have been sites of much focus by academics and policy researchers and analysts (Omata and Kaplan, 2013). These settlements are often illustrated in reports and publications as different entities from the known conventional enclosed and restricted refugee camps like the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya (Omata and Kaplan, 2013). There are obvious important benefits in advocating for a more planned and development style settlements, which also involve heightening interaction and engagement with local communities and recognition that refugees will most probably stay in the settlements for relatively long time (Hovil, 2016). However, despite reasonable freedom and acknowledgement of the above facts, restrictions on refugee mobility are not suspended, and political opportunities and interaction with state structures and the broader community remain restricted (Hovil and Maple, 2022:257). Uganda has, however, taken this self-style development approach further in its 2006 Refugee Act and 2010 Refugee Regulations that grant refugees freedom to move, right to work, right to start businesses and access to social services just like Ugandan nationals.

It is a known fact that these local solutions of refugee resilience and sustainable livelihood are funded partially or fully by the international donors or as part of wider policies of containing refugees within the global south, and bar them from further mobility into the north (Chimni, 2002). Indeed, whereas Uganda refugee policies is outstanding and a transformative model in these local spaces, it is still worth noting that most of its decisions have been influenced and adopted partly as a wider strategy of engagement with the international community that has interest in supporting and maintaining Uganda’s reputation and ensure that its government accesses its desired foreign development and humanitarian assistance (Hovil, 2018). Because of that, its “transformative” policies have effectually consolidated the settlement model approach and beefed the notion that repatriation is the sole feasible durable solution; while local integration has been continuously obstructed, in spite of the great attention on





augmenting de facto integration (local solution) of refugee services into the national system.

Furthermore, in relation to this novel advocacy for local solutions, is the growing use of policy jargons like self-reliance and resilience, and the enactment of policies based on these concepts, which has emerged as a comfortable replacement for local integration by international donors, UN agencies and host countries (Hovil and Maple, 2022:258). These policies pay attention on the agency of refugees to mold an environment in which they are able to survive such as in urban areas and, at least on policy documents, is an important pathway to a sort of local inclusion. It is a fact that international agencies like UNHCR are facing challenges that are political and financial in nature in attempt to execute refugee policy in urban environments. Therefore, it can be argued that these types of inclusionary and integration approaches are merely trying to get the best from very complicated political environments. “Yet, fundamentally they also neatly side-step issues relating to both genuine political inclusion of refugees, and state and international agencies’ roles in providing international protection for refugees. For example, refugees living in many urban areas in Africa – especially countries that have encampment policies – are still offered little to no assistance by the state or UNHCR” (Hovil and Maple, 2022:258). Uganda seems to be an exception in this argument because of its open-door policies - 2006 Refugee Act and 2010 Refugee Regulations, and refugees living in urban areas seem to be faring well economically and are not interested in humanitarian aid (Omata and Kaplan, 2013; Opono and Ahimbisibwe, 2023).

The justification of these approaches of local solutions is hinged on the “resilience” of refugees, with both states and UNHCR basically embracing the policies of non-interference in urban areas. If refugees choose to do away with the aid channeled to them in the varied refugee camps in Africa and move to towns and cities, they are now on their own to self-integrate and provide for themselves (Hovil, 2016). In short, local solutions aspire to make refugees economically self-reliant and resilient, not dependent on humanitarian aid, de facto integrate in the host communities and away from the camps and settlements especially in urban areas and also in rural host communities such as in Uganda, even if they are not naturalized. Below is a practical application of local solutions based on Ugandan case, featuring comprehensive extracts of the successes of policies based on local solutions as a model of refugees hosting in the world.

In responding to the needs and aspirations of refugees in Uganda, Ugandan government uses an integrated system of management framework called the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which is the “multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to the refugee response ... that promotes self-reliance for refugees and measures to ease the pressure on refugee-hosting districts” (UNHCR, 2021b:3; Ifat, 2020). A vital aspect of the CRRF in Uganda is integrating refugees in national planning and local development, as a way of reducing the pressure on refugee-hosting districts and to improve service delivery for both refugees and local communities as highlighted in these extracts below.

*Comprehensive sectoral plans have been formulated which link the refugee response to government sector plans. The plans also enable Uganda to clearly highlight where the international community may usefully channel support for a comprehensive and people-centered response in its refugee-hosting districts. UNHCR has aligned its strategies with these comprehensive plans and supports the coordination structures for CRRF implementations, such as the Secretariat for the Education Response Plan (ERP), the Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan, the Water and Environment Response Plan and the CRRF Secretariat in OPM, which provides services for the CRRF Steering Group (UNHC, 2021b:3).*

*Whereas refugees had already been included in the National Development Plan (NDP) II (2016 – 2020) through the Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA), NDP III, which entered into effect on 1 July 2020, explicitly calls for refugees to be integrated into national planning and statistics. Refugee hosting districts have included refugees in their planning for the next five years. UNHCR is working closely with the refugee-hosting districts to provide analysis on refugees in the settlements and support the planning processes for these District Development Plans (DDPs) (UNHCR 2021b:3).*

*These efforts offer opportunities to integrate longer-term resilience and development approaches within the refugee and host population assistance and create entry points for development partners to invest in the response. UNHCR continues to foster a multi-stakeholder and partnership approach and to strengthen its convening role aimed at mobilizing and coordinating support, particularly regarding economic and social inclusion. Close collaboration with development partners has allowed for the handover of activities, which were previously funded by UNHCR. Development partners have also extended services for water and environment, allowing UNHCR to play a more catalytic and coordination role (UNHCR 2021b:3).*

*In order to enhance protection, UNHCR works with the Government of Uganda to provide effective protection for refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda. The ultimate goal of the interim Multiyear Multi Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMPSS) 2021 is that refugees are protected by the Government of Uganda, live in safety and dignity with host communities, and progressively attain lasting solutions by 2021 (UNHCR 2021b:3).*

*The Uganda refugee response Strategic Objective 3 highlights that “by 2021, the refugee response paradigm in Uganda has progressively shifted from care and maintenance to inclusion and self-reliance through the promotion of a conducive environment for livelihoods opportunities and provision of integrated basic social services including: health, education, water and sanitation, provided by national authorities in refugee-hosting districts (UNHCR 2021b:4).*

*Figure 1: Extracts explaining Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). Source: UNHCR, 2021.*

As highlighted earlier, durable solutions to refugees are being minimally implemented around the world and refugees are living in the host countries for a very long time without realizing any durable solution, for instance living for more than 20 or 40 years



in Ugandan, yet without being locally integrated. Uganda has instead, with the help of various partners and the international community led by the UNHCR, adopted the multi-stakeholder approach in their CRRF which mirrors a system of local solutions that seek to make refugees resilient and self-reliant in the Ugandan hosting communities. The following successes by sectors have been registered in the empowerment of refugees in different sectors of the Uganda economy.

### **Comprehensive extracts of the success of local solutions in Uganda (UNHCR, 2021b)**

**In the education sector**, in conjunction with the government and other stakeholders, “UNHCR provides service delivery to refugees and supports strengthening of education system. Together with NGO partners, UNHCR provides education to 79 per cent (264,470) of refugee children enrolled in UNHCR-supported Primary Schools and 11 per cent (20,991) enrolled in Secondary Schools within the settlements. Compared to the previous academic year (2019), this is an increase of 10,028 pupils and 678 students in Primary and Secondary Schools respectively (UNHCR, 2021:4). Additionally, “Uganda has made progress in refugee education through the implementation of the Education Response Plan (ERP). This includes the improvement of the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in primary from 76 percent in 2019 to 79 percent in 2020, the training and salary payment of some 4,000 teachers in Primary and 500 in Secondary to enhance the quality of education while progressively meeting the national standard; strengthening the education system for refugee inclusive planning through the contextualization of ERP at District level. The refugee-hosting districts of Koboko, Lamwo and Yumbe in West Nile, Isingiro and Kamwenge in the Southwest finalized and approved ERP at district level (UNHCR, 2021b:5). Refugees also have opportunities to progress to tertiary educational institutions.

**In the health sector**, the Uganda refugee operation has a total of 2,221 Health Workers across all settlements, of which 41 are medical doctors. Consultation per clinician per day is at 46 against the standard of <50. Refugees access health services from 89 health facilities in the settlements, with District Hospitals, Regional Referral Hospitals and Mulago National Referral Hospital acting as referral points for the secondary and tertiary health care. Disease prevention activities are continuously carried out to minimize the number of outbreaks such as measles, watery diarrhea, and cholera in the operation (UNHCR, 2021b:5).

A total of 17,579 patients are currently receiving HIV care and treatment in the facilities within the settlements, of which 37 per cent (6,589) are refugees. Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services are provided to the refugees and host population, as a measure of preventing the spread of HIV from positive mothers to the babies (UNHCR, 2021b:5). ”.

Under maternal and child health care, maternal mortality rate is at 76 deaths per 100,000 live births. Under 5 mortality rate is at 0.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. Health facilities in the settlements of Rwamwanja and Kyangwali have been supported with theaters and theater equipment for Emergency obstetric care (UNHCR, 2021b:5).

According to the preliminary findings of the Food Security and Nutrition Assessments carried out by UNHCR and partners in 2020 in the refugee settlements and in Kampala, over 76 per cent of the health facilities have been accredited and coded into the national system with the remaining 24 per cent in process of being accredited (UNHCR, 2021b:5).

UNHCR partners are strategically positioned to resume screening, and detection of acute malnutrition among new arrivals and linking them to care once the Government of Uganda opens the points of entry, transit and reception centers to admission of persons of concern (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

### Water and Sanitation

UNHCR and partners continue to provide water, sanitation and hygiene services to refugee and host communities in close collaboration with partners, including government institutions. Generally, service provision is evolving from emergency to medium and long-term WASH infrastructure development. This includes improving performance of piped solar systems to decrease usage of generators and hence contributing to decreasing the carbon footprint. Significant progress has been made in engaging refugees to participate in service delivery, including contribution towards the costs of the service delivery, thus promoting ownership, sustainability of services and a more equal access to services compared to host communities (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

### Food Security and Nutrition

UNHCR, through its partners and with support of District Local Governments (DLGs), UNICEF, and World Food Programme (WFP) continues to provide care to refugees and asylum seekers with acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies across all settlements. The curative interventions, mostly facility-based, are complemented with preventive actions aimed at promoting, protecting and supporting optimal feeding practices, improving dietary diversity and mitigating micronutrient deficiencies for all refugees for optimal growth and development. The interventions largely target the most vulnerable groups, including infants, children, Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs) and other Women of Reproductive Age (WRA), adolescents and the elderly. UNHCR currently prioritizes a nutrition-sensitive food system approach to scale-up the production and consumption of micronutrient-rich foods. This approach involves the adaptation of available small spaces for backyard gardening. Other actions include: community sensitization on feeding practices, cooking demonstrations, community demonstration gardens, counselling, and support to influence household behavior change on feeding practices and health seeking. WFP closely supports with nutrition commodities and community nutrition services. UNICEF closely supports with the commodities and medicines, and health systems strengthening (UNHCR, 2021b:5-6).

With support from UNHCR and Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), WFP continues to provide food assistance to over 1.4 million refugees in Uganda, delivered as in-kind and cash. Distribution of General Food Assistance is implemented using the New Food Assistance Collection Standard Operating Procedures and the Global Distribution Tool (GDT). The new food assistance collection standard operating procedures have been adapted to the COVID-19 context since March 2020 to include double distribution (2 monthly rations) and crowd management to minimize the spread of COVID-19 (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

On average, over 20 million liters of potable water are supplied daily to refugees living in the settlements, ensuring a per capita access of about 16.5 liters per person per day, through almost 100 water systems. To decrease the carbon footprint efforts are made to solarize water systems or connect them to the national grid, leading towards generators used only for 25 per cent of all the water supplied (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

Over 44,000 new latrines were constructed in 2020, mostly through a market-based approach and community involvement in dome-shaped slab production, leading to an increase of latrine coverage from around 60 per cent to over 70 percent (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

The implementation of the Water and Environment Refugee Response Plan (WERRP) is ongoing, including integrating of water delivery services in refugee settlements and host communities into national systems. All water systems in Rwamwanja refugee settlement and 34 per cent of the water systems in Kirvandongo have been taken over by National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC). In West Nile, the Northern Umbrella for Water and Sanitation is managing nine water systems, serving both refugees and host communities (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

Hygiene promotion is progressively mainstreamed with national Village Health Team (VHT) structures (UNHCR, 2021b:6).

### ***Shelter, Settlements and Non Food Items***

*UNHCR provides a technical support role to OPM and DLGs, with physical planning and land optimization of refugee settlements. In 2019, the Refugee Settlement Land Taskforce (RSLT) surveyed and demarcated 7,744 shelter plots (12m x 20m each), out of the targeted 10,000 (UNHCR, 2021:6).*

*The UNHCR Non-Food Items (NFIs) Distribution Entitlement Scale has undergone an official revision, as the emergency shelter kit component was tested within the operation. In future, where market access is possible, some NFIs will be monetized (UNHCR, 2021bb:6).*

*The tracking of NFI distributions using proGres V4 has been rolled out for the regular replenishment of soap and hygiene kit distributions to existing refugees in settlements, where feasible. This has enabled a more accurate recording of items delivered to beneficiaries and inform the monthly reconciliation reports and warehouse inventory reports that UNHCR and partners are producing (UNHCR, 2021b:6-7)*

*In order to enable refugees to have a strong voice in the design of their own homes, the Shelter, Settlement and Non-Food Items Working Group (SSNFI WG) moved away from producing strict design drawings and bills of quantities as minimum standards for semi-permanent shelter. Instead, the WG is aiming for a 'self-help' model, in which shelter actors provide material/financial and technical support. This will help extremely vulnerable households to construct their own homes and facilitate qualified external labor to construct homes for non-abled vulnerable households (UNHCR, 2021:7).*

### ***Energy and Environment***

*The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) with financial support from GIZ, hired a consultant in August 2020 to help guide the process of Developing the Sustainable Energy Response Plan (SERP) for refugees and host communities. The SERP aims at increasing access to energy for household, community, commercial, agricultural and industrial users, and other institutions working in areas where refugees are located, as envisaged in its vision: "Refugee and host communities attain universal access to affordable, reliable and clean energy for socio-economic transformation in an environmentally sustainable manner". Stakeholder consultations were also held at settlement and district level to identify the needs, challenges, and possible actions to enhance access to sustainable, clean, affordable and reliable energy in refugee-hosting areas. The draft consultation report is in place as well as the costed plan for the SERP of approximately US \$572 million for over 4 years. The draft SERP document will be reviewed by stakeholders and the final document will be available in June 2021) (UNHCR, 2021b:7).*

*Infrastructure for Sustainable Development (i4SD) handed over a solar mini grid project to the OPM in Rubondo-Nakivale settlement in March 2021. The power supply system (fed by solar panels of 30 x 360 watts panels with a power bank of 24 battery array of 2x1,500Ah capacity and smart distribution meters) supplies power to administrative offices of partners, all wards of health center II, Youth Center, and OPM accommodation buildings. The solar system was installed and integrated with the existing 24 kVA diesel generator through a manual changeover switch, which serves as a backup during the rainy days (UNHCR, 2021b:7).*



*Energy audits were carried out for six sites including Palabek field office, Pakelle sub office, Yumbe sub office, Invepi, Yoro and Palorinya base camps, under the Energy Supply for Displacement Settings (ESDS) project supported by GIZ. The audit was aimed providing a detailed data on supply and consumption patterns for energy in these offices which will facilitate technical system design and sizing, ascertaining technical requirements as well as financial modelling to support solarization of the sites. This would replace the diesel generators that currently supply energy in these offices (UNHCR, 202b1:7)*

Figure 2: Comprehensive extracts of the success of local solutions in Uganda. Source: UNHCR, 2021b.

Based on the above documented achievements of the initiatives underlying the approach of local solutions in empowering refugees to become self-reliant and resilient in Uganda, and considering the scarce access to resettlement to the third countries in the global north, we asked South Sudanese refugees in Pagirinya Refugee Settlement in Adjumani district in Uganda if they would consider remaining in Uganda or prefer returning to their home country – South Sudan- and the reasons for their choice. We summarize their responses in the three major typologies below.

### *Refugees who had unconditionally made up their minds to remain in Uganda*

#### *Civil wars and their effects in South Sudan*

There was the category of refugees who had decided to settle in Uganda irrespective of whether their country of origin regained normalcy in terms of peace and wellbeing. These refugees had decided to settle in Uganda, despite lack of economic and livelihood opportunities experienced by refugees as delineated in the next typology; yet, in their country of origin, they were overwhelmingly engaged in jobs in governments, NGOs, private and informal sectors of their economy. Their decision was based on the pre-negative violent and chaotic experiences and atrocities faced in South Sudan, which led to loss of lives of relatives and friends, loss of properties they worked hard to attain, and suffering of family members. The following extracts represent their decision:

“As for me, what has happened to me and my family in South Sudan I have not forgotten up to now. So, considering what has happened to me and my family, I will never accept to go back to South Sudan just like that. My main aim is just to stay here.” (Cluster Leader of Block F in an FGD on 24th September, 2020).

“By the time I was in South Sudan, I was engaged in business. I was selling food stuff, clothing, and so on. But when the war started, I was unable to flee with anything. I came with nothing. Right now, I am unable to pay school fees for the





children.” (A Woman Cluster Leader in Block E in an FGD conducted on 23/09/2020).

“...Sometimes they begin to beat you up. They take away your solar, when they see it outside and, if you ask them why they are going away with your thing, they kill you now. That is the problem; they take everything in your compound. They come in and they want you to give them the cow, the chicken, the what... and they take it by force. And they begin to suspect people anyhow, killing people anyhow... You find they have killed so and so in this area, so and so in this area, so we realized life was more important and we decided just to run and we left everything behind. We left good houses.” (Vice Chairperson Block E, interviewed on 23/09/2020).

These refugees feared returning, working and losing everything once again, in addition to the tragic risks of losing their lives. They lost faith in South Sudan governance and the peace processes. Therefore, they would rather remain and rebuild their lives in Uganda where there is relative peace, calmness and normalcy.

### *Rule of law, peace and security in Uganda Vs lawlessness and insecurity in South Sudan*

Furthermore, the decision of this category of refugees to unreservedly remain in Uganda was based on the relative observance of rule of law in Uganda, while lawlessness continued to prevail in South Sudan. Because rule of law prevails in Uganda, security is largely guaranteed; yet, in South Sudan, refugees recalled that people's lives were not valued - anybody can be killed any time - because security forces are brutal and non-law abiding, on top of extrajudicial behaviours of the local tribal communities in terms of meaningless killings and cattle raiding. In fact, respondents narrated that in Uganda, people are secure and have a peace of mind; one sleeps peacefully and does not hear the sound of a gun, unlike in South Sudan where people live in uncivilized and archaic manner, applying the 'law of the jungle' of "survival for the fittest", an almost anarchic situation. These refugees are negative about peace ever returning in South Sudan, that war will not end because of power struggle and enmity between the Nuer tribe and Dinka tribe, because agreements have been signed but conflicts have continued. This is true in view of the fact that the 2015 peace agreement flopped, cessation of hostilities have been violated several times, and the current transitional government of national unity is barely holding. Refugees therefore feel those who are in power - political and military officers - are not fit to lead the country because they don't care about the wellbeing and security of the ordinary populace; they are not educated enough, they are not after peace or protecting the citizens, they are not after the wellbeing of the nation but after their selfish interests and greed. This category of refugees further believes

that segregation and tribalism will persist in South Sudan and tribal wars will not end. In short, they are pessimistic and have lost faith in their government.

“Me, I will not go back to South Sudan, law is okay here (in Uganda), compared to South Sudan. Generally, the security of this country is properly catered for and, hence, all those things come in when the security is proper.” (Cluster leaders of Block F in an FGD conducted on 24th September, 2020).

“The thing is war will not end. Like those two tribes there: the other one is a president, another is a vice president. Even if those people go away or they die, another one will still say I am here; also, the other one will also come and say, I am here, then the war will continue! That’s why some of us are fearing to go back.” (Cluster leaders Block C in an FGD conducted on 25th September, 2020).

In subsequent fieldwork in April 2022, it was supplemented that insecurity in South Sudan had not abated. Fighting, torturing and killing of civilians were still rampant, perpetuated mainly by government soldiers. Insecurity was further exacerbated by pastoralists who moved from place to place displacing farmers, killing resistant farmers, but also fighting among themselves - fellow pastoralists - especially Dinka, Nuer and Murule as it was lamented in an FGD with refugee women on 05/04/2022:

“Those people have many cattle; thousands of herds... When we say we have gardens, we have our land to dig, if you keep these cattle here, we cannot dig... then they start shooting people because of talking like this. They have killed many Acholi there.”

This category of refugees, therefore, were scared of insecurity situation and lawlessness in South Sudan, but positive about deriving livelihood in Uganda especially acquiring land and practicing agriculture. They were further positive about the prospect of changing their nationality in the long run, despite the fact that the process of naturalization takes a long time.

### *Refugee fatigue*

“This is my first time of running, this is my second, this is my third.” (Respondents retorted) (FGD with Cluster Leaders of Block C on 25th September, 2020).

“We have a challenge of going and coming back, going and coming back, that is not okay.” (FGD with cluster leaders of Block C on 25th September 2020).

“For us we have decided that when time for official repatriation comes, we shall not go back to South Sudan. We will settle here in Uganda, because South Sudan has problems: you go and you come back, you go and you come back again. For me and even my son, we have decided to stay in Uganda... Even burial, I will be



buried here. I am now tired: the first war, I came to Uganda; during the second war, I came to Uganda; and the last one (1954, 1989, and in 2016). I am now tired of fleeing because of these wars.” (Interview with an elderly woman on 06/04/2022).

“... I was born during the time of war - the time of Anyanya - so we came here in Uganda... I was 9 years; we were taken back to Sudan. I continued with my education and coming to 1980s, I got married, I had one child, and the war of SPLA started. So, I moved around South Sudan until I could not persevere anymore and I came back to Uganda. My husband remained in Sudan and I came with the children. So, these children I have suffered with them. So, we went back towards the time of referendum and reunited with my husband. Again, we began to struggle to make a better home and again the war started. I ran back to Uganda and left my husband in Sudan... That is why I am saying, if my children can get good education and buy land and build for me a house, if others are going back, I will go to the town-Adjumani- and stay there than going and coming back again.” (Interview with Vice chairperson, Block E on 23rd September, 2020).

Some refugees had fled to refuge multiple times, so were tired of fleeing endlessly. Some of them had run into refuge three times: in 1950s, in 1980s and in 2016. These refugees were bitter about poor governance in South Sudan, uncertain peace, loss of properties due to war after working hard to acquire them; for example, losing a permanent house, yet they were aging and deteriorating in strength and could not keep on cutting grasses yearly to roof grass thatched houses that were frequently destroyed by termites. They, however, had their assets in the country of origin especially large chunks of land, and others were hopeful that someday peace might return and they might return to their country again, but others were thinking of settling in Uganda permanently, die in Uganda and be buried in Uganda. The major emphasis of this category of refugees was the fact that they were tired of fleeing their country over and over again due to insecurity and war. These refugees were hopeful of getting integrated in Ugandan community as they compared themselves with those who never went back after they ran to refuge in Uganda during the previous war/s and were now well integrated in the Ugandan society; they had jobs, owned land, their children were studying and some of them even had Ugandan National identity cards (Opono and Ahimbisibwe, 2023:7). Refugees who had made up their minds to unconditionally return to their country of origin, South Sudan

These were refugees who had decided to return to South Sudan irrespective of whether the security situation in South Sudan had improved or not. Their decision was based on the proceeding factors.

### *Livelihood*

While in the preceding typology, refugees who preferred integrating in Uganda had hope of making a living in Uganda; paradoxically, in the current typology, refugees who had totally opted to return to their country of origin, irrespective of the security situation back home, rationalized their decision on difficult livelihood in Uganda. Their decision was partially dependent on the fact that refugees received limited food rations which further reduced due to corona pandemic, coupled with difficulties to find other income generating opportunities. Allocated land for building and farming was small and, for educated refugees, in spite of freedom to be employed in Uganda as provided for in the 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations, it was hard for them and many remained unemployed.

### *Social services and dreams*

Whereas some refugees had decided to remain in Uganda because of improved social services especially in health and education; there were refugees who had made up their minds to return to their country of origin on account of difficulty in accessibility of these social services. According to this category of refugees, even if education or health care services were comparatively better off in Uganda in public health centres in and outside the settlements, sometimes they wanted to access these services in private facilities but it was difficult for them due to meagre income they had, yet sometimes there were inefficient services in public facilities, delays in referrals and lack of drugs in health centres in the settlement, and payment of school fees or development fees in schools.

“Here, even if you complain that you are sick, you are not sent anywhere.... They don’t refer you; they keep you there until you are very sick. The problem is there is no proper medical treatment for refugees. But in South Sudan, you have what to do and you can get money to go to the private clinic when you are sick.” (FGD with cluster leaders of Block E on 23rd September 2020).

“...These health centres when you are sick, they only test for malaria, but for other complications they send you to Adjumani... They refer you to other hospitals only when you are badly of...” (FGD with cluster leaders of Block E on 23rd September 2020).

“... if you send your child to school here, they ask for money. If you don’t have money, they will tell you to sell part of your food rations, yet the ration is too small, so me I will go.” (FGD with cluster leaders Blocks A and B on 21st September 2020).

Lastly on this category of refugees who had decided to return to their country irrespective of whether peace had returned or not, were those who based their decision on patriotism. For some refugees, this decision was due to the love they had for their country, that one’s country is one’s country irrespective of the situation: your land is yours even though it is bad, because there you have land to dig in order to survive (FGD with Cluster leaders of Block E on 23rd September, 2020). To the majority, however,



this decision was due to hard economic situation in the settlement, yet there were economic prospects and opportunities to progress in their country despite insecurity. In fact, interviews revealed that some male youth and men, after finding life in the settlement increasingly hard, decided to leave the settlement unofficially and returned to South Sudan.

### *Refugees who were in doubt*

The third category of refugees were those who were undecided. They were unsure of whether to return or remain. They were uncertain about peace ever returning to South Sudan due to bad governance that culminated into wars. Their decision to remain or return depended on the prevailing circumstance in the home country. Some of them lost their properties in their country of origin due to war; some of them had been in refuge for the second or third time, in 1950s, 1980s and in 2016, and were tired of constantly running to refuge; some of them had all their levels of education in Uganda but went back and was disappointed by poor governance system which manifested into war and uncertain peace which forced them back to refuge but, because of better job opportunity back home, they would want to go back and work while the family remains in Uganda; some of them had relatives both in Uganda and in South Sudan; the young ones wanted peace to prevail in South Sudan so that financial support for education would be available to them - sent from South Sudan by relatives who were living there; yet some older refugees wanted to remain in Uganda, send their children to school so that the children could be their source of support and security in the future, for instance to get a plot of land for them (parents) and help them (parents) to settle in Uganda.

“Me, mine is still unknown. This is now second time of being a refugee. I started my nursery here, I completed my secondary here, even my tertiary education I completed here in Uganda. So, with this, when I went back to South Sudan in 2007, I thought I was now at home and things are okay. But the way the country is governed, if they don’t come to the reality, I will not uproot myself (from Uganda). I will only go to work then I leave my family here while checking them, because that country (South Sudan) can blow anytime, you cannot be so sure of what tomorrow is going to be; today there is peace, tomorrow there is no peace; a lot of trouble and other things.” (FGD with cluster leaders of Blocks A and B on 21st September, 2020).

“For my case, up to now my dream is not settled. So, it is hard to decide where to go exactly. I am just in the middle. I have not decided exactly where to stay. If real peace comes to South Sudan and if I see good things happening in South Sudan, then I will decide to go. But, if those two people are still on the chair, I will not go. But if you can get some money, get a plot, you can become a citizen (in Uganda) and you stay.” (Interview with Vice Chairperson of Block E on 23rd September, 2020).

## Discussion

As illuminated in the extracts from “UNHCR Fact sheet, January – March 2021”, all the achievements in different sectors of Uganda’s CRRF were possible due to the support and collaborations with relevant ministries in the Ugandan government, relevant district local governments of Uganda in the refugee hosting districts, various UN agencies, numerous NGOs and donor governments (UNHCR, 2021b:8). No wonder CRRF is the “multi-stakeholder and partnership approach to the refugee response ... that promotes self-reliance for refugees” (UNHCR, 2021b:3; Ifat, 2020) and their integration in the national planning and local development. Furthermore, the success of the CRRF’s initiatives – local solutions - is attributable to Uganda’s willingness to enact and implement generous refugee policies, assisted by various stakeholders in practically implementing those policies for the betterment of both refugees and their host communities. Uganda refugee policies have been internationally levelled as progressive and as the best global policies for hosting refugees. As provided for in the 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations, refugees have the right to work, do business, move freely, access social services such as health and free primary education. Refugees are not restricted to live in the camps but can live in towns and cities. These policies have enabled Uganda to receive immense positive attention in promoting the refugee self-reliance.

In our fieldwork, there were refugees who had unconditionally decided to remain and integrate in Uganda. They cited refugee fatigue, a more stable rule of law and peace and security in Uganda compared to lawlessness and insecurity in South Sudan as reason for refusal to return. Additionally, in our previous report ‘Attitudes of Refugees Towards Integration: The Experience of South Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani District in Uganda’, some refugees were hopeful of fully getting integrated in the Ugandan communities as they compared themselves with refugees who never went back to South Sudan after they ran to refuge in Uganda during the previous war/s. These refugees who never went back were now *de facto* integrated in the Ugandan society; they had jobs, owned land, their children were studying and some of them even had Ugandan National identity cards (Opono and Ahimbisibwe, 2023:7). Moreover, there were refugees who were well integrated in the Ugandan society and were benefitting from its comparatively better health and education services and a more stable food security compared to South Sudan (Ibid:4). All these *de facto* integration in the Ugandan host societies, despite the absence of local integration, mirror the success of the model of local solutions captured in CRRF and Uganda’s favourable refugee policies, most notably 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations that grant refugees freedom to move, right to work, right to start businesses and access to social services just like Ugandan nationals.

Furthermore, as our fieldwork unearthed, refugees who were in doubt – undecided whether to return to South Sudan or remain in Uganda – might all still be living in or majority of them are still living in Uganda due to war in South Sudan, including the category of refugees who responded that they had made up their minds to





unconditionally return to their country of origin - South Sudan - irrespective of the situation there. This argument is tenable because officially, out of the near 1 million South Sudanese displaced in Uganda, only 180,400 officially returned to their country by 2021 and, in 2022, only 75,500 returned, although “returns to South Sudan are difficult to verify as they tend to be self-organized, and access is often constrained in areas of returns” (UNHCR, 2022:36; UNHCR, 2023:38). Generally, Uganda is a home to many refugees who have lived in the country for over two decades and some for over 4 decades. Their numbers are in thousands and predominantly from Sudan, DRC and Rwanda. Some have lived entirely in Uganda, raised families in Uganda and, for them, Uganda is their home despite not being naturalized yet. Despite the court ruling in 2015 that refugees were eligible to naturalize, Ugandan government has not positively acted on this ruling (Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 2016; IIRI, 2016), which is congruent to the observation that states in the global south hosting most of the refugees have evaded long-range commitment that involves granting citizenship to refugees within the framework of international pledges and pressures from home (Hovil and Maple, 2022:264). Nonetheless, these long-staying unnaturalised refugees have been favourably living in Uganda, protected under Uganda’s generous policies, including the 2006 Refugees Act, the 1995 Constitution, and the 1997 Children’s Act, among others (Ahimbisibwe, 2020:2) which, on the other hand, reflect Uganda’s national, regional and international obligations (Ahimbisibwe, 2019 and Government of Uganda (GoU), 2006), reflected in the CRRF designs mirroring local solutions.

Despite all these strong legal frameworks and achievements as systematically expounded in the CRRF extracts, refugees are not free from struggles under the CRRF and Uganda’s generous refugee policies that epitomize local solutions. In fact, as our data presentations show, there were refugees who had made up their minds to unconditionally return to South Sudan, irrespective of whether the security situation had improved in their country or not. The reason for their risky decision was based on the difficult livelihood in Uganda and limited food rations which were further compounded by the corona pandemic, in addition to difficulty in earning extra income – outside of humanitarian aid – to pay for private services especially in education and health because even if education or health care services are comparatively better off in Uganda in public health centres in and outside the settlements, sometimes refugees want to access these services in private facilities but it is difficult for them due to the meagre income they earn; yet, sometimes there are inefficient services in public facilities, delays in referrals and lack of drugs, and payment of school fees or development fees in schools. As a result, as our previous study shows, due to hardships in the settlement some refugees unofficially left the settlement and returned to South Sudan while others were contemplating the same even if the country was still insecure (Opono and Ahimbisibwe, 2023:5).

Other studies also find weaknesses in Uganda’s generous approach mirroring local solutions. Refugees are not recognized in law as refugees if they live in other urban areas apart from the capital - Kampala. As “self-settled” urban refugees, they are in danger of

being misunderstood as economic migrants. Urban refugees forfeit assistance if they are not formally registered as refugees, unless they were registered in one of the settlements. Despite economic diversity among the refugees with more than 70 kinds of livelihoods activities, most refugees in settlements live by subsistence farming as their principal livelihood. The plots of land provided to refugees in the settlements are small and often infertile, discrediting farming as a viable livelihood for many refugees. This is an indication that even the “liberal refugee policies, like those promoting self-reliance in Uganda, must be backed with adequate resources if they are to be more than just words on paper” (Solutions Journalism, 2021). In their analysis of already vulnerable Ugandan economy and employment challenge for the locals despite progressive refugee policies, refugees in Uganda face and are engulfed in employment challenges even after 10 years of arriving in Uganda. “The data show a large employment rate gap of 35 percentage points between refugees and Ugandan nationals and a corresponding labour participation gap of 27 percentage points”. For both old and new refugees to sustain their families and make economic contribution to Ugandan economy, more need to be done to help refugees access the employment market (Sarr et al., 2022).

However, despite the challenges associated with Uganda’s generous policies underlying the philosophy of local solutions, Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees in large numbers since 1940s (Solutions Journalism, 2021; Sarr et al., 2022) and it has recently benefitted both politically and financially from its established refugee open door policy, with hundreds of millions of donor funds being channelled into the country annually to support humanitarian and development projects that benefit both refugees and the host communities. For example, between 2012 to 2021, Kenya “received Euros 200 million in humanitarian aid from the European Union, while Uganda received this much from the EU in just over four years” (Solutions Journalism, 2021) to finance its integrated system of managing refugee situation, while the three durable solutions – repatriation, local integration and resettlement - are being marginally applied at the global and local levels, including in Uganda. In the Ugandan case, out over 1.5million refugees hosted in the country by the end of 2022, only 509 departed for the third countries, and only 75,500 officially returned although others could have returned unofficially due to the porous borders and the nature of back and forth movements of South Sudanese refugees from Uganda to South Sudan, and Uganda has not yet naturalized refugees, but its approach - herein referred to as “local solutions” - has been globally praised as a model of hosting refugees, with some refugees who have stayed in the country for more than two, three or four decades.

## *Conclusion*

The shrinking of the conventional three durable solutions of repatriation, resettlement and local integration, has engendered a de facto compromise known as “local solutions” between the global north and the global south refugee hosting countries and UNHCR. Local solutions, implemented by the national and local governments in conjunction with UNHCR and financially supported by the donor countries and the UNHCR, present

refugees with opportunities to become resilient and self-reliant, while providing a temporary although a long period for refugees to live relatively comfortably and freely in the first country of asylum, while the traditional three durable solutions are absent or limitedly implemented. Local solutions in Uganda have been successful in providing refugees services more or less like Ugandan citizens, backed by Uganda's much applauded favourable policies, of course with lingering challenges such as unemployment and restricted assistance when refugees choose to live in other cities other than the capital. Therefore, for local solutions to succeed more substantially, national governments such as Ugandan government have to be willing to host refugees indefinitely, the international community and different organizations should also be willing to financially support the national hosting governments constantly, and these different entities should work together to protect and empower refugees by guaranteeing their freedom to live like in Uganda's case with favourable refugee policies. It is however important to remember that, much as local solutions provide prolonged temporary relief to refugees in protracted situations, it is not a permanent solution; it is merely a transitional solution to permanent solutions. Therefore, it remains important for the international community – the global north states and the global south countries – not to negate their legal obligations, but to keep engaging each other and coming up with innovative ways of sharing responsibility of hosting refugees, and ultimately mechanisms of implementing the official international durable solutions in the long run, in order to ultimately address the challenges of the constantly growing numbers of refugees in protracted situations.

### *Acknowledgements*

We thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments. We are grateful to VLIR-OUŠ for approving and financially supporting this project. We are grateful to God for the gift of life, wisdom, knowledge and understanding, without which we would not exist to do this research.

### *Funding details*

This work was supported by the VLIR-OUŠ, Ref. No. G2019TEA491A102.

### *Disclosure statement*

The authors declare that they have no financial or any competing interests.

### *Data availability statement*

Not applicable.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Samuel Opono is a Research Assistant at the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. His research interests revolve around refugees, forced migration, drivers of conflict and post conflict reconstruction and development in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Frank Ahimbisibwe is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. He is a Guest Professor at the Institute of Development Policy, University of Antwerp, Belgium. Frank is also a Visiting Associate Professor at the African Studies Centre, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan. His research focuses on refugees, forced migration and international relations in the Great Lakes region and Horn of Africa.

Specioza Twinamasiko is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), Uganda. She is a coordinator of Service Course in the department of Community Engagement and Service Learning in the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, MUST. Specioza has expertise in peace, conflict Studies and Development Work, and her research focuses on development induced displacement, forced migration, and gender relations in extractives.

## References

- Agblorti, S. K. M., & Grant, M. R. (2019). Conceptualising Obstacles to Local Integration of Refugees in Ghana. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 38(2), 195-213. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdz005>
- Ahimbisibwe, F. (2020). Voluntary Repatriation of Rwandan Refugees in Uganda: An Analysis of Law and Practice. In M. Yonekawa & A. Sugiki (Eds.), *Repatriation, insecurity, and peace: A Case study of Rwandan refugees* (pp. 1-20). Springer Nature Singapore. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2850-7>
- Ahimbisibwe, F. T. p. o. r. R. r. i. U., 2003-2017', *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 7(12), pp.573-591. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.29822.28481. (2019). The politics of repatriation: Rwandan refugees in Uganda, 2003-2017'. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 7(12), 573-591. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29822.28481>
- Brankamp, H. (2022). Camp Abolition: Ending Carceral Humanitarianism in Kenya (and Beyond). *Antipode*, 54(1), 106-129. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12762>
- Chimni, B. S. (2002). Refugees, Return and Reconstruction of 'Post-Conflict' Societies: A Critical Perspective. *International Peacekeeping*, 9(2), 163-180. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/714002734>
- Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative. (2016). *The eligibility for refugees to acquire Ugandan citizenship*. Retrieved Oktober 17, 2023 from



- <https://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/the-eligibility-for-refugees-to-acquire-ugandan-citizenship/>
- Crisp, J. (2003). *No solution in sight: The problem of protracted refugee situation in Africa. New Issues in Refugee Research. Evaluation and Analysis Unit, UNHCR Working Paper No. 75.* United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Retrieved September 26, 2023 from <https://www.unhcr.org/afr/3e2d66c34.pdf>
- Crisp, J. (2023). Local integration, local settlement and local solutions: Disentangling the conceptual confusion. *Forced Migration Review*, 71, 12-14.
- Forced Migration Review. (2009). Protracted displacement. (33).
- Garnier, A., Jubilut, L. L., & Sandvik, K. B. (2018). *Refugee resettlement: Power, politics, and humanitarian governance.* Berghahn Books.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Aldine de Gruyter.
- Government of Uganda. (May 24, 2006). Refugee Act 2006. Act 21. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4b7baba52.h>
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative research methods. London, California.* Sage Publications.
- Hovil, L. (2016). *Refugees, conflict and the search for belonging.* Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hovil, L. (2018). "We Are Like a Bat. We Are Neither Birds Nor Animals": Where the Formal and Informal Collide as Burundian Refugees in Tanzania Struggle for Belonging. In (pp. 27-50). DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58194-5\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58194-5_2)
- Hovil, L., & Maple, N. (2022). Local Integration: A Durable Solution in need of Restoration? *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 41(2), 238-266. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdac008>
- Ifat, I. (2020). *Integrated approaches to refugee management in Uganda.* University of Birmingham.
- International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI). (2016). *The eligibility for refugees to acquire Ugandan citizenship.* Retrieved Oktober 6, 2023 from <https://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/the-eligibility-for-refugees-to-acquire-ugandan-citizenship/>
- Jansen, B. J., & de Bruijne, M. (2020). Humanitarian spill-over: the expansion of hybrid humanitarian governance from camps to refugee hosting societies in East Africa. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14(4), 669-688. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1832292>
- Karooma, C. (2017). *Rwandan refugees in Southwestern Uganda: Their attitudes and responses to repatriation 1994-2012.* Edwin Mellen Press.
- Landau, L. B. (2019). A Chronotope of Containment Development: Europe's Migrant Crisis and Africa's Reterritorialisation. *Antipode*, 51(1), 169-186. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12420>



- Long, K. (2011). *Permanent crises? Unlocking the protracted displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons. Policy Overview*. Oxford Department of International Development, Refugee Studies Centre. Retrieved July 15, 2021 from <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/pb-unlocking-protracted-displacement-2011.pdf>
- Milner, J. (2009). Refugees and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 28(1), 13-30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdp015>
- Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) & United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2018). *Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal, 2018*. Retrieved September 25, 2023 from <http://ugandarefugees.org/en/country/uga/>
- Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) & United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal*. Retrieved August 22, 2024 from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/uga>
- Omata, N., & Kaplan, J. D. (2013). *Refugee livelihoods in Kampala, Nakivale and Kyangwali Refugee Settlements: Patterns of engagement with the private sector, Working Paper Series No. 95*. Oxford Refugee Studies Centre.
- Opono, S. (2021). The relationship between corruption and armed conflict: A case study of South Sudan. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 9(9), 479-495.
- Opono, S., & Ahimbisibwe, F. (2023). Attitudes of Refugees Towards Integration: The Experience of South Sudanese Refugees in Adjumani District in Uganda. *Society*, 60(3), 333-344. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-023-00858-5>
- Rohwerder, B. (2015). *Refugee return in protracted refugee situation. Governance Social Development Humanitarian Conflict*. Applied Knowledge Services. Retrieved September 23, 2023 from <http://www.gsdr.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1282-Refugee-return-in-protracted-refugee-situations.pdf>
- Sarr, I., Beltramo, T., & Fix, J. (2022). *Understanding successful social and economic integration – an example from Uganda*. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Retrieved May 10, 2023 from <https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/understanding-successful-social-and-economic-integration-an-example-from-uganda/>
- Schneider, H. (2021a). Implementing the Refugee Resettlement Process: Diverging Objectives, Interdependencies and Power Relations. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.629675>
- Schneider, H. (2021b). Implementing the refugee resettlement process: Diverging objectives, interdependencies and power relations. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 3(45), 629-675. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.629675>
- Solutions Journalism. (2021). *Uganda's long history of hosting refugees*. Retrieved Oktober 6, 2024 from <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2021/09/01/uganda-history-hosting-refugees>





- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2004). *Protracted Refugee Situations, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Standing Committee, 30th Meeting on 10th June 2004, UN Doc. EC/54/SC/CRP.14.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2006). *State of the world's refugees: Human displacement in the new millennium.* Oxford University Press.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2019). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2018.* United Nations.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2021a). *Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2020.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2021b). *Local solutions for refugees: Key considerations.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2021c). *UNHCR (2021b) Fact sheet: Uganda January – March 2021. Kampala.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2021.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2023). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2022.*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2024). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2023.*
- Walker, S. G. (n.d.). *From refugee to citizen? Obstacles to the naturalisation of refugees in Uganda.* Retrieved August 22, 2024 from [https://www.refugeelawproject.org/files/briefing\\_papers/Naturalisation\\_Of\\_Refugees.pdf](https://www.refugeelawproject.org/files/briefing_papers/Naturalisation_Of_Refugees.pdf)
- World Bank. (2016). *An assessment of Uganda's progressive approach to refugee management.* Retrieved September 26, 2023 from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/24736>

## Application of Business Intelligence in Kenyan SMEs<sup>1</sup>

Dennis Olondo Orina<sup>2</sup>, Andrea Tick<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract:

Business Intelligence is still in its infancy stages in developing countries, particularly Kenya. Research has shown that different models are available to assess the usage and adoption of Business Intelligence (BI). In this case, the technological, organizational, and environmental (TOE) model was proposed as a suitable model for developing economies like Kenya. The study investigates how the TOE constructs affect BI adoption, the BI systems in Kenya, and whether managers influence BI adoption. The equivocal nature of the TOE framework allowed the creation of a structured interview questionnaire that was divided into two parts; the demographic profile and questions based on the TOE framework. The results demonstrated that the TOE factors led to more intensive BI adoption, but there might be a lack of awareness or technical skills to adopt advanced BI technologies. On this basis, it is recommended that managers within small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) learn about better BI solutions and how they can leverage the advantage to enable them to stay profitable, competitive, and data driven. Further research is needed to better understand BI usage within SMEs preferably with larger and representative sample sizes and across different counties within Kenya.

### Keywords:

Business Intelligence; digitalization; Kenya; SME; TOE framework.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.299>

<sup>2</sup> BA-degree, Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management, Óbuda University, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: 0009-0004-5299-0154; [Dennis@stud.uni-obuda.hu](mailto:Dennis@stud.uni-obuda.hu).

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Dr. Tick Andrea, Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management, Óbuda University, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: 0000-0002-3139-6509; [tick.andrea@kgk.uni-obuda.hu](mailto:tick.andrea@kgk.uni-obuda.hu).

## *Introduction*

A company's feasibility, competitiveness, and performance require perfect knowledge of the environment, adoption of strategic information to achieve the set objectives of a company, adapting its scope, operations, and resources to changes in the environment in the long term (Ouedraogo, Compaoré and Nassè, 2022). There is an increase in the disparity of information in the knowledge economy both externally and internally. Companies are faltering to control their production cycles, to get to know each other better, and mainly to know all their competitors and partners. In the 21st century, a manager should not be ill-equipped and anxious to manage their business when there is compressed decision-making time with the fast-paced and increased volumes of transactions (Séllei et al., 2024).

Presently, business requires a lot of data, which spectrum of data can be easily sourced, but for effective and efficient results, data must be transposed with software into functional information. Time constraint is a major influence to data availability and information. Many businesses require serious allocation of minimal time into decision making and information at their fingertips or they fail to survive. Companies all over the world are constrained by a proactive approach rather than a reactive one to help deal with future challenges.

Within the developed and developing nations, SMEs are undoubtedly the driving forces for the economies. According to the Central Bank of Kenya 90% of all businesses are SMEs in Kenya (KNBS, 2024), their importance is indisputable as they contribute to 38% of employment. However, it was evident that there is a massive untapped potentiality for an economic upturn within Kenya. SMEs faced innumerable hurdles including lack of knowledge, fast changes in technology and no market entry. In 2018, a survey by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics highlighted that many of the Kenyan SMEs do not reach their second year anniversary (Wakiaga, 2019). This is a sign that a lack of vital strategic information is missing for most SMEs based in Kenya. However, SMEs also face stiff competition from multinationals, large companies, and new forms of commerce. For these reasons, SMEs must have contingencies to incorporate tools that will serve as a springboard to enable small companies to strategically leap from one stage of growth to another. This essential task of SMEs to hold, process, and analyze strategic information meets the opportunity of developing information and communication technologies (ICT) in business management.

Business Intelligence (BI) is a vital subject area for various enterprises including SMEs. The difference between large and small enterprises in the use of BI is due to aspects such as resource limitations, skills, and electronic infrastructure. Small enterprises are adapting to the fast-paced technological changes by embracing BI due to the plethora of advantages the tool offers to thrive their business operations.

The main objective of the present study is to examine the influence of TOE factors on the adoption of BI in SMEs in Kenya according to the TOE framework. The study

aims to identify and evaluate the factors that may directly and indirectly have an effect on the deployment of new technologies in their enterprises.

The present study aims to assess the usage of BI in Kenya. The research applies the TOE model and identify the factors leading to BI adoption by SMEs (Ain et al., 2019). Then, a better outlook on the commonly used Business Intelligence products among the SMEs in Kenya is presented. Lastly, since most Kenyan SMEs do not celebrate their second-year jubilee, a succinct picture of whether the age and size of enterprises affect the readiness to adopt BI is planned to be revealed. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated:

Q1. How do technology, organizational and environmental factors influence the adoption of BI in small and medium enterprises in Kenya according to the TOE framework?

Q2. What are the commonly used BI products among SMEs in Kenya?

Q3. Do the age and size of enterprises impact their willingness to adopt BI in Kenya? After the literature review and the presentation of the theoretical framework, the research methodology will be presented, then the research results and findings. The paper discusses the results and gives some recommendations in the Conclusion section.

### *Literature Review*

This chapter discusses the concept of Business Intelligence, the models existing in assessing BI adoption in SMEs, the effects of the TOE factors on the adoption of BI in Kenyan SMEs, and the factors decision-makers consider in assessing the capability of adopting BI. Then the BI usage market in Kenya, the impacts of a particular BI system in a specific organization (Kowalczyk and Gerlach, 2015) will be discussed, and lastly the BI usage in Europe particularly Hungary in contrast to Kenya will be analysed. In conclusion, the literature review provides an all-encompassing summary of the key themes applicable to the research, although it may not be completely comprehensive.

### *Business Intelligence*

Ever since Business Intelligence appeared (BI) in the mid-1950s, the system has developed into large data systems typically in a data warehouse that facilitates various functions such as data reporting, real-time analysis, dashboards, and ad hoc queries. Chen et al. (2012)(2012)(2012)(2012)(2012) posited that BI and analytics provide a modern digital foundation for collecting, analysing and integrating large and heterogeneous data groups. This amplifies the worth of information available for corporate strategy from the angle of information system. BI is regarded as an umbrella term that incorporates strategic aspects, data warehousing, analytics, and visualization methods with other information systems to support decision-making or managerial support. Beal (2021) regarded BI as tools, strategies, and systems that create analysis and

planning processes within a corporation. “BI can be interpreted in multiple ways subject to one’s professional background and viewpoint. Some may view it as visualization, reporting, business performance management, data transformation, data extraction, data integration, statistical analysis or data mining.” Also alluded as strategic BI, managers can consider BI as a tactical approach to making use of the accumulated information (Gangadharan and Swami, 2004).

Ain et al. (2019) conducted a systematic literature review that highlighted only ten studies published in Africa in their all-inclusive examination of BI incorporation, usage and triumph for over twenty years. In a Swahili article, Kiwia (2019) highlighted how BI was essential in ensuring SMEs in Tanzania cooperated with International Trade Center. This collaboration would ensure that SME staff are well equipped with BI expertise to ensure they can trade internationally and externally. A gap could be found in research in developing economies regarding the usage of BI to enhance competitiveness, optimize resources, save resources, and improve performance (Table 1).

Country	Article count
South Africa	7
Ghana	1
Morocco	1
Nigeria	1

*Figure 1 BI research papers on the African continent. Source: Ain et al., 2019.*

### ***Business Intelligence tools architecture***

BI tools are a combination of systems that aid enterprises in their decision-making process. For a clearly defined, well-built and new strategic business opportunities, BI technologies incorporate a huge amount of structured and unstructured data (Friedman, 2011; Jonker, Tegelaar and Geurtsen, 2013; Mariani and Baggio, 2022). The International Data Corporation found that there was tremendous data produced among enterprises with 90% of the data being unstructured (Klein, Tran-Gia and Hartmann, 2013), which needs to be reconstructed by integrating BI tools. The reconstruction of data is vital for businesses since it ensures that value-added information support the decision-making within the enterprises. BI tools have an architectural layer which ensures transformation of both unstructured and structured data to a user-friendly report and helps meeting the business requirements. BI architecture consists of multiple layers with different structures and relationships. The Extract, Transform and Load (ETL) is fundamentally a segment of the BI architecture with additional layers constituting data sources, datawarehouse, end user and metadata (Marjamäki, 2017; Dhingra and Chaudhry, 2018; Drake and Walz, 2018).

The data warehouse (DW) layer is a principal determining factor within the BI architecture that gathers, stores data in a centralized system, constitutes analysis, and queries of the already loaded data. The data is then stored in different formats such as clustered data, historical data and summarized data. Data warehousing and BI have different objectives (Geetha, Dhanani and Doshi, 2020); data warehouses act as a

foundation for BI while BI systems utilize data warehouses. The DW layer might constitute multiple levels depending on the complexity of the ETL phase. The degree of database modelling that happens may directly influence how much effort is needed within a particular BI tool (Ain et al., 2019). The literature on ETL processes amongst companies is rather subjective depending on whether they already have an existing technological stack, cost efficiency and business requirements. There are popular ETL tools such as SQL Server integration (SSIS) and Pentaho. SSIS is a Microsoft tool used by companies relying on SQL server as their database whereas Pentaho is collaborative. According to Geetha et al. (2020), SMEs tend to use Pentaho ETL tool due to its debugging manager capabilities and also the logging ensures that errors can be identified in real time. The author's argument on usage of Pentaho due to its reduced throughput is weak since the speed of Pentaho is subjective depending on the hardware size, network and data size (Best Practices Team Pentaho, 2024). In addition, large companies tend to navigate towards SSIS due to the huge database handling capability provided by Microsoft (Geetha, Dhanani and Doshi, 2020).

All the BI architectural layers have a profound impact on the type of BI tool adopted within a company depending on its size and capability. Developing economies still generate unstructured data which is a huddle to integrate, they also use siloed data and several data providers which are sometimes not compatible with ETL providers like in the case of using Pentaho tool (Dobrev and Hart, 2015). Data regularly saved in silos within databases and systems prevent users from accessing the data for reporting and analytical purposes (Mullan, 2019).

According to an annual survey by KPMG East Africa (KPMG, 2024), SMEs in Kenya are regularly under pressure to operate in a competitive digital market leading to a need to effectively manage data as leverage in the business environment (KPMG, 2022). As SMEs worldwide, Kenyan SMEs also generate a significant amount of data which is an information overload for the individual businesses. To stay afloat and boost competitiveness, stakeholders within the enterprises need to understand the data generated. Failure in utilization of data, businesses end up using instincts to make decisions. A broad similar point is made by (Mesaros et al., 2016), who posits that SMEs are still grouped as being data deficient due to their inability to fully utilize data capabilities in semantic evolution and semantic acquisition.

Berbel et al. (2015) have found that there are limited studies conducted within third world nations to investigate important aspects of BI adoption. Data dependency is gaining traction because many applications, if not all, demand BI or data analytics to make critical decisions based on insights. SMEs must quickly adapt to the rapid changes to bridge the gap (Adeyelure, Kalema and Bwalya, 2018). Similarly, BI adoption is still at its formative stage within developing nations (Owusu, Ghanbari-Baghestan and Kalantari, 2017).





### *Small and medium-sized enterprises*

SMEs are commonly referred to as firms with less than 250 employees (OECD, 2008, 2023). According to the European Commission, 99% of the total enterprises in the European Union are SMEs, which is also determined by the turnover or the balance sheet total and the number of employees (Enterprise Ireland, 2007)

A large and growing body of literature has shown that flexibility is the main element attributed to SMEs (Fiegenbaum and Karnani, 1991; Gupta and Cawthon, 1996; Storey, 2016), their viability is usually ascribed to their speed of response to customers' changing requirement, environmental change and adaptability (Levy and Powell, 1998). Llave (2017) argues that there might be owners having considerable knowledge of the enterprise's capability, and the managerial structure of SMEs usually lacks bureaucracy and is normally flat, therefore they are less limited by bureaucracy and by cumbersome organizational hierarchies (Lefebvre and Lefebvre, 1992). Gupta and Cawthon (1996) also points out that SMEs are intrinsically more innovative than large companies due to their small size and the day-to-day interaction of owner-managers, especially in the company lifecycle's early stages (Acs and Audretsch, 1987; Audretsch, 2002). SMEs are considered the cornerstone of the European economy (Executive Agency for Small and Medium sized Enterprises. et al., 2021), they generate the largest number of job opportunities with 66% in Europe. In emerging countries, SMEs have substantial influence on their economies (Cataldo, Pino and McQueen, 2020).

Expanding on the previous point of the importance of SMEs in underdeveloped countries, Ntwoku et al. (2017) asserted that SMEs serve as sparks and powerhouse for economic improvement. The goal of the SME Strategy Master Plan by the African Union (2016) is to aid the enforcement of the industrial development and economic reform under the agenda 2063.

Kenya has over 1.6 million registered SMEs and 5.8 million unregistered enterprises. According to the Kenya Economic Report (KNBS, 2024), the registered SMEs entail 98% of all the businesses in the country employing approximately 5 million people who constitute a percentage close to 75% of the labour force which consequently contributes 33% to Kenya's GDP. Small enterprises constitute a huge proportion of the registered businesses employing 5-50 citizens. In light of the fact that the Kenyan economy is prevailed by SMEs in industries such as manufacturing, construction, commerce, trading, services and agriculture, it is apparent that the role of these proprietor-run or family-operated enterprises can be tremendous.

To understand the adoption of BI, most studies have presented maturity levels, frameworks, adoption theories, and models. Boonsiritomachai et al. (2016) introduced a model to assess the level of BI incorporation among SMEs in Thailand. They also explored the aspects that facilitate the incorporation of BI in these enterprises through the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Technology Acceptance and Use of Technology, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Rogers, Singhal and Quinlan, 2019). In addition, the authors pinpointed two notable theories for the adoption of information systems at an organizational level, the Technology,

Organization, and Environment Framework (TOE) and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DIT) (Daft, Sormunen and Parks, 1988). Based on twelve determinants that influence the adoption of BI in SMEs by Puklavec et al. (2014), van der Krogt (2020) validated the model with several European countries.

In his impressive validation of the model, van der Krogt (2020) concluded that it is applicable in developing countries because the study is quite unbiased, uniform, and comparable and when applied to SMEs it would increase economic growth.

### *Technology, Organization, and Environmental (TOE) model*

The TOE model analyses the technological adoption within companies (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). To examine user's views on specific systems, the model suggests general factors (technological, organizational and environmental) that influence the adoption of technological systems (Awa, Ukoha and Emecheta, 2016). Awa et al. (2016) also identified that the integration of the TOE model with other aspects such as the functionality context and individuality would add on the prediction and explanation of technological adoption within enterprises. This study uses the TOE framework with the 12 determinants as proposed by van der Krogt et al. (2020) (Figure 2).

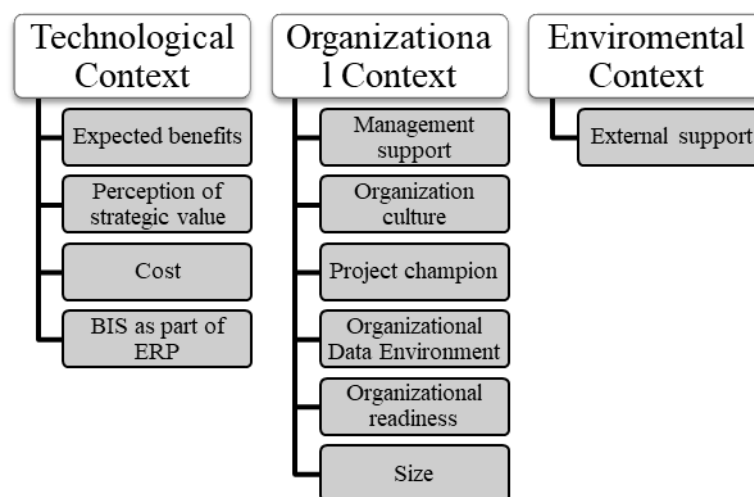


Figure 2 TOE Framework Source: based on (van der Krogt, Coronel and Núñez-Castillo, 2020), Source: author's edition.

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of the TOE model. Ramdani et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of digital innovation among SMEs and highlighted how the model has gained prominence due to the wide range of determinants that would lead to the adoption, implementation, and wide use of digital technologies. The Technological context encompasses the technological attributes such as compatibility with existing technologies, perceived advantages, learning requirements and visibility. It takes into account the variety of technologies within the enterprise and outside. In a business setting, these factors play a fundamental role in determining whether technology adoption is feasible. The Environmental context describes the scope



of where the business operates. It includes external pressures which can be summed into normative and mimetic. The normative pressures stem from expectations within the legal frameworks, government, demands of customers and trade partners and professional organizations. As for the mimetic pressures, they stem from imitation of competitors, and intentional observation of competitors. An increased competition amongst rivals as a result of the mimetic pressure steers the enterprise towards technological adoption.

On the other hand, Organizational context is highly influential towards technological adoption. The ability to adopt technology within an organization can be as a result of either internal or external factors. Internal factors constitute the organization's structure, human resources and culture whereas the external factors are competitive pressure and strict government regulations. Change is inevitable within organizations and the model also takes into account the probability of adopting new technologies or changes on business models and organizational structure. The TOE model confirms that adoption of technology is not only influenced by technical aspects; organizational factors are also instrumental (Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990; Awa, Ukoha and Emecheta, 2016).

Talaoui et al. (2021) discovered that the nature of the linkage between the environmental influences on BI is still equivocal. Some studies (Daft, Sormunen and Parks, 1988; Boyd and Fulk, 1996; Ebrahimi, 2000) endorse a "one rule fits all" approach to various environmental layers (e.g., customer, political remote, and direct) much less country-level contexts (e.g., developing vs developed countries). By doing so, they miss peculiarities of developing economies where other non-standard singularities and pressure (cultural, cognitive, and institutional) moderate the interrelation between the environment and BI. Wamai et al. (2022) confirmed that BI influences performance and managers play a pivotal role in spearheading the adoption and deployment of BI infrastructure as they are major drivers of performance.

### *Impacts of a particular BI system on an organization*

With reference to the use of a particular BI system on an organization, Gartner's research reveals that BI has risen to the forefront as the top technology for improving competitiveness in recent years (Manis, 2024). Chaudhuri et al. (2011, p. 91) remarked that "today, it is difficult to find a successful enterprise that has not leveraged BI technology for their business."

In the 2022 report, Gartner Research identified twelve vital proficiencies for a current Business Intelligence technology. These include "governance, security, cloud-based analytics, data preparation, connectivity to data sources, automated insights, catalogs, data storytelling, data visualizations, natural language generation and query and reporting" (Manis, 2022, p. para 6). According to Gartner's Magic Quadrant Report, Microsoft (Power BI), Salesforce (Tableau), and Qlik were identified as leaders in the business information technology industry. What is striking in Figure 2 is how Microsoft has outpaced the rest of the leaders in the quadrant.



Figure 2: Magic quadrant for Analytics and Business Intelligence Platforms; Gartner, Inc. Source: Manis, 2024; Schegel et al., 2024.

Microsoft offers a plethora of services in the BI ecosystem such as data preparation, interactive dashboards, augmented analytics, and visual-based data discovery. Power BI is available as an on-premises option on Power BI Report Server or a SaaS alternative running in the Azure cloud (Wade, 2010, para. 14).

To determine the BI impacts, Llave et al. (2018) conjectured that when BI is an executive precedence, it would result in organizational performance. The study offers a detailed examination of the BI impacts such as competitive advantage, customer insights, and business insight and cost reduction. Business insight was acknowledged as the most impactful since it allows organizations to understand their strengths and weaknesses, performance, competition and market share. Customers are also crucial towards the success of businesses and BI technology also helps give customer insights which translates to increased sales and customer retention by implementing targeted retention strategies and identifying valuable customers. Cost control can be gained by automating reports and decision-making and implantation of better resource utilization (Llave, Hustad and Olsen, 2018).

### BI usage market in Kenya

Business Intelligence is considered a crucial investment for organizations as demonstrated by a survey of over 4000 ICT experts from 93 countries (IBM, 2011). Certainly, global investment in BI was estimated to reach \$18.3 billion in 2017 and was expected to increase to \$22.8 billion by the end of 2020 (Moore, 2017). In Kenya, there has been an 11% increase in spending on information technology, including BI, from \$2.28 billion in 2016 to \$3.45 billion in 2017 (KNBS, 2020). BI is broadly acknowledged as an essential factor for organizational success in the global market. Some authors (Sasvari, 2015; Nagy et al., 2018; Saáry, Kárpáti-Daróczi and Tick, 2022; Tick, Saáry and Kárpáti-Daróczi, 2022; Tick, 2023a, 2023b) for example suggest that Hungary is still

lagging, mainly due to a lack of support from leadership and of clear strategy. Sasvári (2015) and Venczel et al. (2024) posit that companies are reluctant to spend on expensive BI systems. Respondents from the studies criticized the protection level of BI systems insisting that the data protection layers should be repaired to ensure data privacy and safety. The authors assert that within different geographical contexts, there is still much to learn about innovation and SMEs.

However, Kinuthia (2018) posited that despite the growth in investment, the performance of many corporate institutions especially those that are publicly listed has been reducing. This is concerning as the publicly listed SMEs play a key responsibility in the economic development and their reliable and prolonged performance is crucial. Understanding the manner in which SMEs rank and evaluate emerging digital technological investments, particularly in BI adoption, is vital (Li et al., 2016).

### *Theoretical Framework and Research Questions*

The study will entail a couple of objectives. First, it investigates the BI systems used in Kenyan SMEs. Second, it investigates the factors decision-makers consider when adopting a BI system, hence assessing the managerial aspect in correlation to adoption factors. Third, it uses the TOE framework as an adoption model, which answers the goal of identifying the driving forces of BI applicability in SMEs. Finally, the research aims to explore the specific types of BI systems adopted by SMEs in Kenya and using the TOE framework aims to identify the advantages and provide recommendations for successful adoption. The findings of this study will enable the management of SMEs in Kenya to understand the need for BI in business operations and they opt to employ BI in their businesses, to know the prerequisites that must be put in place for successful implementation.

Many existing studies in broader literature have examined the advantages of adopting BI in companies. Based on the literature review and the research gap identified, this research hypothesizes that Kenyan SMEs would adopt Business Intelligence in their businesses if there were advantages, support, and easy-to-use systems. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Relative benefits of technology affect the adoption of Business Intelligence.

Advantages of adopting Business Intelligence in small and medium enterprises: Most firms analyse the cost of adopting technology versus the advantages the technology brings to the enterprise. Cost-benefit analysis for the firm may help decide on the adoption of the technology (Tiernan and Peppard, 2004), may also be used among SMEs to assess whether there is a need to adopt BI. When BI is adopted, this may further determine the growth of the enterprise. This guided us to the following hypothesis.

H2: The complexity of technologies affects Business Intelligence adoption by SMEs.

User-friendliness: BI can help SMEs increase their cost-effectiveness (Lueg and Lu, 2013). For the reason that BI enhances user-friendliness and simplicity which are vital for

boosting economical use of resources and improving data validation. However, BI does involve some complexity, so having the necessary prerequisite skills and knowledge is advantageous for successful adoption. This led to the following hypothesis.

H3: Users are more likely to adapt to easy-to-use systems as opposed to complex systems.

Complex systems: For the success of enterprises, the need for data and information security is inherent. This will entail the use of complex technologies to safeguard the data and improve decision-making. BI models are complicated because they incorporate mathematical functions for the prediction of trends in a firm's performance to enhance solutions in certain situations (Voicu, Zirra and Ciocirlan, 2009). Thus, the following can be hypothesized:

H4: Larger enterprises have higher adoption capability than small enterprises.

Organization size: An enterprise's capability concerning technical as well as financial resources may be considered to negatively or positively influence how it makes choices on the adoption of modern technologies. Organizational size has been found to positively impact the adoption of technology innovations (Puklavec, Oliveira and Popovič, 2014; Rogers, Singhal and Quinlan, 2019). This extends to the following hypothesis:

H5: Managers' support affects the adoption of Business Intelligence by SMEs.

Management support: The perspective of management plays an essential role in ascertaining whether or not a company integrates new technology. BI requires that management professionals stay informed about the rapidly growing BI industry. This will ensure that the enterprise makes correct business decisions (Marjamäki, 2017). Endorsement from management can favorably impact a company's preparedness to adopt Business Intelligence. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H6: Organizational readiness for technologies leads to the adoption of Business Intelligence.

Organizational readiness: Papachristodoulou et al. (2017) indicated how researchers in the past have assessed organizational readiness for BI solutions. Hidayanto et al. (2012) created a scheme to support SMEs measure their preparedness for implementing BI tools. Scholz et al. (2010) identified that the primary drivers for using BI are enhancements in data support, external factors and improved decision-making capabilities. On the other hand the main hinderances are the difficulties in managing the software failures and managing the system. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H7: SMEs facing stiff competition from the market readily adopt Business Intelligence more than those with no pressure.



Competitive pressure: Raj et al. (2019) conducted a case study among SMEs and found out that to be ahead of competitive pressure, enterprises should effectively use and monitor information resources, which will lead to positive business decisions being made while staying competitive in the market. Figure 3 summarizes the proposed research model of the TOE constructs and the related hypotheses.

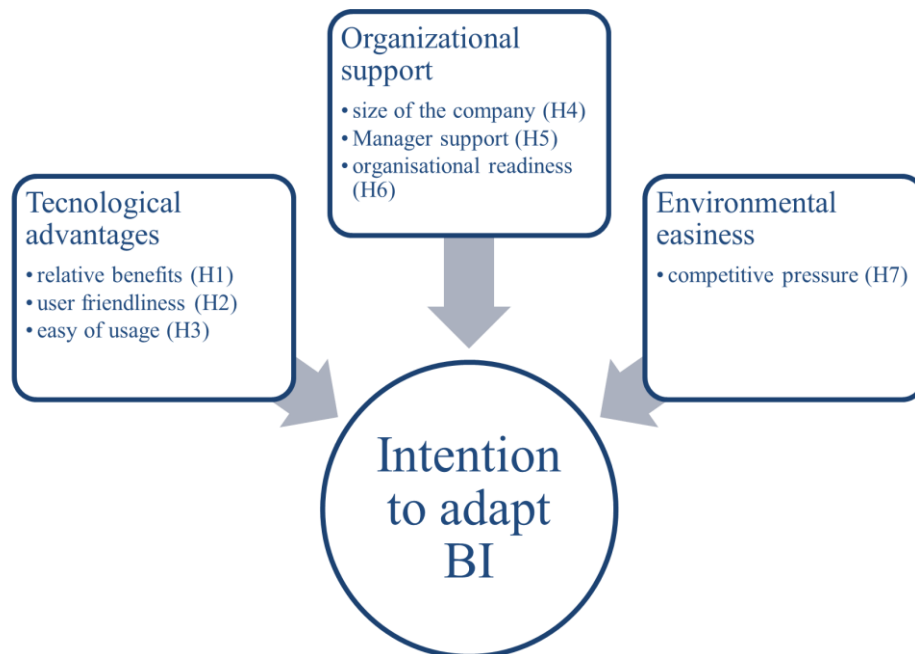


Figure 3: Proposed hypotheses based on the TOE model. Source; edited by authors.

### Research Methodology

After the literature review and given the exploratory nature of the study, the research adopts a triangulation approach that involves qualitative (Kern and Willcocks, 2002; Golafshani, 2015) and quantitative methods (Golafshani, 2015), it incorporates a structured interview and a questionnaire. Half of the questionnaire is standardized and the other half is adopted from the determinants of the TOE framework as proposed by Ain et al. (2019). A structured interview was adopted because of reduced bias, cost-effectiveness, because it is simple and dependable and there is increased credibility and validity. The structured interview will have two parts, the first entails the collection of details such as organization size, title, type, and industry of the organization. The second part includes questions covering a variety of issues to garner an understanding of the usage of BI in Kenyan SMEs and explore the managerial aspects in decision-making for the proper BI system. The data collection will incorporate snowball sampling of the potential participants of the SMEs in the Nairobi Securities Exchange through LinkedIn and other social media channels. The sample did not reach the level of representativeness, however, gives a general view of BI adoption situation among SMEs in Kenya.

The questionnaire was close-ended with a 4-point Likert scale, and it was geared towards answering questions stemming from H1 to H7 as well as other questions that

were to assist in drawing any pattern to answer the research objectives and see if there may be any improvement at a firm level (Appendix 1). Previous studies have also adopted the use of the Likert scale when adopting the TOE framework (Boonsiritomachai, McGrath and Burgess, 2016; Popovič, Puklavec and Oliveira, 2019). MS Excel and SPSS v25 was used for analysis. Anonymity was assured and consent were given with filling in the questionnaire.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to explore the underlying relations between the items. Pearson correlation was used to determine the strength of the relationship between the ratio-scale constructs for the TOE framework. Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha.

## Results

### Demographic profile

A total number of 42 SMEs filled in to the responses, 33.3% of them have been in operation for 1–5 years. Small enterprises accounted for 45.2% of the total sample size. The sample characteristics are presented in Figure 4.

		Count	Column N %
No of Employees	Small	19	45.2
	Medium	10	23.8
	Large	13	31
Total		42	100
Period of existence	less than 1 yrs.	4	9.5
	1-5 yrs.	14	33.3
	5-10 yrs.	5	11.9
	10-15 yrs.	6	14.3
	15-20 yrs.	3	7.1
	Above 20 yrs.	10	23.9
Total		42	100
Type of SME	Manufacturing industry	2	4.8
	Financial Institution	12	28.6
	Hospitality industry	2	4.8
	Health or medical organization	6	14.3
	Other	20	47.6
Total		42	100
Company Category	less than 1 yr.	4	9.5
	1-5 yrs.	14	33.3
	5-10 yrs.	5	11.9
	10-15 yrs.	6	14.3
	15-20 yrs.	3	7.1
	Above 20 yrs.	10	23.8
Total		42	100.0

Figure 4: Demographic profile. Source: edited by the authors.

As per the nature of businesses, most of the respondents were from the financial sector (28.6%), the Information technology sector (15.7%) and 14% were health or medical organizations. The information collected was from more than ten SME industries and therefore sufficient for further analysis. The first section of the questionnaire also covered how long the company has been in existence. One-third of the SMEs in the sample were between 1 and 5 years, 23.8% were above 20 years old and only 9.5 % were less than 1 year old.

### *Reliability*

In empirical analysis, reliability is the measure of internal consistency of the constructs being measured. Cronbach's Alpha is used for reliability. The present TOE model proved to be reliable, as  $\alpha_{\text{Organizational construct}}=0.857$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Technological construct}}=0.9$ , and  $\alpha_{\text{environmental construct}}=0.755$ . According to Hair et al. (2013), a construct is reliable if its Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is above 0.70.

### *BI adoption status and encouragement*

The final question under this section expected respondents to indicate the status of Business Intelligence adoption. The respondents were to select (1) Our firm intends to adopt Business Intelligence, (2) Our firm has already adopted Business Intelligence, (3) I have no idea what Business Intelligence is, and (4) Our firm does not intend to adopt Business Intelligence. Table 3 highlights the distribution of the SMEs by their readiness to adopt Business Intelligence in Kenya.

BI use-case	Frequency	Percent%
Already adopted BI	5	12.2
Planning to adopt BI	3	7.3
No plans to adopt BI	16	39
No Idea what BI is	17	41.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100</b>

*Figure 5: Analysis of BI adoption. Source: edited by the authors.*

The responses show that 41.5% of the participating SMEs were not aware of the concept of Business Intelligence, with 39% not ready to adopt it, meaning that most SMEs (80.5%) in the sample are either not familiar with BI or do not use it. The analysis also indicates that 12.2% of SMEs in the sample have already adopted BI while a mere 7.3% of them plan to do so. There was no answer from one SME. The results show a very low level of BI adoption, similarly, Owusu (2017) asserted that BI is still in its infancy stage among developing economies. The low awareness of BI poses a gap in most SMEs.

Figure 6 presents the descriptive measures all the factors that encouraged the adoption of BI in Kenyan SMEs. Improved performance and decision-making scored the highest with an equivalent standard deviation which corroborates the 2:1 rule of thumb (Yin et al., 2016). Participants were asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert scale whether they agreed that the above factors led to the adoption of BI in their companies.

It can be seen that respondents fully agreed with all the factors that encourage the adoption of BI, with improved performance and improved decision-making having the highest mean (3.31), implying that these two factors are the most advantageous for SMEs in Kenya.

Factors in the TOE framework	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
Operational performance	3.17	4.00	4	1.12
Operational efficiency	3.17	3.00	4	0.98
Reduced operational costs	3.12	3.50	4	1.06
Improved performance	3.31	4.00	4	1.00
Competitive advantage	3.19	4.00	4	1.13
Improved decision making	3.31	4.00	4	1.00

Figure 6: Factors encouraging the adoption of BI in SMEs in Kenya. Source: edited by the authors.

### TOE Framework

Figure 7 presents the general statistical figures of the TOE constructs following the rule of thumb (2:1) (Yin et al., 2016).

Constructs	Valid	Mean	Median	Mode	STDEV	IQR
T	42	3.13	3.40	3.40	0.79	1.00
O	42	3.05	3.25	3.50	0.76	1.00
E	42	2.99	3.00	3.00	0.73	1.08

Figure 7: TOE Descriptive Statistics. Source: edited by the authors.

The technological construct reveals an overall mean score of 3.13 ( $SD=0.79$ ) (Table 10), the highest compared to the rest of the constructs. This shows a positive perception of the technological aspect. Resistance to change was on the higher spectrum of the scale as a factor that can hinder the adoption of BI. The majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the organizational constructs with a mean of 3.05 ( $SD=0.76$ ) amongst the participating SMEs, which shows a positive perception of the organizational constructs, indicating that SMEs regard the adoption of BI as highly dependent on the organizational readiness to adopt BI. The environmental construct under the TOE framework reveals an overall mean score of 2.99 ( $SD=0.73$ ), therefore, SMEs somehow agree that environmental factors under the TOE framework influence the adoption of BI. Competitive pressure appears to be the largest factor influencing the adoption of BI among SMEs in Kenya.

Participants were asked whether they agreed with the TOE individual constructs contributing to Business Intelligence adoption. The correlation between the relative benefits and organizations' readiness to adopt Business Intelligence was also analysed. Relative advantages of BI were found to be moderately positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.529$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), hence H1 was supported. This showed that an increase in the relative advantages of technology would lead to an increased need for organizations to adopt BI. To investigate the correlation between the complexity of technology and an organization's readiness to adopt BI, the analysis shows a moderately strong positive, and significant relationship ( $r=0.499$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), hence H2 was

supported. This shows that the complexity of technology would lead to an increased need to adopt BI. The next section was concerned if users are more likely compared to adapt to easy-to-use systems as opposed to complex systems. This relationship was found to be highly positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.748$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) hence H3 was also supported. If we now turn to the fourth hypothesis, whether organizational size was correlated with the organization's readiness to adopt BI, it can be said, that based on the participants responses the relationship is moderately positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.587$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), therefore H4 is also supported, meaning that larger enterprises have higher adoption capability than small enterprises. Moving on to the next hypothesis, the agenda was to check the correlation between the top manager's innovation capacity and the organization's readiness to adopt BI. The correlation was found highly positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.731$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) hence H5 was supported stating that managers' support affects the adoption of Business Intelligence by SMEs. The next hypothesis asks whether an organization's readiness for technologies is influenced by the available technical and operational skills. Even in this case the correlation was found moderately positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.547$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), so H6 can be supported. This proves that the availability of technical and operational skills would ensure that organizations are ready to adopt BI. Lastly, the hypothesis H7 of whether stiff competition would influence SMEs to adopt BI was also supported as the correlation was found moderately positive and statistically significant ( $r=0.581$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This showed an increase in competitive pressure would lead to an increased need for the organization to adopt Business Intelligence.

Figure 8 summarizes the results. It is apparent that manager support and ease of usage scored significantly higher ( $r^2=0.56$ ,  $r^2=0.53$ , respectively) than the rest of the hypotheses when correlated to the intention to adopt BI.

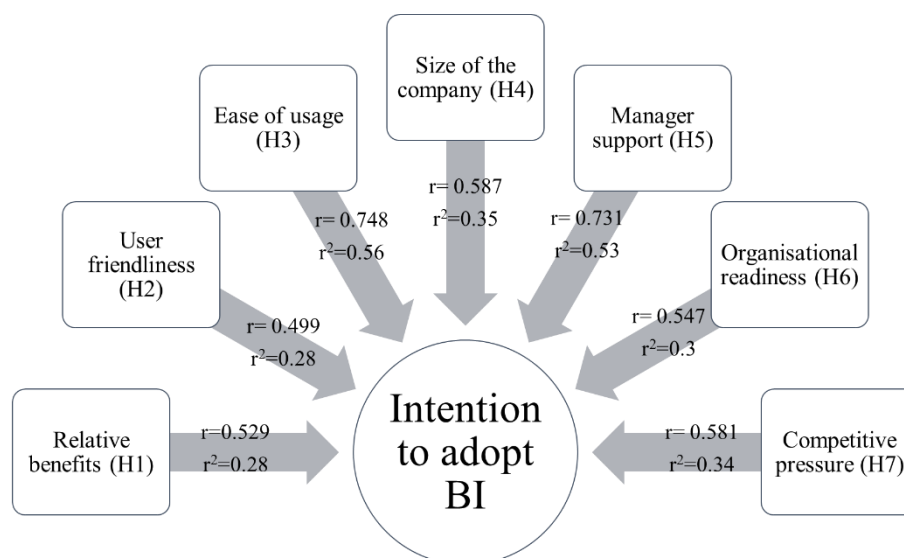


Figure 8: TOE constructs correlation. Source: edited by the authors.

### BI systems used in Kenya

The last part of the questionnaire required individuals to indicate the BI system with which they are familiar. Figure 9 presents an overview of the BI systems used in Kenya. The majority of the respondents (21) regarded MS Excel as a BI tool, nine respondents consider Microsoft Power BI as a BI system, which was followed by IBM Planning Analytics with three users.

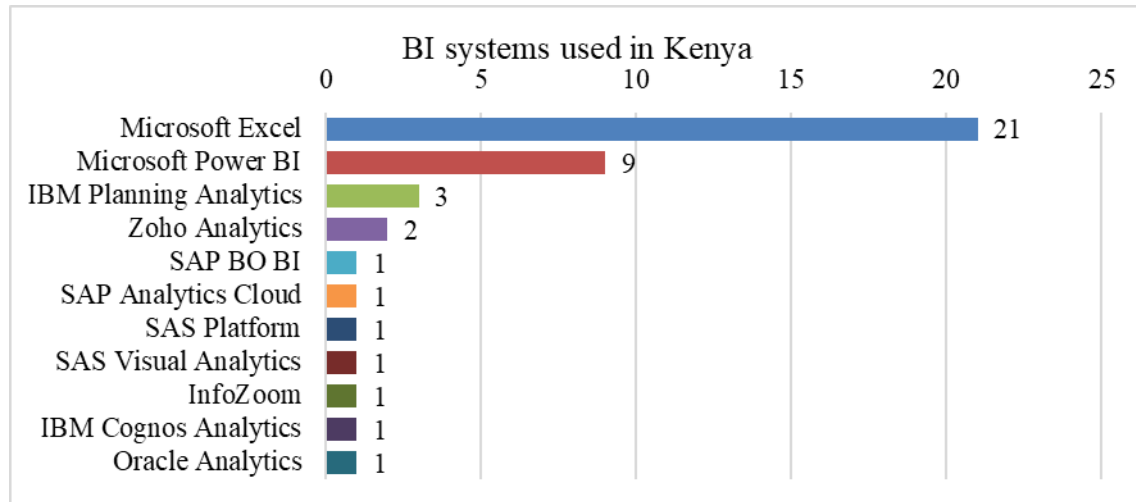


Figure 9: Business Intelligence Systems used in Kenya. Source: edited by the author.

### Discussion

To answer the research aims on the TOE framework, seven hypotheses were formulated, which were set to give a picture of the current BI adoption based on the sample while analysing the individual constructs of the TOE framework. The study supplied an overview of the BI adoption of SMEs in Kenya. Initially, the literature review highlighted some gaps. However, with a small sample size of forty-two, caution must be applied as these findings might not apply to the whole country.

This study set out with the aims to analyse the factors affecting the adoption of BI by incorporating the TOE framework, assessing the commonly used BI systems used in Kenya, and whether age or size affects the readiness to adopt BI. The study aimed to also assess the factors decision-makers consider when adopting BI including the managerial side, namely operational performance, operational efficiency, reduced operational costs, improved performance, competitive advantage, and improved decision-making. The data suggest that all these six factors are crucial for the adoption of BI in SMEs, while improved performance and improved decision-making standing out as the most important ones (H1 supported). These results support the previous research on Business Intelligence systems conducted by Gauzelin and Bentz (2017) who also stated that BI leads to increased performance and productivity for the employees which leads to overall improved performance in a company. Similarly, the authors concluded that BI is essential at the managerial level due to improved decision making which is a result of timely, quality, and accurate data. It is therefore necessary for SMEs



to compare their goals and outcomes to get a vivid picture of the performance of the BI system adopted. When determining BI performance, the authors also posited that it is necessary to consider the following dimensions: operational, financial, and overall effectiveness.

SMEs in Kenya referred to MS Excel as a BI tool when that is not the case. Most respondents have been fervent supporters of MS Excel which might be triggered due to the low cost, easy integration with other MS tools, and the global recognition the software has garnered. Papchristodoulou et al. (2017) support this finding, as they also observed that MS Excel had become more prevalent due to its affordability. Preceding research has proven that BI is now viewed as indispensable for businesses to remain competitive and feasible in today's data-centric environment, rather than just being an additional advantage (Liebowitz, 2017).

MS Power BI was the second tool adopted by the sample although based on the responses, it has not garnered traction in the SME market. It is worth noting that Power BI is the leading tool based on the Gartner survey due to the plethora of advantages the system offers. It is therefore critical for BI champions within SMEs to ensure the transition to a more adaptable tool, such as Power BI in this scenario, as it is also a less expensive solution when compared to MS Excel. Most Excel users would be able to work seamlessly with Power BI without much supervision.

A study conducted by Ray et al. (2016) on the use of BI in SMEs suggested that there are various phases involved when implementing a BI solution and SMEs should have a good understanding of their existing infrastructure before diving into new investments, for SMEs looking to adopt BI solutions, the Microsoft suite of BI tools may be the prime pick particularly if they are formerly conversant with Microsoft products, and a lot of SMEs are usually discouraged by the complex and expensive implementation process when there are simple and affordable BI solutions that can easily be embedded in their existing IT solutions. There is a need for industry-standard tools, and the study by Llave (2017) recommends that SMEs adopt MS Power BI since it allows for integration with other solutions while also offering prompt data and insights.

The proposed research model took into account the relevant factors that influence the incorporation of BI, managerial considerations using the TOE model as a base. In each case a positive, moderately strong correlation was detected, ranging from  $r=0.499$  to  $0.798$ . The results on relative benefits suggested that an increase in relative advantages of technology would lead to an increased need for BI adoption, which are consistent with previous studies by Tiernan and Peppard (2004) The data thus supports that analysing the costs of adopting technology is paramount to ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs. The results on user-friendliness revealed a moderately low positive correlation which refutes previous studies of Lueg and Lu (2013). Simplicity and user-friendliness would lead to the adoption of BI due to the strengthened data validation which might be complex to form (H2 and H3 are supported).

The success of an enterprise is inherent in the adoption of industry-standard tools. According to Raj et al. (2019) it is crucial for an IT solution to be intuitive in order to

expand integration by end-users. Drushku et al. (2019) applied a wide variety of resource to examine the significance of user-friendliness. They maintain to note that the interfaces may be tedious and unproductive since the BI systems do not detect user interest.

BI is not only for big companies, but this is also a strong opinion that has been disposed of and spread around the world. Although large companies have already adopted BI and reached maturity, large software providers like Microsoft, SAP, Oracle, and Micro strategy have adapted Business Intelligence to the needs of the SME. From the sample, organizational size is a factor in BI adoption and there is an interesting observation from the demographic profile. Most of the companies within the sample were small companies and had been in operation for 5 years. This data suggests that ideally, SMEs have not yet gathered enough information throughout the time they have been in operation as compared to large firms which have huge data centres that can be upgraded from software providers. In terms of infrastructure, existing systems over time become easier to upgrade since they just need to adapt, ensure compatibility, and are easy to learn for the users (H4 is supported).

For SMEs to be competitive, managers cannot depend on intuition-they need accurate information based on timely data. For this reason, the sample within this study should have a strong correlation that was highly positive (H5 is supported). Previous studies have shown that in the past SME managers did rely on intuitive decision-making (MacGregor and Vrazalic, 2005). These strategies are based on constrained essential skills that always do not meet their business objectives and goals resulting in reduced competitiveness. From the sample results, data suggests that managers play a crucial role since they will usually function as BI champions within their enterprises which will positively impact the SMEs.

H6 is also supported and the results align with the fact that availability of technical and operational skills within an enterprise would lead to the adoption of BI. Prior studies that have noted the importance of organizational readiness for BI adoption concluded that quick installations, ease of use, continuous data access, responsiveness, and reduced costs were major factors to ensure that SMEs adopt BI. The correlation was moderately positive and an explanation for this might be due to the huge upfront costs incurred during the adoption process of BI. Cloud software for instance has extra costs, non-establishment within the public, and reduced checking services.

The results showed that the more the SMEs in the sample perceive competitive pressure, the more it is likely that they will adopt BI (H7 is supported). Currently, there is increased competitive pressure due to the rapidly growing IT infrastructure and this can signal the need to adopt advanced technologies that improve enterprise performance (Beheshti et al., 2007).

Upon analysing the factors in the TOE framework, a significant correlation between all the constructs was detected. Many of the respondents agreed with all the factors affecting BI adoption. The TOE framework was found a reliable measurement tool for BI adoption model. Complexity, relative advantage, easy-to-use, managerial support,



and competition were significant in BI adoption which corroborates the ideas of Boonsiritomachai et al. (2016). Interestingly, the research shows that managerial support and easy-to-use systems are highly susceptible to BI adoption among SMEs in the sample. An exploratory study by Llave et al. (2018) examined the factors that affect how BI creates value. The study did highlight that BI can create value through data control, automation, improved decision-making, cost reduction, competitive advantage, customer and business insights. Furthermore, for a successful value-creation after implantation of BI, it is also dependent on other factors such as business' competitive position, nation-specific variables and industry dynamics (Llave, Hustad and Olsen, 2018).

The study has some limitations due to the limited number of potential people to be interviewed and that it could not cover the entire country. Therefore, the conclusions derived from this research may be refined with more data gathered in future studies. In addition, given the qualitative exploratory study, generalizations of outcomes should be done with vigilance.

To summarize, these findings suggest that most of the sample agrees with all the factors leading to the adoption of BI within SMEs in Kenya. A further study with more focus on the macro and micro-environment is suggested to give a clear picture, and that takes these factors into account might also need to assess the current information systems to suit the research process.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research has demonstrated that BI and corresponding technologies are considered among the most worthwhile IT investments for SMEs, and the research interest is intensifying. The research aimed to appraise the use of BI in Kenyan SMEs using the TOE framework.

This research has multiple findings. Firstly, through the review of existing literature it was determined that use of Business Intelligence is still gaining traction in the Kenyan market. The results indicate that financial sectors have a huge adoption rate, and this is also consistent with the available literature on BI adoption in Kenyan SMEs. This paper clearly illustrates that the responding SMEs considered MS Excel as a BI tool and provides insight into why the SMEs might still be fervent supporters of the spreadsheet tool other than advanced BI technologies. The cost of purchase is a hindrance to advancing to new BI technologies.

SMEs account for 75% of the labour force and the registered SMEs entail 98% of all the businesses in Kenya. This paper contributes to the existing knowledge of Business Intelligence in developing countries particularly Kenya by providing a snapshot of BI usage among SMEs. However, the small sample size should be treated with a grain of salt and not generalized to the whole country. More information on BI among the rest of the SMEs would help us to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

Third, to analyse the managerial side, the paper suggested that managerial support has a high influence on the adoption of BI. Since the managers are also the decision-

makers in the SMEs, they need to incorporate the use of Business Intelligence to stay competitive in the growing market economy. Fourth, the TOE framework that was used in the paper assists in our understanding of the factors influencing BI adoption in SMEs. All the correlations were strong as per the discussions and the results.

Further research should explore adopting longitudinal research while analyzing the BI tools' lifecycle with their value creation. Notwithstanding the limitations above, the study suggests that detailed data collection should be collected across the country. Although the study is also based on a small population, it suggests that BI champions play a critical role in ensuring that Kenyan SMEs adopt industry-standard BI tools that fit their *modus operandi* and delivers value.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The article has not been submitted to any journal for publication.

### *Notes on Contributors*

Dennis Olondo Orina is a Robotic Process Automation Developer with two years of experience at Avis Budget Group, where he specializes in business intelligence automation. He began his academic journey at the Technical University of Kenya, studying Business Information Technology, and later pursued a Bachelor's degree in Technical Management at Óbuda University, where he graduated with honours. Combining a solid foundation in engineering and corporate strategy, Dennis Olondo Orina brings a unique perspective to the intersection of business informatics and automation. His passion lies in leveraging technology to optimize business processes and drive data-driven decision-making.

Andrea Tick is a full professor at Óbuda University Keleti Faculty of Business and Management. She completed her MA in English language and literature, Mathematics and Computer Sciences at József Attila University of Arts and Sciences in Szeged and her BSc in Economics at the College for Foreign Trade in Budapest. She completed her PhD in Military Sciences at Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University. Her PhD and Dr. habil research areas are digital teaching and learning with special cyber security awareness. She has over 25 years' experience in teaching in higher education where she teaches statistics, data analytics, and Business Intelligence and ERP system. Her research interests include internet security, cyber security, and user behaviour regarding digital learning, cyber security awareness and the human factor in cyber security.

## References

- Acs, Z. J., & Audretsch, D. B. (1987). Innovation, Market Structure, and Firm Size. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 69(4), 567. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1935950>
- Adeyelure, T. S., Kalema, B. M., & Bwalya, K. J. (2018). Deployment factors for mobile business intelligence in developing countries small and medium enterprises. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 10(6), 715-723. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2018.1491137>
- African Union. (2016). *The African Union Commission begins the process of validating SME Strategy and Master Plan 2017-2021*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20161013-5>
- Ain, N., Vaia, G., DeLone, W. H., & Waheed, M. (2019). Two decades of research on business intelligence system adoption, utilization and success – A systematic literature review. *Decision Support Systems*, 125, 113113. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2019.113113>
- Audretsch, D. B. (2002). The Dynamic Role of Small Firms: Evidence from the U.S. *Small Business Economics*, 18(1), 13-40. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015105222884>
- Awa, H. O., Ukoha, O., & Emecheta, B. C. (2016). Using T-O-E theoretical framework to study the adoption of ERP solution. *Cogent Business & Management*, 3(1), 1196571. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2016.1196571>
- Beal, V. (2021). *Business Intelligence (BI)*. Webopedia. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.webopedia.com/definitions/bi/>
- Beheshti, H. M., Hultman, M., Jung, M. L., Opoku, R. A., & Salehi-Sangari, E. (2007). Electronic supply chain management applications by Swedish SMEs. *Enterprise Information Systems*, 1(2), 255-268. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17517570701273221>
- Berbel, T. d. R. L., & González, S. M. (2015). How to help end users to get better decisions? Personalising OLAP aggregation queries through semantic recommendation of text documents. *International Journal of Business Intelligence and Data Mining*, 10(1), 1-18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBIDM.2015.069022>
- Best Practices Team Pentaho. (2024). *Logging, Monitoring, and Performance Tuning for Pentaho, Pentaho Customer Portal*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://support.pentaho.com/hc/en-us/articles/360001742172-Logging-Monitoring-and-Performance-Tuning-for-Pentaho>
- Boonsiritomachai, W., McGrath, G. M., & Burgess, S. (2016). Exploring business intelligence and its depth of maturity in Thai SMEs. *Cogent Business & Management*, 3(1), 1220663. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2016.1220663>

- Boyd, B. K., & Fulk, J. (1996). Executive Scanning and Perceived Uncertainty: A Multidimensional Model. *Journal of Management*, 22(1), 1-21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639602200101>
- Cataldo, A., Pino, G., & McQueen, R. J. (2020). Size matters: the impact of combinations of ICT assets on the performance of Chilean micro, small and medium enterprises. *Information Technology for Development*, 26(2), 292-315. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2019.1684870>
- Chaudhuri, S., Dayal, U., & Narasayya, V. (2011). An overview of business intelligence technology. *Commun. ACM*, 54(8), 88–98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1145/1978542.1978562>
- Chen, H., Chiang, R. H. L., & Storey, V. C. (2012). Business Intelligence and Analytics: From Big Data to Big Impact. *MIS Quarterly*, 36(4), 1165-1188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/41703503>
- Daft, R. L., Sormunen, J., & Parks, D. (1988). Chief executive scanning, environmental characteristics, and company performance: An empirical study. *Strategic Management Journal*, 9(2), 123-139. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250090204>
- Dhingra, S., & Chaudhry, K. (2018). A Study of the Impact of Data Warehousing and - ProQuest. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Computers, Science and Engineering*, 7(1), 13-20.
- Dobrev, K. V., & Hart, M. (2015). Benefits, Justification and Implementation Planning of Real-Time Business Intelligence Systems. 18(2). <https://typeset.io/papers/benefits-justification-and-implementation-planning-of-real-2zo46y0a0l>
- Drake, B. M., & Walz, A. (2018). Evolving Business Intelligence and Data Analytics in Higher Education. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2018(178), 39-52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20266>
- Drushku, K., Aligon, J., Labroche, N., Marcel, P., & Peralta, V. (2019). Interest-based recommendations for business intelligence users. *Information Systems*, 86, 79-93. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.is.2018.08.004>
- Enterprise Ireland. (2007). *SME Definition*. Retrieved March 20, 2024 from [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/sme-definition_en)
- Executive Agency for Small and Medium sized Enterprises. (2021). *Annual report on European SMEs 2020/2021: digitalisation of SMEs: background document*. LU: Publications Office. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from DOI: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2826/120209>
- Fiengenbaum, A., & Karnani, A. (1991). Output flexibility—A competitive advantage for small firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(2), 101-114. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250120203>
- Friedman, T. (2011). *Measuring the Business Value of Data Quality*. Gartner. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/1819214>





- Gangadharan, G. R., & Swami, S. N. (2004). *Business intelligence systems: design and implementation strategies*. Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Information Technology Interfaces (ITI). Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/1372391>
- Gauzelin, S., & Bentz, H. (2017). An examination of the impact of business intelligence systems on organizational decision making and performance: The case of France. *Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business*, 7(2), 40-50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37380/jisib.v7i2.238>
- Geetha, S., Dhanani, K. R., & Doshi, P. P. (2020). Data Analysis and ETL Tools in Business Intelligence. *International Research Journal of Computer Science*, 7(5), 127–132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26562/irjcs.2020.v0705.007>
- Golafshani, N. (2015). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. 8(4), 597-606. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2003.1870>
- Gupta, M., & Cawthon, G. (1996). Managerial implications of flexible manufacturing for small/medium-sized enterprises. *Technovation*, 16(2), 77-94. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0166-4972\(95\)00023-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0166-4972(95)00023-2)
- Hair, J. F., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2013). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling: Rigorous Applications, Better Results and Higher Acceptance. *Long Range Planning*, 46(1), 1-12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2013.01.001>
- Hidayanto, A., Kristianto, R., & Shihab, M. (2012). Business Intelligence Implementation Readiness: A Framework Development and Its Application to Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) pp. 1-10. International Research Symposium in Service Management (IRSSM),
- IBM. (2011). *IBMTech Trends Report - The 2011 IBM Tech Trends Report Tech Trends of today. Skills for - Studocu*. IBM. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.studocu.com/row/document/national-university-of-sciences-and-technology/digital-communications-fundamentals-and-applications-second-edition-by-bernard-sklar/2011-ibmtech-trends-report/42752606>
- Jonker, R., Tegelaar, J., & Geurtsen, J. (2013). Enterprise Data Management: value and necessity'. *Compact*, 24-30.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2020). Economic survey 2020. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. *Africa Research Bulletin: Economic, Financial and Technical Series*, 58(8), 391.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2024). *2024 Economic Survey - Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Nairobi, Kenya, p.28*. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.knbs.or.ke/reports/2024-economic-survey/>
- Kern, T., & Willcocks, L. (2002). Exploring relationships in information technology outsourcing: the interaction approach. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 11(1), 3-19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ejis.3000415>
- Kinuthia, K. (December 3, 2018). List: Firms that have issued profit warning this year. *Business Daily*.

- <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/corporate/companies/list-firms-that-have-issued-profit-warning-this-year-2229978>
- Kiwiya, A. (2019). *Makala Ya Mtangazaji*. TanTrade. Retrieved September 15, 2025 from <https://www.tantrade.go.tz>
- Klein, D., Tran-Gia, P., & Hartmann, M. (2013). Big Data. *Informatik-Spektrum*, 36(3), 319-323. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00287-013-0702-3>
- Kowalczyk, M., & Gerlach, J. (2015). *Business Intelligence & Analytics and Decision Quality - Insights on Analytics Specialization and Information Processing Modes*. University of Münster. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18151/7217398>
- KPMG. (2022). *2022 TOP100 Kenya Survey Results*. KPMG. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://eastafriktop100.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-Top100-conference-presentation.pdf>
- KPMG. (2023). *EastAfricaTop100 – Be seated among the great*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://eastafriktop100.com/>
- Lefebvre, E., & Lefebvre, L. A. (1992). Firm innovativeness and CEO characteristics in small manufacturing firms. *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 9(3), 243-277. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0923-4748\(92\)90018-Z](https://doi.org/10.1016/0923-4748(92)90018-Z)
- Levy, M., & Powell, P. (1998). SME Flexibility and the Role of Information Systems. *Small Business Economics*(11), 183-196.
- Li, W., Liu, K., Belitski, M., Ghobadian, A., & O'Regan, N. (2016). E-Leadership through Strategic Alignment: An Empirical Study of Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises in the Digital Age. *Journal of Information Technology*, 31(2), 185-206. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2016.10>
- Llave, M. R. (2017). Business Intelligence and Analytics in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: A Systematic Literature Review. *Procedia Computer Science*, 121, 194-205. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.027>
- Llave, M. R., Hustad, E., & Olsen, D. H. (2018). Creating Value from Business Intelligence and Analytics in SMEs. *Insights from Experts*.
- Lueg, R., & Lu, S. (2013). How to Improve Efficiency in Budgeting; the case of Business Intelligence in SMEs. *European Journal of Management*, 13(2), 109-120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18374/EJM-13-2.13>
- MacGregor, R. C., & Vrazalic, L. (2005). The Effects of Strategic Alliance Membership on the Disadvantages of Electronic Commerce Adoption: A Comparative Study of Swedish and Australian Regional Small Businesses. *Journal of Global Information Management (JGIM)*, 13(3), 1-19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4018/jgim.2005070101>
- Manis, K. (2022). *Microsoft named a Leader in the 2022 Gartner Magic Quadrant™ for Analytics and BI Platforms*. Retrieved September 15, 2025 from <https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/blog/microsoft-named-a-leader-in-the-2022-gartner-magic-quadrant-for-analytics-and-bi-platforms/>
- Manis, K. (2024). *Microsoft named a Leader in the 2024 Gartner Magic Quadrant™ for Analytics and BI Platforms*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from



- <https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/blog/microsoft-named-a-leader-in-the-2024-gartner-magic-quadrant-for-analytics-and-bi-platforms/>
- Mariani, M., & Baggio, R. (2022). Big data and analytics in hospitality and tourism: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(1), 231-278. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2021-0301>
- Marjamäki, P. (2017). *Evolution and trends of business intelligence systems : a systematic mapping study* University of Oulu. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Evolution-and-trends-of-business-intelligence-%3A-a-Marjam%C3%A4ki/cbe86d72795cd546aadd319620419471b080c7f8>
- Mesaros, P. (2016). Model of key success factors for Business Intelligence implementation. *Journal of Systems Integration*, 3-15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20470/jsi.v7i3.264>
- Moore, S. (2017). *Gartner Says Worldwide Business Intelligence and Analytics Market to Reach \$18.3 Billion in 2017*. Gartner. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2017-02-17-gartner-says-worldwide-business-intelligence-and-analytics-market-to-reach-18-billion-in-2017>
- Mullan, M. (2019). The data-driven airport: How daa created data and analytics capabilities to drive business growth, improve the passenger experience and deliver operational efficiency. *Journal of Airport Management*, 13(4), 361-379. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69554/NVJX2492>
- Nagy, J., Oláh, J., Erdei, E., Máté, D., & Popp, J. (2018). The Role and Impact of Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things on the Business Strategy of the Value Chain—The Case of Hungary. *Sustainability*, 10(10).
- Ntwoku, H., Negash, S., & Meso, P. (2017). ICT adoption in Cameroon SME: application of Bass diffusion model\*. *Information Technology for Development*, 23(2), 296-317. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2017.1289884>
- OECD. (2008). *OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms —Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Definition*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264055087-en>
- OECD. (2023). *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2023. OECD (OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook)*. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/342b8564-en>
- Ouedraogo, H., Compaoré, I., & Nassè, T. B. (2022). Practice of Business Intelligence by SMEs in Burkano Faso. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 4(1), 48–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijmer.v4i1.262>
- Owusu, A. (2017). Business intelligence systems and bank performance in Ghana: The balanced scorecard approach. *Cogent Business & Management*, 4(1), 1364056. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2017.1364056>

- Owusu, A., Ghanbari-Baghestan, A., & Kalantari, A. (2017). Investigating the Factors Affecting Business Intelligence Systems Adoption: A Case Study of Private Universities in Malaysia. *International Journal of Technology Diffusion*, 8(2), 1-25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJTD.2017040101>
- Papachristodoulou, E., Koutsaki, M., & Kirkos, E. (2017). Business intelligence and SMEs: Bridging the gap. *Journal of Intelligence Studies in Business*, 7(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37380/jisib.v7i1.216>
- Popovič, A., Puklavec, B., & Oliveira, T. (2019). Justifying business intelligence systems adoption in SMEs. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 119(1), 210-228. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-02-2018-0085>
- Puklavec, B., Oliveira, T., & Popovič, A. (2014). Unpacking Business Intelligence Systems Adoption Determinants: An Exploratory Study of Small and Medium Enterprises. *Economic and Business Review*, 16(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15458/2335-4216.1278>
- Raj, R., Wong, S. H. S., & Beaumont, A. J. Business Intelligence Solution for an SME: A Case Study. *SCITEPRESS - Science and Technology Publications, Proceedings of the 8th International Joint Conference on Knowledge Discovery, Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management*, 41-50. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5220/0006049500410050>
- Raj, R., Wong, S. H. S., & Beaumont, A. J. (2019, 2019//). Empowering SMEs to Make Better Decisions with Business Intelligence: A Case Study. *Knowledge Discovery, Knowledge Engineering and Knowledge Management*, Cham.
- Ramdani, B., Raja, S., & Kayumova, M. (2022). Digital innovation in SMEs: a systematic review, synthesis and research agenda. *Information Technology for Development*, 28(1), 56-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02681102.2021.1893148>
- Rogers, E. M., Singhal, A., & Quinlan, M. M. (2019). Diffusion of Innovations 1. In D. W. Stacks, M. B. Salwen, & K. C. Eichhorn (Eds.), *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*. 3rd ed. (pp. 415–434). Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203710753-35>
- Saáry, R., Kárpáti-Daróczi, J., & Tick, A. (2022). Profit or less waste?: Digitainability in SMEs: A comparison of Hungarian and Slovakian SMEs. *Serbian Journal of Management*, 17(1), 33-49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjm17-36437>
- Sasvari, P. (2015). The Examination of Using Business Intelligence Systems by Enterprises in Hungary. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 6(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2015.060214>
- Schegel, K. (2024). *Magic Quadrant for Analytics and Business Intelligence Platforms*. Garzner. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://www.gartner.com/doc/reprints?id=1-2HVUGEM6&ct=240620&st=sb>
- Scholz, P. (2010). *Benefits and Challenges of Business Intelligence Adoption in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises* ECIS 2010 Proceedings, pp. 1-12,





- Séllei, B. (2024). Gaps and Bridges between Future Managers and IT People. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 21(3), 53–72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.21.3.2024.3.5>
- Storey, D. J. (1994). *Understanding The Small Business Sector (1st ed.)*. Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315544335>
- Talaoui, Y., & Kohtamäki, M. (2021). 35 years of research on business intelligence process: a synthesis of a fragmented literature. *Management Research Review*, 44(5), 677-717. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-07-2020-0386>
- Tick, A. (2023, 23-26 May 2023). Evaluation of Industry 4.0 familiarity at SMEs in Central-Eastern Europe using Machine Learning Algorithms. 2023 IEEE 17th International Symposium on Applied Computational Intelligence and Informatics (SACI),
- Tick, A. (2023). Industry 4.0 Narratives through the Eyes of SMEs in V4 Countries, Serbia and Bulgaria. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 20(2), 83-104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.20.2.2023.2.5>
- Tick, A., Saáry, R., & Kárpáti-Daróczi, J. (2022). Conscious or Indifferent: Concerns on digitalisation and sustainability among SMEs in Industry 4.0. *Serbian Journal of Management*, 17(1), 145-160. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5937/sjm17-36412>
- Tiernan, C., & Peppard, J. (2004). Information Technology:: Of Value or a Vulture? *European Management Journal*, 22(6), 609-623. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2004.09.025>
- Tornatzky, L. G., & Fleischer, M. (1990). *The processes of technological innovation. 4. print. Lexington, Mass.* Lexington Books.
- van der Krogt, A., Coronel, R. a., & Núñez-Castillo, C. (2020). *Adoption of business intelligence for SMEs*, in O. Dvouletý, M. Lukeš, and J. Mísař (eds) *8th International Conference Innovation Management, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability* 8th International Conference Innovation Management, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability, Praga.
- Venczel, T. B., Berényi, L., & Hriczó, K. (2024). The Project and Risk Management Challenges of Start-ups. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 21(2), 151-166. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.21.2.2024.2.8>
- Voicu, V., Zirra, D., & Ciocirlan, D. (2009). Business intelligence effective sollutions of management. In *Proceedings of the 10th WSEAS international conference on Mathematics and computers in business and economics* (pp. 181-185). World Scientific and Engineering Academy and Society (WSEAS).
- Wade, C. (March 15, 2010). *Power BI as a superset of Azure Analysis Services*. *Microsoft Power BI Blog*. <https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-sg/blog/power-bi-as-a-superset-of-azure-analysis-services/>
- Wakiaga, P. (2019). *SMEs critical in attaining manufacturing dream*. Kenya Association of Manufacturers. Retrieved September 15, 2024 from <https://kam.co.ke/smes-critical-in-attaining-manufacturing-dream/>

- Wamai, J., James, R., & Tumuti, J. (2022). Analysis of Business Intelligence Capability and Performance: Empirical Evidence from Commercial Banks in Kenya. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce & Management*, *X*(5), 83-101.
- Yin, T. S. (2016). Application of Mean and Standard Deviation in Questionnaire Surveys: Construct Validation. *Jurnal Teknologi*, *78*(6-4).  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.11113/jt.v78.8983>

## Appendix 1

The questionnaire consists of 3 sections.

### *A (Company characteristics)*

### *B (BI applicability)*

### *C (BI adoption factors)*

I truly appreciate your valuable time and effort in helping me with this research. All the information gathered here will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for research and analysis purposes without mentioning the person or company names.

**Business Intelligence (BI) is simply a collection of technology-driven approaches for gathering, storing, analyzing, providing access to data, and presenting actionable information to help corporate executives, business managers, and other end users make more informed business decisions."**

**"A small and medium enterprise (SME) is an enterprise that has between 51 and 250 staff members and a turnover that doesn't exceed Sh100 million."**

Use of Business Intelligence in SMEs	Measurement Items
<b>SECTION A: COMPANY'S CHARACTERISTICS</b>	
Which of the following is the specialty of your company?	Manufacturing industry
	Financial Institution
	Hospitality industry
	Health or medical organization
	Others (specify)
What is the number of employees in your company?	Less than 20
	Between 20 and 50
	Between 51 and 100
	Between 101 and 200
	More than 200
How long has the firm been in existence	Less than 1 yr.
	1-5yrs



	5-10yrs
	10-15yrs
	15-20yrs
	Above 20 yrs
Select which one best represents your case	Our firm has already adopted Business Intelligence
	Our firm is planning to adopt Business Intelligence
	Our firm has no plans to adopt Business Intelligence
	I have no idea what Business Intelligence is
<b>SECTION B: BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE APPLICABILITY IN SMEs</b> The question below is related to the <b>Business Intelligence applicability</b> in SMEs. Please rate the next items in the matrix using a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" value=1 to "totally agree" value=4	
Investing in new computer technologies will improve operational performance	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
The following <b>factors encourage the adoption of Business Intelligence</b> in your organization. Please rate the next items in the matrix using a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" value=1 to "totally agree" value=4	Operational efficiency Reduced operational costs Improved performance Competitive advantage Improved decision-making
<b>SECTION C: BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE ADOPTION ENABLING FACTORS</b>	You're doing great; we're about halfway through now. Let's find out what you think about <b>BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE ADOPTION ENABLING FACTORS FOR SMEs in Kenya</b>
The following <b>are organizational factors related to Business Intelligence adoption in SMEs</b> . Please rate the next items in the matrix using a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" value=1 to "totally agree" value=4	
Organizational size affects the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Organizational age influences the use of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
A top manager's innovation capacity affects the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree

Adoption of Business Intelligence is highly dependent on an organization's readiness to adopt it	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
<b>Technological factors</b>	
The complexity of technology (user-friendliness) affects the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Relative advantages or benefits of technology influence the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Available technical and operational skills are sufficient for the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Users are more likely to adopt easy-to-use as opposed to complex systems	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Resistance to change can hinder the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
<b>Environmental factors</b>	
Competitive pressure on the market forces the firm to adopt BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Owner managers, IT knowledge is a prerequisite for the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Vendor selection of new technology is important for the adoption of BI	Strongly agree I agree Disagree Strongly disagree
Select the BI product you are familiar with	
Alteryx Antivia DecisionPoint Birst Bissantz DeltaMaster BOARD CALUMO Chartio Coheris Corporate Planner Corporater EPM Suite Cubeware C8 Solutions Platform (Cockpit) cubus outperform CXO-Cockpit Cyberscience Cyberquery Datapine DigDash Dimensional Insight Diver Platform Domo Dundas Entrinsik Informer Envision evidanza GoodData Halo BI IBM Cognos BI/IBM Cognos Analytics IBM Cognos TM1/IBM Planning Analytics iDashboards IDL.DESIGNER InetSoft Infor BI Information Builders WebFOCUS Izenda Jedox BI Suite	

(formerly Palo) Konvergence Shuttle Logi Analytics Logi Suite Longview Analytics (formerly arcplan Enterprise) Looker Microsoft Excel (Excel only and Power Pivot) Microsoft Power BI (released in 2015, not formerly Excel-based version) Microsoft SharePoint Server Excel Services (only BI usage, no portal) Microsoft SQL Server Reporting Services (SSRS) MicroStrategy Analytics Platform MIK (now prevero BI) OpenText Information Hub (formerly Actuate) Oracle BI (formerly OBIEE and OBIFS) Oracle Hyperion Planning Oracle Hyperion Smart View for Office Pentaho Business Analytics (HDS) Phocas prevero prevero Prognoz Platform Pyramid Analytics Qlik Qlik Sense Qlik QlikView Report One sales-i270 THE BI Survey 17 – Sample, Products and Methodology - 19 - Salient SAP BO Analysis (OLAP or Office) SAP BO Cloud (formerly Cloud for Analytics/for Planning) SAP BO Lumira (Designer, formerly Design Studio) SAP BO Lumira (Discovery, formerly Lumira) SAP BO Web Intelligence SAP Business Explorer (BEx) (including SAP Web Application Designer (WAD) and SAP BEx Analyzer) SAP BW Integrated Planning (IP) SAP Crystal Reports SAP Predictive Analytics SAS Base SAS Intelligence Platform SAS Visual Analytics and Visual Statistics Sisense SpagoBI Tableau TARGIT BI Suite TIBCO Jaspersoft TIBCO Spotfire Yellowfin Zoho reports Don't know Other, please specify

## RÁBA – Running Down a Dream<sup>1</sup>

### The Hungarian Mission in North Africa, Egypt

Borbála Horváth<sup>2</sup>

#### Abstract:

This article aims to introduce to the reader the story of the RÁBA Hungarian machinery factory and its connections to North-Africa. As the RÁBA consortium was one of the largest industrial company in Hungary from the beginning of the 20th century, it surely has a long history with Africa to be told. The article firstly gives a historical review of the company, then it turns to describe the role of the machinery factory in the international trade and then the life of the famous Mr. Ede Horváth (CEO of RÁBA), a relative of the author gets to be examined. The article then takes every era of Egyptian politics (the Infitāh with Sadat, the Mubarak years), and continues to describe the business the company made with the country. After concluding the findings, there is an interesting appendix with the memoirs of the author which colours lively the experiences and thoughts of the author. The theme is very actual and with its interesting forms and stories that it includes is more than recommended for the reader. The article's aim finally is to give a comprehensive picture about the Soviet era's businesses between Hungary and Africa, which it surely describes well enough.

#### Keywords:

Africa; Egypt; Hungary;  
RÁBA; Horváth Ede;  
Business.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.354>

<sup>2</sup> BA degree with postgraduate education in African Studies, Széchenyi István University; ORCID: 0009-0007-1974-0796; management@sheparoute.com.

## Introduction

The business Mission in Africa of Hungarian motor vehicles started in Egypt at the beginning of the 20th century, when Hungarian Railway Carriage and Machine Works<sup>3</sup> (Győr, Hungary) delivered the first railway carriages; however, it will run further to heavy vehicle trade, including Libya, Sudan, and Ethiopia. The aim of this article is to investigate the vivid world of the Hungarian vehicle success story around the Nile's neighbouring countries after the Egyptian-Israeli 6 days happened in 1967.



Figure 1: The Nile River map with neighbouring countries.

Source: <https://egyptunitedtours.com/nile-river-map/>.

This research will show, through interviews, articles, datasheets and oral history, how the trading has evolved and what the background was. How the bilateral agreements of the 1970's affected future partnerships. The chronicle that is going to be elaborated on is based on personal experience, interviews, articles, studies, and reports collected from the abovementioned timelines.

<sup>3</sup> Large engineering company established in 1896 supplied the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with army and road vehicles.

This research work intends to investigate and analyse in light of the Cold War the period of 'friendly countries cooperation', focusing on Hungarian-Egyptian relations and partnerships, how the collapse of the Soviet Union and the affected partnerships, and how neoliberal globalisation affected Egypt.

Egypt is in the heart of the world; it connects Asia with Africa, belongs to the Arab world, and yet is located on the African continent, where the Nile, the Red Sea, and the Sahara interconnect Egypt's socio-economic and political life with its neighbours. So it can be confidently said that Egypt belongs to the African continent, treasures its Asian dimension, and historically contributes to building and developing the African continent.

### *Brief historical overview*

The 1980's was the period when Egypt and the Soviet bloc, including Hungary, had already boosted friendly and prosperous economic, technological, cultural, and diplomatic bonds. Despite the turmoil of political and economic challenges of the 1960s and 1970s in Egypt, the Egyptian and Hungarian political relations that have re-emerged since 1955 – after Stalin's<sup>4</sup> death – were able to develop and extend into a bilateral multidisciplinary agreement.

After the six-day war in 1967<sup>5</sup> Hungary continued to support Egypt. Discussing the relation between Egypt and Hungary, János Kádár, the General Secretary of the Hungary Social Workers' Party, stated at a meeting in Hungary in 1971 that the partnership stands on strong principles and economic interest. "We both stand against imperialism, and we also share common ground on certain issues, for instance, social progress [...] Our solidarity is not something newly formed. We enjoy political cooperation, economic alliances, and, to a limited extent, the military." (Abdallah Abdel-Ati Al-Naggar, J. Nagy László, 2020).

The official contact between the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Arab Socialist Union took place in 1972 in Egypt during Anwar Sadat's leadership. The two countries' economic alliance had shown a nonpareil in the Hungarian vehicle export: 800 Ikarus buses and 1300 heavy vehicles were already running on the roads in Egypt. According to *Világgazdagág* (World Economy), in the following years, the Hungarian Trading Company for Motor Vehicles (MOGÜRT) has made significant progress in exporting IKARUS buses running with RÁBA MAN diesel motors and RÁBA trucks to African countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Libya (Böcz, 1971).

The chart below gives an insight into the RÁBA truck sales statistics to Africa of the given time period:

---

<sup>4</sup>Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin (born Dzhugashvili, 18 December 1878 – 5 March 1953, born in Gori, Georgia) was a Soviet politician and revolutionary who led the Soviet Union from 1924 until his death in 1953; he began calling himself Stalin, i.e. "Man of Steel", when he was a young revolutionist.

<sup>5</sup>The six-day war of 1967 was the 3rd Arab-Israeli war; Israel's overwhelming victory included overtaking the Sinai Peninsula (returned back to Egypt in 1982), Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights, and Old Jerusalem, subsequently the major territories of which are still disputed and conflict zones.



RÁBA HEAVY VEHICLE EXPORT*				
Year	Country	Vehicle Type	Qty	Notes
1973	Sudan	831.03+571.00	27	
1974	Sudan	831.03+571.00	30	
1978	Egypt	853.13	21	
1979	Egypt	853.13+574	8	
	Egypt	853.16	16	ADR
	Tunesia	853.04	15	
1980	Egypt	833.03	6	
	Egypt	853.13+574	26	
1981	Egypt	853.13+574	48	
	Libya	F26.188	10	
	Libya	K26.188	14	
	Libya	S26.188	34	
	Zambia	F22; U26	2	
1982	Libya	K26.188	28	
	Libya	L26.188	2	
	Libya	582.00	10	
	Libya	S26.188	20	
1983	Egypt	833.03	1	
	Egypt	L26.188	27	
	Egypt	S26.188	63	
1985	Egypt	S16.206	120	
1987	Egypt	S16.206	40	
1988	Libya	T18.188	174	

Figure 2: excl. sales by MOGÜRT (Ikarus buses, Steiger trucks, RÁBA MAN diesel motors). Source: Szabó János, RÁBA Technological Center, 2024.

RÁBA Motor Vehicle Manufacturing Company had achieved in the 1980s unprecedented growth in exports outside of the Soviet bloc. During the Cold War time

period, the USA had become one of the largest importers, which marked a milestone in the worldwide success of the Hungarian manufacturing company.

### *Years of living dangerously*

It is worth mentioning that the Libyan government was also a special partner to RÁBA Company. Muammar Gaddafi's president of Libya from 1969 until his assassination was a suggestive and highly influential figure in the region. His particular Third Theory ideology set him apart from other autocrats in the Arab and African regions. He combined his radical fundamentalist Muslim faith with a militant creed of "national liberation" to garner support for terrorist activities and revolution across Africa. His policy was based on strong moral, religious, and political foundations. Gaddafi's vast oil wealth and alliance with the Soviet Union provided resources for making him a strategic acquirer.

To understand the peculiarities of the Rába Company for taking part in the and Libyan and Middle-Eastern public vehicle trade, it is important to know that in the 1980s there was an agreement between the Libyan government and the Rába company that for constructing houses the Rába would export public vehicles to the country (Aranyi, 2020).

Since 1975, the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc strongly supported Libya's military force. The Soviets' sale of powerful weapons to Gaddafi has raised security concerns for Egypt. In 1981, the Soviets sent RBA military trucks to the Sahara for testing; the deployed RBA professionals, accompanied by the Libyan Army, cruised around the borders of Sudan, Chad, and Egypt. The secret military mission involved capturing the military radio frequencies of neighbouring countries, listening to their communications, and recording their movements.

"It was very demanding with a lot of stress," recalls Alfred Fehérvári, one of the military-deployed RÁBA technicians. President Muammar Gaddafi's headquarters in Tripoli held us almost captive. Held captive and under constant military guard, with tanks stationed everywhere, we found it difficult to leave. The army changed the gate codes every hour. Once we set off to the Sahara with RÁBA trucks, we stayed in the desert for 3 months, living in tents. The experience was not only physically intense but also mentally demanding, remembers Alfréd. Three employees of RÁBA were accompanying the trucks. Due to their specialized efforts and military undercover missions, backed by RÁBA technology, President Gaddafi acquired a total of 174 RBA military trucks by 1988.

These were the years when Gaddafi permitted outlawed organizations from other countries to have representatives in Tripoli. These include resistance movements from Tunisia, Chad, Sudan, and Egypt. Gaddafi provided funding, training, weapons, and radio facilities for these groups and others from around the world. There were about 20 training camps for terrorists and guerrillas in Libya, with approximately 7,000 recruits (Francis, 1982). One can lament whether the RÁBA technicians were hosted in these camps while fulfilling their business undercover mission.

### *A brief historical overview of the RÁBA factory*

Ox Stables served as the first site for the founding of one of Hungary's most renowned automobile manufacturers over 125 years ago. Austrian entrepreneurs established the Hungarian Waggon and Machine Factory (Rába Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár, Rába MVC) in 1896, which became the preeminent machine-factory enterprise of the 20th century. The Lederer family, prominent manufacturers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, possessed 88% of the firm. The City of Győr (known as Raab in German) was the preeminent hub for Hungarian grain exports. The Industrial Revolution in Győr during the 1880s displaced horses from transportation. The railway network in Hungary was rapidly constructed and predominantly state-owned, with the Ganz factory in Pest being the sole manufacturer of wagons. Győr's primary enterprise involved the production of railway freight and passenger waggons; that also caught the eye of the audience at the Exposition Universelle (1900) in Paris (Hacsa, 2021b). Subsequently, Rába MVC exported locomotives to Romania and Italy and afterwards to India, Egypt, Korea, and Yugoslavia (Hacsa, 2021b). Also, passenger vehicles and pickups were manufactured under the Austro-Daimler license. In 1899, the company began exporting railway carriages to South Africa, the East Indies, and Egypt. Rába supplied city tramcars to Antwerp and Amsterdam and many carriages to the London Underground Railway. Production of gasoline-fuelled trucks began in 1904 and of passenger cars in 1914; later, the company also produced military vehicles. Between World Wars, Krupp and MAN licensed their vehicles. (History of automobile production, "Rába" (publications of the Museum of Transport 5., 1980)

A turning event in the history of the manufacturing company is 1938. Ede Horváth, a 14-year-old ambitious—later stakhanovist—Turner apprentice, entered Rába MVC. His father already worked at the factory, so he followed him there. At that time, no one anticipated that this young man would elevate the Hungarian automotive industry to international prominence, thereby enhancing the region's and the nation's visibility and sustainability during socialism (Interview with Jr. Ede Horváth). The massive military preparedness program offered significant development prospects. (Honvári & Somlyódyné Pfeil Edit, 2014) In later years, the 38-meter Botond military all-terrain vehicle, the Rába 41-meter artillery truck, and Turan tanks were created. Aviation included the Levente learning machine, the Falcon bomber, and military training machines from 1940 ("The All-terrain Hungarian," n.d.). From 1942, young Ede Horváth used to work on the Messerschmitt machines (Interview with Jr. Ede Horváth)

The facility contributed to the city's reconstruction and the restoration of the region's bridges with assistance from the Soviet army, as their advancement and mobility were impeded in the absence of road and rail bridges. The city endured 18 significant bombardments during World War II. The primary and most disastrous catastrophe transpired in 1944. On April 13, 163 British and American B-17 bombers targeted Győr, obliterating the wagon and machinery factory and the airport beyond the Industrial Canal. (Interview with Jr. Ede Horváth)

In 1948, Rába MVC was placed under state management (Honvári & Somlyódyne Pfeil Edit, 2014), and until the 1960s, it manufactured essential automotive components, including front and rear undercarriages, steering systems, and gearboxes. Ede Horváth became the general manager of the plant in spring 1963. With his ambitious vision and extensive experience, he enacted significant changes, systematically optimising production, organising administration, integrating departments, and establishing new divisions, while implementing rare socialist employee dismissals. Numerous war-destroyed bridges were predominantly fabricated at the Rába MVC. A swivel bridge was provided to Heluwan on the Nile Delta. They manufactured large cranes, tanks, and forklifts. Vehicle output increased as Ede Horváth took over the leadership (Hacsa, 2021b). During COMECON, the factory commenced the production of high-performance road diesel engines and large series chassis licensed from MAN, ceasing the manufacture of railcars. They also manufactured trucks and agricultural machinery. A significant milestone was the multibillion-dollar funding package that enabled the MAN-Renault-Ferrostal collaboration to develop a cutting-edge diesel engine with innovative manufacturing technologies. During the Cold War period, Rába's primary markets encompassed the Eastern Bloc, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. 80% of the company's turnover was from exports. The company employed more than 22,000 people in the region. The 1990 Eastern Market meltdown nearly obliterated the industrial giant. Ede Horváth was overthrown from his position. The state crisis management plan enabled the firm to conclude 1992 with moderate profits; nevertheless, it also inflicted significant transformation of the corporate (Interview with Jr. Ede Horváth)

Since 1999, the company has conducted its primary operations via subsidiary companies. Audi acquired the 114,000-square-meter hall in 1993; General Motors purchased the Szentgotthárd facility. The open Joint Stock Company Rába today makes chassis, cars, and parts. It is still one of Western Europe's largest automotive suppliers; the business has supplied the Hungarian army's off-road vehicles exclusively since 2003. While Rába continues to thrive, its size and significance have diminished. It now employs 1,700 people and no longer affects Győr's life. (Hacsa, 2021b)

### *The RÁBA Engine*

“The strength or weakness of a society depends more on the level of its spiritual life than on its level of industrialization. Neither a market economy nor even general abundance constitutes the crowning achievement of human life. If a nation's spiritual energies have been exhausted, it will not be saved from collapse by the most perfect government structure or by any industrial development. A tree with a rotten core cannot stand.” (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)

The CEO of the RÁBA Rába Hungarian Wagon and Machine Factory (Rába Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár, Rába MVC) facility in the socialist era was Mr. Ede Horváth, a great visionary, a businessman who was generous and shared the success of his business with

the people, a real patriot. He consistently sought opportunities and innovative solutions to secure a larger position in the global vehicle market, while also sharing the benefits with the community. RÁBA was the largest factory in the county of Győr-Moson-Sopron. The international trade in US dollars resulted in a positive trading balance both for the country and region, and that was one of the greatest economic necessities for the country of Hungary. No one ever disputed the management, qualities, community spirit, and international trade performance of the director, known as 'Red Baron'. He took the bravery and radically changed the production structure in favour of international and Western competitiveness. The company he led was an exceptional engineering firm, dedicated to identifying sustainable markets abroad and fostering prosperity in his home country. He expected hard work from others as much as from himself. He considered it natural for people to burn themselves at work, as he himself worked the hardest. The main investments of the Rába in the first decades of the company's history included the COMECON public vehicles cooperation and its major business partners were the eastern Soviet-Bloc countries (Germuska & Honvári, 2014, p. 158.).



*Figure3: RÁBA logo from 1933. The RÁBA brand has been a registered trademark since 1918. This logo was used for most of the years of operation.*

*Source: <https://iconape.com/raba-logo-logo-icon-svg-png.html>.*

The New York Times published an article in May 1976. His company's sales are 80% for export—with three-quarters of the exports going to the other Eastern European members of COMECON and one-quarter to the capitalist world, including the United States. An emblematic milestone and a breakthrough between US and Hungary relations was the visit to the Győr RÁBA plant by Philip M. Kaiser, former ambassador to the United States of America, on the 9th of December in 1977. It was the period when the Hungarian government had ongoing negotiations about the transfer of the Hungarian crown. It was then that the author's grandfather became a respected businessman in the International Mechanical Engineering Industry, and his authentic management behaviour convinced the Americans that they could trust us Hungarians and hand over our treasured Hungarian royal treasures. In 1978, on January 5, The Crown arrived at Ferihegy Airport on a presidential special plane, and on January 6, a

delegation representing the American people, headed by foreign minister Cyrus Vance, solemnly handed over the Holy Crown and the coronation symbols in Budapest.

Mr. Philip Mayer Kaiser during the administration of Jimmy Carter was ambassador to Hungary. While ambassador to Hungary, he was instrumental in the return of the Hungarian Crown jewellery to the Hungarian government from the United States. In his memoir, he recalls the encounter with the CEO of Rába with these thoughts:

"I saw with my own eyes how the new economic program worked in Raba, one of Hungary's most important plants. Raba produced axles for General Motors. Horváth, the company's director, earned the nickname "Red Baron." With thousands of employees, he steered his huge company with a hand that many American and British leaders could have envied. On one of my visits to the headquarters of the company, which is about 140 km from Budapest to Vienna, Horváth proudly displayed his state-of-the-art machines brought from the United States, Germany, and other Western countries." (Kaiser, 1992).

Nevertheless, the Rába had an excellent relationship with the US, as for example during the years 1975-1990, before the regime change, the value of the goods exported to America was 470,7 million USD. Besides the Soviet Union – which was the main business partner of the company in those years – the US was one of its main export targets and the cooperation was were active (Áldozó, 2014, p. 118.).

The Rába had excellent relations with Italy as well. In the early years, the company had agreed to a contract with the Austro-Fiat consortium in 1928. Furthermore, a pact was further accomplished on 05 March 1937, when serious deals were made between the two partners concerning their mutual cooperation and work (Nagy, 2013, p. 165.).

Mr. Ede Horváth was the author's grandfather, who had a remarkable sense of how to build collective ambition and integrate the brand Rába into more than 20,000 people's lives. Moreover, an entire region's population enjoyed his international appreciation, shaping it into a football stadium, a modern theatre, cultural centres, and housing.

One of his famous quotes was "I would even cut a deal with the devil...". What it meant was that he was ready to find the most extreme solutions to multiply the production and revenue of the factory with bold decisions, bypassing the economic socialist regulations of the time, only focusing on fulfilling the plan, and keeping the interests of the economy in mind. This benefited the national economy and factory workers, say many. The company was highly respected in Győr, known as the biggest employer. They built a large stadium and sponsored the local football team, Rába ETO. They also provided training and scholarships, along with a technical library, cultural centre, brass band, dance group, and sports club.

One of the key elements of business success was the establishment of a local technical service and after-sales management network. The strategy was based on the notion that



new prospects are also important, but it's also crucial to continue nurturing your existing customers.

### *A brief historical overview of the Rába factory*

Ox Stables served as the first site for the founding of one of Hungary's most renowned automobile manufacturers over 125 years ago. Austrian entrepreneurs established the Hungarian Waggon and Machine Factory (Rába Magyar Vagon-és Gépgyár, Rába MVC) in 1896, which became the preeminent machine-factory enterprise of the 20th century. The Lederer family, prominent manufacturers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, possessed 88% of the firm. The City of Győr (known as Raab in German) was the preeminent hub for Hungarian grain exports. The Industrial Revolution in Győr during the 1880s displaced horses from transportation. The railway network in Hungary was rapidly constructed and predominantly state-owned, with the Ganz factory in Pest being the sole manufacturer of wagons. Győr's primary enterprise involved the production of railway freight and passenger wagons; that also caught the eye of the audience at the Exposition Universelle (1900) in Paris (Hacsa., 2021b). Subsequently, Rába MVC exported locomotives to Romania and Italy and afterwards to India, Egypt, Korea, and Yugoslavia (Hacsa., 2021b). Also, passenger vehicles and pickups were manufactured under the Austro-Daimler license. In 1899, the company began exporting railway carriages to South Africa, the East Indies, and Egypt. Rába supplied city tramcars to Antwerp and Amsterdam and many carriages to the London Underground Railway. Production of gasoline-fuelled trucks began in 1904 and of passenger cars in 1914; later, the company also produced military vehicles. Between World Wars, Krupp and MAN licensed their vehicles (History of automobile production, "Rába " (publications of the Museum of Transport 5., 1980).

A turning event in the history of the manufacturing company is 1938. Ede Horváth, a 14-year-old ambitious—later stakhanovist—Turner apprentice, entered Rába MVC. His father already worked at the factory, so he followed him there. At that time, no one anticipated that this young man would elevate the Hungarian automotive industry to international prominence, thereby enhancing the region's and the nation's visibility and sustainability during socialism (interview with Jr. Ede Horváth). The massive military preparedness program offered significant development prospects (Honvári & Somlyódyné Pfeil Edit, 2014). In later years, the 38-meter Botond military all-terrain vehicle, the Rába 41-meter artillery truck, and Turan tanks were created. Aviation included the Levente learning machine, the Falcon bomber, and military training machines from 1940 ("The All-terrain Hungarian," n.d.). From 1942, young Ede Horváth used to work on the Messerschmitt machines (interview with Jr. Ede Horváth).

The facility contributed to the city's reconstruction and the restoration of the region's bridges with assistance from the Soviet army, as their advancement and mobility were impeded in the absence of road and rail bridges. The city endured 18 significant bombardments during World War II. The primary and most disastrous catastrophe

transpired in 1944. On April 13, 163 British and American B-17 bombers targeted Győr, obliterating the waggon and machinery factory and the airport beyond the Industrial Canal. (interview with Jr. Ede Horváth)

In 1948, Rába MVG was placed under state management (Honvári & Somlyódyné Pfeil Edit, 2014), and until the 1960s, it manufactured essential automotive components, including front and rear undercarriages, steering systems, and gearboxes. Ede Horváth became the general manager of the plant in spring 1963. With his ambitious vision and extensive experience, he enacted significant changes, systematically optimising production, organising administration, integrating departments, and establishing new divisions, while implementing rare socialist employee dismissals. Numerous war-destroyed bridges were predominantly fabricated at the Rába MVG. A swivel bridge was provided to Heluwan on the Nile Delta. They manufactured large cranes, tanks, and forklifts. Vehicle output increased as Ede Horváth took over the leadership (Hacsa., 2021b). During COMECON, the factory commenced the production of high-performance road diesel engines and large series chassis licensed from MAN, ceasing the manufacture of railcars. They also manufactured trucks and agricultural machinery. A significant milestone was the multibillion-dollar funding package that enabled the MAN-Renault-Ferrostal collaboration to develop a cutting-edge diesel engine with innovative manufacturing technologies. During the Cold War period, Rába's primary markets encompassed the Eastern Bloc, the Middle East, Africa, and the United States. 80% of the company's turnover was from exports. The company employed more than 22,000 people in the region. The 1990 Eastern Market meltdown nearly obliterated the industrial giant. Ede Horváth was overthrown from his position. The state crisis management plan enabled the firm to conclude 1992 with moderate profits; nevertheless, it also inflicted significant transformation of the corporate (interview with Jr. Ede Horváth).

Since 1999, the company has conducted its primary operations via subsidiary companies. Audi acquired the 114,000-square-meter hall in 1993; General Motors purchased the Szentgotthárd facility. The open Joint Stock Company Rába today makes chassis, cars, and parts. It is still one of Western Europe's largest automotive suppliers; the business has supplied the Hungarian army's off-road vehicles exclusively since 2003. While Rába continues to thrive, its size and significance have diminished. It now employs 1,700 people and no longer affects Győr's life (Hacsa., 2021b).

### *Infitāh: Egypt's Open Door Policy*

The initiative of economic liberalisation in Egypt started under Anwar Sadat's presidency. "In the past, when the government was expected to meet every need, people's attitudes were negative. That belongs to a dead era of impoverishing socialism. Now we have an open-door policy for our economy—and democratic socialism," reflected Sadat on the previous president Nasser's policy (Sadat, 2014).

This shift in economic policy, known as the Infitāh or "Open Door" policy, marked a significant departure from the state-controlled socialist model implemented by Gamal

Abdel Nasser. The liberalization process aimed to attract foreign investment, promote private sector growth, and reduce government control over the economy (Ikram, 2006).

The implementation of these reforms, however, was not without challenges. While the Infitāh policy led to increased foreign investment and economic growth, it also exacerbated income inequality and social tensions. The urban elite and foreign investors largely benefited from economic liberalization, while rural and working-class Egyptians saw little improvement in their living standards, according to a study by Waterbury (1983).

However, the policy also faced significant challenges, such as bureaucratic obstacles and increased economic disparities, benefiting a small elite while leaving the broader population largely disappointed. Despite some improvements in GDP, Egypt's economy continued to struggle with issues like underemployment and a trade deficit, and the general standard of living remained low. Political instability following Mubarak's ouster in 2011 further impacted the economy negatively, particularly in the tourism and manufacturing sectors.

The Soviet Union's influence in Egypt had already waned significantly by the time Mubarak took office, following Sadat's expulsion of Soviet advisors in the 1970s and the subsequent realignment towards the West. Mubarak's presidency was characterized by a pragmatic approach to foreign relations, prioritizing economic aid and political stability over ideological alignments.

Authoritarian governance, socio-economic transformations, and the persistent influence of military power marked the Mubarak presidency (1981–2011). The author's encounter with Egypt started in 1984, when RÁBA signed a contract with the Egyptian exclusive distributor and his, Jr. Ede Horváth (firstborn son of the late Ede Horváth, CEO, RÁBA), was appointed as head of after-sales service to Cairo. The Hungarian MOGÜRT-RÁBA Business Mission was at its peak. In 1985, Mr. Tilly and Mr. Horváth (the younger) successfully closed a deal that was struck for the supply of 120 RBA trucks, with Copetrole Egypt among the buyers. The oil shocks (1973, 1979) created a regional boom that had direct effects on Egypt, indicating higher oil revenues as well as indirect effects (through workers' remittances, foreign aid, and tourism), resulting in abundant financing for investment. The further liberalization of the economy, which granted the private sector a wider scope for operations, and a series of laws encouraging investment through incentives also fuelled growth. As a result of these factors, real GDP grew sharply, averaging 8.4 percent a year between the years of 1974-75 and 1984-85.

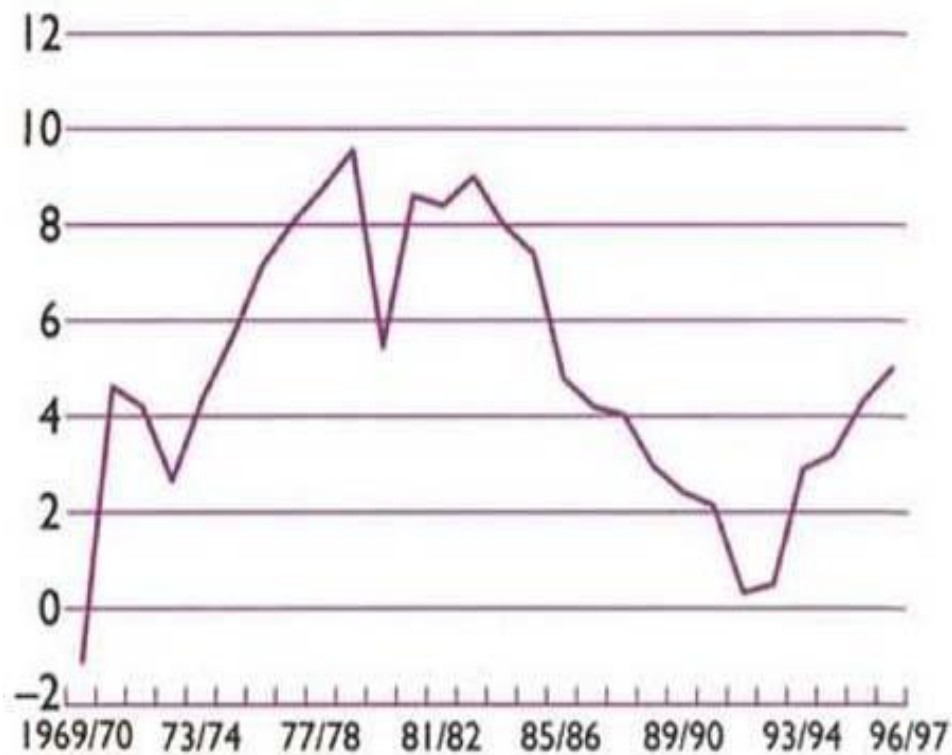


Figure 4: A Historical examination of growth, investment, and saving, IMF eLibrary. Source: Handy, 1998.

The state of emergency became a hallmark of governance under Mubarak, who succeeded Sadat. This period was characterized by the entrenchment of authoritarianism, where the executive branch wielded significant power, often at the expense of democratic institutions (Reza, 2007). The political landscape remained largely unchanged, with the ruling party Nationals suppressing opposition and dissent, leading to a climate of political stagnation and public disillusionment. The persistence of emergency laws and the use of military courts to try to suppress citizens and movements was a regular practice.



*Figure 5: D10 RÁBA L26.188-6.4-000 Egypt 1983. Source: RÁBA Technological Centre*

Mr. János Tilly, former MOGÜRT representative to Cairo (1980-1985), was fulfilling his duty on the days at the Hungarian Embassy when President Anwar Sadat was assassinated during the annual victory parade held in Cairo to celebrate Egypt's crossing of the Suez Canal.

“It was a constant state of emergency,” says Mr. Tilly. “We, Hungarians serving at our foreign post, took enormous personal risk and tackled the political and ideological issues of the time; we were young and enjoyed every moment of the trading in Africa; we were cautious, but nothing could stop us. These men had guts with wit and intelligence and were eager to bring home results,” said Mr. Tilly when recollecting the pieces.

Mr. Tilly graduated from high school in Egypt at the end of the 1960s; his father was a 3x national champion fencer for decades and the brother of the legendary head of section of Vasas Sport Club,<sup>6</sup> Endre Tilly. Older János Tilly, just as his brother was a fencing coach in the 1960s in Cairo, Egypt. Younger János graduated as an economist and immediately headed to MOGÜRT to enhance his skills in international vehicle trade and gain valuable experience from his youth in Egypt.

“The major focus of MOGÜRT was the sales of Ikarus buses,” said Mr. Tilly. “The Hungarian buses were running with RÁBA-MAN licensed diesel engines. They were reliable buses; however, the heavy overload of the buses caused a lot of problems.”

---

<sup>6</sup>Vasas Fencing Sport Club, established in Budapest in 1911, is one of Hungary's most successful clubs. It boasts 45 Olympic Gold Medalists and 40 World Champions among its over 30 sports, including fencing with 9 Olympic Champions.

Looking back into the 1960s, Hungary made a significant contribution to Africa. They organized an expedition that included two Ikarus buses operating on the Rába axle and two Csepel trucks. Their journey began in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, and spanned over 20,000 kilometres as they passed through Nigeria on their way to Accra, the capital of Ghana. MOGÜRT hoped that African countries would buy the buses and trucks. How much exactly the expedition itself boosted sales is not known. But it is known that there were 1,298 Ikarus buses sold in 1963; in 1964, the figure rose to 2,060; and in 1967, to 2,820. In the desert of Mali, the Ikarus buses were the first to make it through the desert. (Ághassi & Dezsényi, 2024)

Ikarus buses were the all-winning goods of the Hungarian motor vehicle, however, the public transport capacity of the buses was meant to carry 180 passengers; but in Egypt, public transport vehicles are constantly overloaded, carrying up to 300 passengers. The lack of proper maintenance and non-proper use (i.e., heavy overload). „It was time for us to start introducing RÁBA truck heavy vehicles," recalls Mr. Tilly.

Thanks to Mr. János Tilly trading skills and devotion, after a break of more than 10 years, Hungarian trucks returned to Egypt. MOGÜRT Company won the competition in front of more than 30 international companies. The vehicles were put into service in different cities of Egypt from the following year, January. The other major contract was with Alexandria Transport Company; according to this, they had been commissioned to transport 63 tractor units and 23 trucks based on the tender they had won. The Alexandrian company has been buying from RÁBA almost every year since 1977, so the Hungarian factory was able to introduce additional trucks of various categories to the Egyptian market on a larger scale. (Hungarian News Agency, 1983).

The visit of Mr. Ede Horváth, RÁBA CEO, to Cairo in 1983 and his ambitious yet professional approach to after-sales services between 1983 and 1985 resulted in further supply of trucks in 1985. The sales management team was composed of a business manager and three technicians. The head of the after-sales team was Jr. Ede Horváth. The RÁBA service team was truly one-of-a-kind. Not only did they provide education and knowledge to local technicians in garages, but they also served as the go-to service and support team for all Hungarian expats and diplomats in Egypt. They formed an alliance of knowledge, innovative wit, and courage—a crucial support system, acting almost as an umbrella organization for those in need or in a state of emergency. One could always count on them for assistance and guidance, no matter the issue at hand.





*Figure 5: Photo: R22 RÁBA 833.03 in Egypt, 1985. Source: RÁBA Technological Centre.*

The Jr. Horváth's favourite motto was:

“We show as the RÁBA team to the outside world a strong unity. We are from Győr, representing a company and a brand that we are all proud of. Any personal or professional problem can be solved within our team, but it should not concern outsiders. The RÁBA team's unity should never crack on foreign land!”

János, the confident and driven head of MOGÜRT's representative office, and Ede, the experienced and resourceful leader of RÁBA's after-sales team, had formed a remarkable partnership. Their shared vision for what makes a successful business in Africa had earned them the opportunity to establish an exceptional after-sales and service presence in the market. This included providing comprehensive education, installing garages, conducting regular monitoring, and offering on-the-spot technical support. The team seamlessly communicated with their Egyptian partners' employees in Arabic. This unique collaboration not only strengthened the bond between Hungary and Egypt on a professional level but also fostered strong personal connections.

### *Early signs of Mubarak's Internal Policy struggles*

When Mubarak took office, the Centralized Security Forces already had a great number (cca. 100,000 members). The state of emergency and military enforcement were a common phenomenon one got used to since Nasser's presidency.

The new president in 1981 had immediate concerns following the killing of Sadat. The two main worries were the possibility of a power grab and the loyalty of the armed forces, which may have been compromised by religious extremists. Within days of the assassination, supporters of the assassins attacked government property and Coptic

Christians. The government responded swiftly with paratroopers and Special Forces. There was concern that Islamists had gained influence within the military, as evidenced by the religious beliefs of Sadat's assassins. Radical groups sought to recruit from the military and mobilize the people against the regime. Low-ranking soldiers who came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were particularly susceptible to extremist ideologies.

After the growth of Islamist militancy, the Mubarak government conducted a study and determined that economic distress and poverty were to blame. They took measures to prevent infiltration by religious fanatics in the armed forces, but some officers still formed alliances with extremists. To prevent this, an oversight institution was created. However, by the turn of the millennium, the system began to falter as top-ranking officers believed promises of lucrative post-retirement positions were enough to maintain their loyalty. These positions were highly sought after due to patronage and kinship ties. This led to resentment towards those who obtained these positions and the affluent liberal class in control of the economy.

In the tumultuous era of the 1980s, a strikingly odd characteristic of Egyptian authoritarianism emerged: the staggering inefficiency of its large coercive apparatus. Despite vast financial and human resources being directed towards it and its well-deserved reputation for ruthlessness, time and time again, the government proved incapable of effectively handling issues such as low morale, inadequate training, and dismal pay. These problems continued to fester well into the twenty-first century. The police and paramilitary forces were particularly affected, with the units based in the south being deemed unreliable due to their failure to fulfil their duties.

### *The official story that not many know*

A post-Mubarak report on internal security revealed that the paramilitary Central Security Forces (CSF) lacked proper training and skills. In February 1986, a "revolt" involving 20,000 CSF members erupted as rumours circulated that their unpopular term of service would be extended. Despite being a conscript force of 300,000 men, mostly illiterate peasants from rural areas, the CSF was responsible for maintaining security around public facilities and suppressing demonstrations by students and workers.

The military was ultimately called in to quell the rebellion, although there was little chance of it gaining traction with urban society. The two groups were culturally different, despite both facing economic struggles. However, the government failed to learn from this event and made few efforts to improve the quality of life, pay, and skills of the CSF members. While units based in northern Egypt received better treatment and training, those in southern Egypt (where the Islamist insurgency would later erupt) remained neglected and vulnerable to infiltration by Islamist activists. As a result, northern units were often deployed to deal with unrest in the south.

Rebellions broke out in CSF camps in Qaliubiya, Ismailia, and Sohag, but the conscripts were unable to leave as the army surrounded them. In Asuit, during a year of rampant terrorism, there was a strong mutiny at the CSF camp. It is rumoured that the

governor of Asuit at the time, police general Zaki Badr ended the mutiny by drowning thousands of conscripts in the Asuit Nile canal after opening its lock.

### *The dying of the Swan*

Népszabadság<sup>7</sup> interviewed the author's grandfather, Ede Horváth on June 20th, 1989, one month before the 41st president of the United States of America, George Bush, visited Hungary. In that interview, he comments on the political-economic urge for reforms and measures:

"...do you know where the problem is? No political reform automatically creates economic renewal. And we, as if rocking ourselves in this dream, sit idly by and wait for the western capitalists to take our place in the form of millions of dollars. Political reforms can relieve the economy of many unnecessary burdens. They can sweep away the current bureaucratic economic management. They could radically transform our disastrous cadre policy. Political reforms can help society not to turn economic issues into political issues. The former state is untenable." (Hajba, 1989).



*Figure 6: Mr. George Bush US president meets Mr. Ede Horváth CEO of RÁBA, at Ambassador to Hungary Mark Palmer's Residency. Source: family album.*

The downfall of the MSZMP<sup>8</sup> in October 1989 left Ede Horváth without the political backing he had relied on for years. The once-powerful members of the old political elite, now facing accusations and blame for the country's economic turmoil, were under immense pressure to defend themselves. As a prominent figure within the Central Committee, Ede Horváth was a prime target for criticism and attack. His every move

<sup>7</sup> Népszabadság - "Liberty of People", major Hungarian Daily Newspaper, formerly the official press of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party.

<sup>8</sup> MSZMP - Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party.

and action would be scrutinized by both his enemies and allies alike, leaving him vulnerable in a time of uncertainty and unrest.

A few months later, the magnificent businessman and emblematic figure of the Hungarian industry and a local patriot was overthrown by his own board of directors from his position. Ede Horváth's dream to create an automobile manufacturing plant seemed to perish. By the early 1990s, RÁBA factory was in difficulty due to the unforeseen collapse of the Eastern Market, and later, due to reorganizations, chassis production and the design and production of walking chassis came to the fore. RÁBA did not give up truck production despite the difficult economic situation. In 1992, it signed a new licensing agreement with MAN for small and medium-sized trucks with a gross weight of 6 to 10 tonnes. By the end of the '90s, however, it became clear that Raba trucks could no longer compete with Western European products.

The new management of RÁBA invited AUDI Car Manufacturing Company to set up their plant and purchase the unfinished workshop facility left abandoned after the grandfather was removed by force.

### *Sparks of RÁBA in Egypt*

Since 2011, Egypt has undergone a new phase, leading to a power struggle between those in favour of the revolution and those supporting the coup. Although these developments were part of the country's democratic transition, it was disappointing that people's political and economic demands were not met after the Arab Spring. This has highlighted the fact that success in movements like these requires both political transformation as well as attention to economic and social needs. View of the role of global actors on the failed transition to democracy in Egypt (n.d.).



Figure 7: RÁBA annual report 2018. Source: [https://raba.hu/wp-content/uploads/befektetoknek/eves\\_jelentesek/raba\\_eves\\_jelentes\\_2018\\_hun-eng.pdf](https://raba.hu/wp-content/uploads/befektetoknek/eves_jelentesek/raba_eves_jelentes_2018_hun-eng.pdf)

In 2015, RÁBA closed a “monumental” deal to supply 145 axles to EAMCO (Engineering Automotive Manufacturing Company). The company was built upon the truck and bus businesses of NASCO (El Nasr Automotive Manufacturing Company). EAMCO has become an independent public limited company. Dating back to 1960, it gained immense industrial prowess through access to DEUTZ and FIAT know-how, cementing its dominance not only in Egypt but also in the Arab world.

This year, on February 20th, Lieutenant General Ferenc Kajári, Deputy Chief of the HDF General Staff, received a courtesy visit from Colonel Tamer Ali Ibrahim Bebars, Egypt's non-resident defence attaché in Hungary. They both acknowledged the strong and positive relationship between their countries and the potential for further cooperation. The key areas of collaboration between the Hungarian Defence Forces and the Egyptian Armed Forces include joint participation in military exercises, joint training opportunities such as peace operations and counter-IED courses, and defence industry cooperation. There is also ongoing cooperation between the Hungarian Army and RÁBA within the frame Hungarian national procurement program. Recently, the Ministry of Defence and Raba Vehicle Ltd. renewed their framework contract to extend the vehicle procurement program until 2026.

Egypt has constantly grappled with the struggle between authoritarianism and the pursuit of an open door policy. This battle has been shaped by various factors such as socio-economic policies, military influence, and civil society activism, leading to significant changes and upheavals. The legacy of emergency rule continues to play a crucial role in shaping the country's political landscape and poses challenges for transitioning towards a more democratic governance model.

The textbook definition of military rule came to fruition in Egypt after the events of 2013. It was then that then Minister of Defence Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi orchestrated a coup d'état, overthrowing the only civilian president in the country's history. In the year following, el-Sisi assumed the role of president himself. (The Changing Role of the Egyptian Military Under el-Sisi | ISPI, 2024)

Now, 'military society' permeates all levels of government in Egypt. The Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF), along with other powerful military entities and closely affiliated intelligence agencies, hold significant control over parliament and local governance. Their presence is felt in every aspect of daily life.

Ede Horváth's words from the 1989 interview keep echoing: “No political reform automatically creates economic renewal.”

On the other hand, Hungary's manufacturing and motor vehicle industry has experienced significant transformations since the 1990s. Today, RÁBA no longer manufactures vehicles and instead functions primarily as a supply chain management body for H22 military trucks. RÁBA supplies military trucks to the Hungarian Army with an outsourced manufacturing technological model. Initially, the author's father's grand vision was to construct the company's own military vehicles, as the RÁBA Holding was well empowered by all necessary manufacturing capacity in the early years of the 2000s. With years, the production of different vehicle components was cut down to being a



basic supplier of complete axels and other vehicle components. No more genuine RÁBA trucks.

Today you can read on the company's website, [www.raba.hu](http://www.raba.hu), the following catchphrase: "RÁBA's flagship is the production of complete axles and axle components. Every third truck on Europe's roads has a chassis component manufactured and delivered by the company."

### *Conclusion*

While RÁBA managed to secure new markets and maintain some of its existing ones between 1990 and 2010, it appears that in Africa, Egypt, it has re-earned its strategic and technological significance after years of stagnation in different forms to enhance the current government policy. It is supposedly fit to believe that a deep and unbreakable bond was forged during the times of socialism, when the Arab nation eagerly absorbed Hungary's advanced and affordable motor vehicle technology through years of close collaboration and relentless pursuit of knowledge, industrial and military autonomy, regional dominance, and sustaining. The close industrial and strategic ties between Hungary and Egypt are based on their shared understanding of the negative impact of powerful global states throughout their histories. Both nations have experienced this burden, creating a self-explainable foundation for their relationship with the aim of becoming autonomous and knowledgeable nations in their own regions. Some might look at the Hungarian military partnership as support towards President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's initiative for human development called "Bedaya: A New Beginning for Building the Human."<sup>9</sup> If it is so, then the two countries not only would focus on economic benefits but can rely on each other as allies. The new forms of partnerships have the potential to encapsulate an alternative in responding to today's challenges indicated by the main global actors.

### *Conflict of Interest*

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### *Notes on Contributor*

Borbála Ágnes Horváth is a postgraduate of African Studies at Széchenyi István University and an apprentice researcher at the Africa Research Institute at Óbuda University, Doctoral School for Safety and Security Sciences. She graduated from Eötvös Lóránd University in English-Russian major. From this year, became a junior researcher at Africa Research Institute, writing articles and reviews for journals. She speaks Russian and English, and has learned Arabic and Spanish. She aims to advance her academic

---

<sup>9</sup>The project targets human development and strengthening Egyptian identity through initiatives in health, education, culture, sports, and job creation. It involves collaboration between state agencies, civil sectors, and private sectors to enhance investment in human capital coordinated by the Egyptian Army.





work in humanitarian relief towards self-sustaining development in the African continent and would like to continue researching and actively participating in projects.

## References

- Ághassi, A., & Dezsényi, I. (August 6, 2024). There was a time when Hungarian buses traversed the Sahara where Mercedes buses had broken down. *Telex*. <https://telex.hu/english/2024/08/06/the-ikarus-buses-crossed-places-in-the-sahara-where-the-mercedes-broke-down>
- Al-Naggar, A. A. A., & Nagy, L. J. (2020). gyptian-Hungarian and Egyptian-Soviet relations in the light of the 1973 war: Intercultural Relations between East And West 11th-21th century. In A. A. A. Al-Naggar & A. A. El-Sayed (Eds.), *Intercultural Relations between East and West 11 th –21 th* (pp. 103-116). JATE Press. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339687135\\_Egyptian-Hungarian\\_and\\_Egyptian-Soviet\\_relations\\_in\\_the\\_light\\_of\\_the\\_1973\\_war](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339687135_Egyptian-Hungarian_and_Egyptian-Soviet_relations_in_the_light_of_the_1973_war)
- Áldozó, I. (2014). A Rába Magyar Vagon- és Gépgyár a rendszerváltás utáni évtizedben. In J. Honvári (Ed.), *Győr fejlődésének mozgatórugói: A Győri Járműipari Körzet, mint a térségi fejlesztés új iránya és eszköze c. kutatás monográfiái* (Vol. 1, pp. 112-139). Universitas-Győr Nonprofit Kft.
- Aranyi, P. (2020). *Nem akarták kifizetni a full extrás Rábákat*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.vezess.hu/haszongepjarmu/2020/10/17/raba/>
- Autóbuszexport és járműipari kooperáció/Autobus export and vehicle industry cooperation. (n.d.). *Világgazdaság, 100*(Original work published 1975).
- Békés, C. J., Nagy, L., & Vékony, D. (n.d.). *Bittersweet Friendships: Relations between Hungary and the Middle East, 1953–1988*. Wilson Center. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bittersweet-friendships-relations-between-hungary-and-the-middle-east-1953-1988>
- Böcz, S. (December 21, 1871). Nyolcszáz Ikarus autóbusz Egyiptomban/Eighthundred Ikarus autobuses in Egypt. *Népszabadság*, 9.
- CARANA Corporation. (2002). *The Results and Impacts of Egypt’ s Privatization Program*. In *United States Agency for International Development, USAID Coordinating and Monitoring Services Project [Report]*. Retrieved November 12, 2024 from <https://www1.aucegypt.edu/src/wsite1/Pdfs/Results%20and%20Impacts%20of%20Privatization%20in%20Egypt.pdf>
- The Changing Role of the Egyptian Military Under el-Sisi*. (February 21, 2024). Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/the-changing-role-of-the-egyptian-military-under-el-sisi-156254>
- Cold War II? Preserving Economic Cooperation Amid Geoeconomic Fragmentation*. (December 11, 2023). Retrieved December 11, 2024 from

- <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/12/11/sp121123-cold-war-ii-preserving-economic>
- Dale, E. L., Jr. (1975). Hungarian Businessman Seeks U.S. Sales. *The New York Times*.
- Driver2. (Január 27, 2016). *Ikarus*. Retrieved December 12, 2024 from <https://www.drive2.ru/c/2716926/>
- El-Naggar, S. (n.d.). 8 Foreign Trade Policy of Egypt, 1986–91. *IMF eLibrary*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781557753052.071.ch008>
- Francis, S. T. (1982). Libya's empire of terror. *Africa Insight*, 12(1). [https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA02562804\\_68](https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA02562804_68)
- Germuska, P., & Honvári, J. (2014). The History of Public Vehicle Production in Győr from 1945 until 1990. In E. Somlóiné Pfeil (Ed.), *Industrial Districts and Cities in Central Europe: Monographies of the "Győr Automotive Industrial District as the new trend and means of spatial development" research* (Vol. 6, pp. 131-175). Universitas-Győr Nonprofit Ltd.
- Hacsa. (2021). *Ede a kamion. RITKÁN LÁTHATÓ TÖRTÉNELEM. Ede the truck. RARELY SEEN HISTORY*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://ritkanlathatotortenelem.blog.hu/2021/05/05/ede\\_a\\_kamion](https://ritkanlathatotortenelem.blog.hu/2021/05/05/ede_a_kamion)
- Hajba, F. (1989). I am not going to be an altar boy when I have already conducted sermons. *Népszabadság*, 127-152. [https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Nepszabadsag\\_1989\\_06/?query=SZO%3D%28%22Horv%C3%A1th+Ede%22%29+AND+DATE%3D%281989--1990%29&pg=247&layout=s](https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Nepszabadsag_1989_06/?query=SZO%3D%28%22Horv%C3%A1th+Ede%22%29+AND+DATE%3D%281989--1990%29&pg=247&layout=s)
- Handy, H. (1998). *II A Historical Examination of Growth, Investment, and Saving*. IMF eLibrary. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781557757203.084.ch002>
- Hashim, A. (2011). The Author, & Middle East Policy Council. The Egyptian Military, Part Two: From Mubarak Onward. *The Egyptian Military, Part Two: From Mubarak Onward*, 18(4). <https://d1lwqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/100858648/j.1475-4967.2011.00514.x20230409-1-drelair-ld=APKAJLOHF5CGSLRBV4ZAJ.1475-4967.2011.00514.x20230409-1-drelup-libre.pdf>
- Honvári, J., & Somlyódyne Pfeil, E. (Eds.). (2014). *Győr fejlődésének mozgatórugói a Győri járműipari körzet, mint a térségi fejlesztés új iránya és eszköze c. kutatás monográfiái* 1. [https://gyik.sze.hu/images/Monogr%C3%A1fi%C3%A1k/Honvari\\_GyorFejlode senekMozgatorugoi.pdf](https://gyik.sze.hu/images/Monogr%C3%A1fi%C3%A1k/Honvari_GyorFejlode senekMozgatorugoi.pdf)
- Horváth, B. (n.d.). *Horváth Ede* [Interview].
- Hováth, B. (n.d.). *Tilly János* [Interview].
- Hungarian News Agency. (1883). MOGÜRT szerződések Egyiptomban / MOGÜRT Trading Agreements in EGYPT. *Világgazdaság*, 15, 235/3734-3254/3753. [https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Vilaggazdasag\\_1983\\_12/?query=MOG%C3%9CRT+egyiptom+1983&pg=16&layout=s](https://adt.arcanum.com/hu/view/Vilaggazdasag_1983_12/?query=MOG%C3%9CRT+egyiptom+1983&pg=16&layout=s)



- Ikram, K. (2006). *The Egyptian Economy, 1952-2000: Performance policies and issues*. Routledge.
- Kaiser, P. M. (1992). *Journeying Far and Wide: A Political and Diplomatic Memoir*. Macmillan Reference USA.
- Maertens, G. (1980). A „Rába” gépkocsigyártás története. In *A Közlekedési Múzeum Közleményei* (Vol. 5). Közlekedési Múzeum. [https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/ORSZ\\_KOZL\\_KMK\\_05\\_Raba/?pg=0&layout=s](https://library.hungaricana.hu/hu/view/ORSZ_KOZL_KMK_05_Raba/?pg=0&layout=s)
- Nagy, R. (2013). Contacts of „RÁBA” Hungarian Railway Carriage and Machine Works in the Italian armaments industry on the field of aircraft and transport vehicle production between 1928 and 1941. In F. Fischer, M. Ormos, & I. Harsányi (Eds.), *Kutatási Füzetek* (Vol. 20, pp. 155-176). Pécsi Tudományegyetem Interdiszciplináris Doktori Iskola.
- Osman, T. (2017). *The Mubarak Years*. Yale University Press eBooks. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300181760-010>
- Puskás, C. (1977). Egyesült Államok nagykövete a Vagongyárba látogatott./The US Ambassador to Hungary visited the Hungarian carriage manufacturer. *Kisalföld*. [https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/gymmsgyl/2018\\_január](https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/gymmsgyl/2018_január)
- Rába Heavy Vehicle Africa EXPORT (1973-1988). (n.d.).
- Rába Járműipari Holding Nyrt. (2018). *Éves jelentés. ába Heavy Vehicle Africa EXPORT (1973-1988)*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from [https://raba.hu/wp-content/uploads/befektetoknek/eves\\_jelentesek/raba\\_eves\\_jelentes\\_2018\\_hun-eng.pdf](https://raba.hu/wp-content/uploads/befektetoknek/eves_jelentesek/raba_eves_jelentes_2018_hun-eng.pdf)
- Reza, S. (2007). Endless Emergency: The Case of Egypt. Regents of the University of California. *New Criminal Law Review*, 10(4), 532-553. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/nclr.2007.10.4.532>
- Sadat, A. (2014). Anwar Sadat on international affairs | International Affairs & Middle East Peace. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anwar-Sadat-on-international-affairs-1960770/Peace-and-self-determination-in-the-Middle-East>
- The all-terrain Hungarian. (n.d.). *The all-terrain Hungarian*. Key Military. <https://www.keymilitary.com/article/all-terrain-hungarian>
- Turan, S. (2018). *View of The role of global actors on the failed transition to democracy in Egypt*. Retrieved November 23, 2024 from <https://www.j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/IJHS/article/view/5598/2657>

#### Interviews:

Interview with late Jr. Ede Horváth, son of Ede Horváth (oral history).

Interview with Mr. János Tilly former representative of MOGÜRT office in Cairo, Egypt.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Malawian Education: Focusing on Teacher Training<sup>1</sup>

Csaba Szeremley<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

The primary education system in Malawi experienced significant changes, especially since the abolition of school fees in 1994, which resulted in an instant surge in enrolments. However, access improvements have not translated into substantial gains in educational quality. The primary education sector in Malawi is still under constant pressure and facing numerous challenges. The most important factors that need attention are the inadequate infrastructure, high pupil-teacher ratios and the lack of trained teachers. Financial constraints, such as allocating budgets to teacher salaries and inefficiencies in using School Improvement Grants (SIGs), further hinder progress. Systematic challenges are related to expenditure allocations, educational outcomes and service deliveries. Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to improve educational outcomes through targeted interventions. In-service training programs, like the Primary School Improvement Program (PSIP) and Technology-Assisted Learning (TAL), have demonstrated some positive impacts, especially in enhancing teacher practices and learning environments. Practical teacher training and ICT integration catalyse change in a resource-constrained environment. This paper also discusses recommendations for policy reforms, including better allocation of SIGs, optimising teacher deployment, and enhancing community involvement in school decision-making processes to evoke and strengthen ownership and responsibility outside of the school walls. Addressing the comprehensive inefficiencies requires a multifaceted approach that includes greater accountability in resource use, enhanced teacher support, and more equitable resource distribution across urban and rural schools. Recognising and addressing the unique challenges of the different schools in different areas is crucial. Focusing on cost-effective strategies and leveraging partnerships with international donors can also significantly reshape Malawi's education system. Ultimately, improving teacher quality and ensuring effective service delivery is essential for enhancing learning outcomes and addressing the persistent issues in the education sector in Malawi.

### Keywords:

Teacher training;  
Malawi; rural  
education; primary  
education; school  
improvement.

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.303>

<sup>2</sup> PhD-student, Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, University of Óbuda, Budapest; ORCID: 0000-0002-1819-243X; szeremley.csaba@uni-obuda.hu.

### *List of Acronyms*

EGRA - Early Grade Reading Activity

ICT - Information and Communication Technology

NESP - National Education Sector Plan

PSIP - Primary School Improvement Program

PTR - Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio

SIG - School Improvement Grant

TAL - Technology-Assisted Learning

UPE - Universal Primary Education

UN - United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

### *Introduction*

This paper seeks to delve into the intricate challenges faced by Malawi's primary education system, specifically focusing on teacher training. The history of education in Malawi is shaped by significant policy decisions to expand access to all segments of society, particularly following the country's transition to a democratic government in the early 1990s. The abolition of school fees in 1994 was perhaps the most notable of these reforms, leading to an unprecedented increase in enrolment. This expansion reflected a national commitment to education as a fundamental right and as a critical element of development. Access to education is considered a fundamental right in very few African countries. One such country is Western Sahara, which exists de jure, but most of its part is under Moroccan occupation. So, most of the Sahrawis live as refugees in Algeria. Education is mandatory for all children in the refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria. As a result, illiteracy has now been eradicated among the Sahrawis (Besenyo, Miletics, 2017; Besenyo, 2010). Yet, while enrolment numbers increased in Malawi, the quality of education available to most Malawians did not see a commensurate improvement (MoEST, 2008; Mtika, Gondwe, 2023). Despite a consistently high proportion of the government's budget being allocated to education, youth in Malawi are failing to progress to secondary school in large numbers and consistently do poorly compared to other similar countries assessed on literacy and math skills (Sharra et al., n.d.). Like many developing nations, Malawi has been caught in the dichotomy between expanding access and ensuring quality. The rapid growth in student numbers has led to overburdened teachers, deteriorating school infrastructure, and an acute shortage of resources. The absence of adequate planning for such an expansion created a ripple effect that is still felt today—manifesting in the form of overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers, and significant resource disparities between urban and rural schools (World Bank, 2016). Teacher quality is widely recognised as one of the most crucial determinants of student success, and as such, investing in teachers—through comprehensive pre-service and in-service training programs—can provide the needed



transformative change. Additionally, exploring the integration of ICT into the educational landscape presents new opportunities to bridge gaps in quality and access, especially in remote areas where traditional educational resources are scarce (Gondwe, 2021).

## *2. Educational Context in Malawi*

### *2.1 Historical Background and Reforms*

The education system in Malawi has evolved through a series of reforms aimed at broadening access and enhancing quality. The 1994 abolition of school fees marked a pivotal moment in the country's educational history. This policy intended to make education accessible to all children, regardless of socio-economic status. It was largely inspired by international frameworks such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiative and the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Following the abolition of fees, student enrolment surged, and by 2014, more than 4.5 million children were enrolled in primary schools—a substantial increase from the 1.8 million reported in 1993 (World Bank, 2016; Ravishankar et al., 2016). However, this rapid increase also put immense pressure on an ill-prepared education system to accommodate such numbers. The increase in enrolment was not accompanied by a proportional increase in infrastructure, teaching materials, or trained teachers, leading to significant challenges that persist to this day. The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) from 2008-2017 sought to address some of these challenges by focusing on improving quality, promoting equity, and enhancing governance within the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2008). Despite these efforts, many structural issues remain unaddressed, particularly those related to resource allocation. The bulk of educational funding continues to be absorbed by recurrent expenditures, primarily teacher salaries, leaving little for the capital investments needed to improve infrastructure and learning materials (World Bank, 2016; Ravishankar et al., 2016).

### *2.2 Current Educational Statistics and Challenges*

Educational outcomes in Malawi remain low, with significant barriers affecting both the quality of learning and retention rates. According to the World Bank (2016), only about one-third of students manage to complete the eight-year primary cycle without repetition or dropping out. Repetition rates are particularly high in the lower grades, often resulting from insufficient teachers and insufficient learning materials. Dropout rates are also a major concern, with socio-cultural factors such as early marriage and economic hardship forcing many students, particularly girls, to leave school prematurely (UNICEF, 2022). These challenges are compounded by regional disparities, with rural schools experiencing more severe shortages of resources compared to urban centres. For instance, the pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR) in some rural areas can reach as high as 100:1, making it nearly impossible for teachers to provide the individualised attention necessary for effective learning (Mkandawire et al., 2018). The shortage of female



teachers in rural areas further exacerbates gender inequalities, as many girls lack role models and feel unsupported in their educational pursuits. Modernising the hygiene of schools could also help (Tampu & Juhász, 2022).

### *3. Challenges in Malawian Education*

#### *3.1 Financial and Infrastructure Deficiencies*

The inadequacy of financial resources and the inefficient allocation of existing funds are among the most pressing challenges in Malawi's education system. The World Bank's 2016 report revealed that over 84% of the education budget is dedicated to teacher salaries, severely limiting the funds available for other critical expenditures, such as infrastructure development, learning materials, and teacher training programs. This financial imbalance directly impacts the quality of education, as schools cannot provide students with the resources they need for effective learning. Infrastructure challenges are particularly pronounced in rural areas, where schools often lack basic amenities such as electricity, desks, and classrooms. Many classes are held outdoors, under trees, with students sitting on the ground—a situation far from conducive to learning, especially during adverse weather conditions. Ravishankar et al. (2016) highlight that these infrastructure gaps are exacerbated by poor financial management practices and inefficiencies in budget execution, which prevents the timely allocation of funds needed to address these pressing issues. This lack of infrastructure affects the quality of education and discourages students from attending school, thus contributing to high dropout rates (Mtika, Gondwe, 2023).

School Improvement Grants (SIGs) were introduced as part of the Primary School Improvement Program (PSIP) to address some of these infrastructure gaps by providing schools with funds to make necessary improvements. However, delays in the disbursement of these grants, coupled with a lack of capacity among school management committees to manage the funds properly, have limited their effectiveness. As a result, many schools continue to operate in substandard conditions, with little hope for immediate improvement (World Bank, 2016, Ravishankar et al., 2016).

#### *3.2 Teacher Quality and Training Deficits*

The quality of teachers in Malawi is another major challenge that significantly impacts educational outcomes. Many teachers, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary qualifications and pedagogical skills to deliver the curriculum effectively. This is partly due to inadequate pre-service training and limited opportunities for in-service training once teachers are in the field (Popova et al., 2018). The pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR) is also a significant concern, particularly in rural schools where PTRs can be as high as 100:1. Such high ratios make it difficult for teachers to provide individualised attention to students, which is critical for effective learning. Moreover, teachers in rural areas often face difficult working conditions, including poor housing, long commutes, and a lack of basic amenities. These challenges contribute to high levels of teacher absenteeism,

further undermining education quality (NSO, 2020, Ravishankar et al., 2016). Teacher absenteeism is not merely a reflection of individual behaviour, but is often symptomatic of systemic issues within the education sector. Inadequate salaries, delayed payments, and poor working conditions all contribute to low morale and motivation among teachers, making it difficult to retain skilled educators. Addressing these systemic issues is crucial if Malawi want to improve teacher quality and, by extension, student learning outcomes.

### *3.3 Sociocultural Barriers and Gender Inequities*

Socio-cultural factors significantly affect educational attainment in Malawi, particularly for girls. In many rural communities, cultural norms prioritise boys' education over that of girls, with the latter often being viewed primarily as future wives and mothers. As a result, girls are more likely to drop out of school due to early marriage, pregnancy, or the need to help with household chores (UNICEF, 2022). These socio-cultural practices not only limit girls' educational attainment but also perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. The disparity between boys' and girls' education is further exacerbated by the lack of female teachers, particularly in rural areas. Female teachers can serve as role models and mentors for young girls, encouraging them to stay in school and pursue their education. However, the shortage of female teachers in rural areas means that many girls lack this support, negatively impacting their educational outcomes. The equity framework put forth by James (2007) highlights the importance of creating opportunities for marginalized groups within the education system. Addressing these sociocultural barriers requires comprehensive community engagement initiatives that educate parents about the value of educating all children, regardless of gender. Programs that provide incentives for keeping girls in school, such as conditional cash transfers and scholarship schemes, can be particularly effective in improving retention rates for girls (UNESCO, 2019).

## *4. Teacher Training as a Catalyst for Improvement*

### *4.1 Integration of ICT in Teacher Training*

One of the most promising avenues for transforming the education sector in Malawi lies in the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teacher training programs. ICT offers a multifaceted solution to many of the challenges faced by teachers, including the shortage of training opportunities, limited access to updated educational resources, and the need for interactive teaching methods that engage students more effectively (Gondwe, 2021). ICT can enhance teachers' professional development by providing them with access to online training courses, webinars, and other digital resources. This is particularly valuable for teachers in rural areas, where physical access to training programs is often limited due to logistical challenges. Through the use of digital platforms, teachers can improve their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills without having to travel long distances or take extended time away

from their classrooms. However, the success of ICT integration in teacher training depends heavily on the availability of the necessary infrastructure. Many schools in rural areas lack reliable electricity, internet access, and the digital devices needed to support ICT-based learning. To overcome these barriers, the government must prioritize investments in ICT infrastructure and develop a comprehensive policy that provides clear guidelines for the integration of technology into the education sector (World Bank, 2016).

## *4.2 In-Service Training and Technology-Assisted Learning (TAL)*

In-service training is an essential component of professional development for teachers, as it allows them to enhance their skills and stay updated with the latest educational practices. The Early Grade Reading Activity (EGRA) is an example of a successful in-service training initiative that significantly improved literacy skills among students in the early grades (Mattos, Sitabkhan, 2016). Expanding such initiatives to include other subjects, such as mathematics and science, can help improve overall educational outcomes in Malawi. Technology-assisted learning (TAL) offers additional potential for improving education quality by making learning more interactive and engaging. Tablets and digital content allow students to learn at their own pace, while teachers can use these tools to provide differentiated instruction that meets the needs of individual students. TAL has been particularly effective in improving numeracy skills, as evidenced by pilot projects in Malawi that have significantly improved student learning outcomes (Pitchford, 2015). For TAL to be effective, it is crucial that teachers receive adequate training in using technology in their classrooms. Many teachers lack the necessary skills to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices, limiting technology's potential benefits. Providing teachers with comprehensive training on the use of digital tools and ensuring that they have access to the required infrastructure is essential for maximizing the impact of TAL on education quality.

## *5. Cost-Benefit Analysis of Interventions*

### *5.1 Efficiency in Resource Allocation*

Effective resource allocation is critical to improving the quality of education in Malawi. The current allocation of resources, with the majority of the budget dedicated to teacher salaries, leaves little room for investments in infrastructure, learning materials, or teacher training. This imbalance has resulted in a lack of essential educational resources, which has a direct impact on student learning outcomes (World Bank, 2016). Investing in teacher training and ICT integration has been shown to yield significant returns in terms of improved learning outcomes. For example, the World Bank found that in-service teacher training interventions have a high benefit-cost ratio, making them an economically viable solution for enhancing education quality. Levesque et al. (2020) also emphasize that investing in well-structured teacher training programs offers high economic returns by enhancing teacher productivity and student achievement across

sub-Saharan Africa. The evidence from their analysis suggests that targeted investments in training teachers yield substantial improvements in learning outcomes, which is crucial for addressing Malawi's current education challenges. The rationalization of expenditures, such as reducing unnecessary travel allowances and optimizing the use of School Improvement Grants (SIGs), is necessary to ensure that funds are used efficiently and effectively (World Bank, 2016; Levesque et al., 2020, Ravishankar et al., 2016).

## ***5.2 Classroom Infrastructure and SIG Utilization***

Classroom infrastructure remains a major barrier to providing quality education in Malawi. Many schools lack basic facilities such as desks, blackboards, and permanent classrooms, which makes it difficult for teachers to provide effective instruction. The SIGs, introduced through the PSIP, were intended to address these gaps by providing schools with the funds needed to make necessary improvements. However, delays in the disbursement of these grants and the lack of capacity among school management committees to effectively manage the funds have limited their impact (World Bank, 2016).

Levesque et al. (2020) also argue that financial efficiency in allocating grants like SIGs can significantly enhance the quality of education by ensuring that schools have the necessary resources to create an effective learning environment. Their research shows that, when effectively managed, these grants can lead to improved infrastructure, better teacher retention, and ultimately, enhanced student performance. Involving support from NGOs would also be effective (Tampu & Babos, 2023).

## ***6. Policy Implications and Recommendations***

### ***6.1 Strengthening Teacher Training Programs***

Improving teacher quality through effective training programs is central to enhancing education outcomes in Malawi. Both pre-service and in-service training programs must be expanded to ensure that teachers are well-prepared and continuously supported throughout their careers. Pre-service training should provide a strong foundation in subject-specific knowledge, pedagogy, and classroom management skills, while in-service training should offer opportunities for teachers to update their skills and learn new teaching strategies (Mattos, Sitabkhan, 2016).

Levesque et al. (2020) provide substantial evidence that well-designed in-service training programs not only improve teacher performance but also offer significant economic returns. The cost-benefit analysis conducted by Levesque and colleagues indicates that teacher training is among the most cost-effective interventions for improving student outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa. By investing in high-quality in-service training, Malawi can maximize the efficiency of its education expenditures and ensure that teachers have the skills needed to provide quality instruction.

## *6.2 ICT Integration and Policy Development*

The integration of ICT into education is an opportunity to bridge the gap between urban and rural schools, enhance teacher training, and improve student engagement. However, for ICT integration to be effective, there must be a comprehensive policy that provides clear guidelines on the use of technology in education. This policy should address infrastructure needs, training requirements for educators, and guidelines for the procurement of digital tools (Gondwe, 2021). Public-private partnerships can play an important role in providing the necessary infrastructure and training for teachers. These partnerships can help schools acquire digital devices, establish internet connectivity, and provide teachers with the training they need to use technology effectively in their classrooms. Ensuring that these resources are distributed equitably across urban and rural schools is essential to prevent further disparities in education quality.

## *6.3 Enhancing Community Engagement*

Community engagement is vital to addressing some socio-cultural barriers that hinder education in Malawi, particularly for girls. The PSIP has demonstrated that involving parents and community members in school governance can lead to greater accountability and better outcomes (World Bank, 2016). Strengthening these ties through local councils, parent-teacher associations, and village-based education committees can help ensure that schools are responsive to the community's needs. Engaging local leaders, including traditional chiefs and religious leaders, can also play an important role in changing community attitudes toward education (Vajda, 2023). Community-based campaigns that highlight the importance of educating girls and challenge harmful practices such as early marriage can help reduce dropout rates and promote gender equity. Programs that provide incentives for keeping girls in school, such as scholarships or conditional cash transfers, have also proven effective in encouraging parents to prioritize their daughters' education (UNICEF, 2022).

## *6.4 Financial Efficiency and Accountability*

Ensuring financial efficiency and accountability is crucial for improving education outcomes in Malawi. Inefficiencies in the allocation and use of education funds have been a major impediment to progress. Strengthening financial management systems at the school level and providing training for school management committees on budgeting and financial planning can help address these inefficiencies and ensure that funds are used for their intended purpose (World Bank, 2016). Community involvement in monitoring school finances can also promote greater accountability. Programs that engage parents and community members in budget tracking and reporting of financial irregularities can reduce corruption and misuse of funds, ensuring that allocated resources are used effectively to improve the learning environment.



## *7. Conclusion*

Malawi's education sector has made significant strides in improving access since the abolition of school fees in 1994, but challenges remain in ensuring the quality of education for all. The primary obstacles include insufficient infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, financial inefficiencies, and socio-cultural barriers that particularly affect girls. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions that focus on teacher training, the integration of technology, and community engagement.

The analysis has underscored the importance of improving teacher quality through effective pre-service and in-service training, leveraging Technology-Assisted Learning (TAL), and optimizing the use of School Improvement Grants (SIGs). Developing a comprehensive ICT policy and strengthening community involvement in school governance are also essential for improving the quality and equity of education in Malawi.

To bring about meaningful change, a collaborative effort involving the government, international donors, local communities, and non-governmental organizations will be necessary. By focusing on strategic investments in teacher training, infrastructure, and technology, Malawi has the potential to create an education system that provides high-quality, equitable opportunities for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location.

## *Conflict of interest*

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## *Notes on the Contributor*

Csaba Szeremley graduated from the University of Pannonia in 2002 as an economist in the field of tourism. He spent his 18-month-long internship at Brookdale Living Inc. in the USA. In 2009, he obtained his MA degree in Educational Planning, Economics and International Development at the Institute of Education, University College of London. Before moving to Malawi in 2012, he worked as the general manager for Development Aid from People to People UK. In Malawi, he set up his own company in audio-visual production and worked for several big NGOs and firms, as well as running the Hungarian Trade and Cultural Centre. In 2016, he returned to Hungary and became an entrepreneur with strong ties to Malawi. He continued his participation in 13 medical missions as a coordinator. In 2021, he enrolled at the Doctoral School of Safety and Security Sciences at the University of Óbuda to do his PhD in Teacher Training in rural primary schools in Malawi, assessing the effectiveness of a unique teacher training program DNS.

## References





- Besenyő, J. (2010). Saharawi refugees in Algeria. *Academic And Applied Research In Military Science*, 9(1), 67-78.  
[https://real.mtak.hu/83783/1/Besenyő\\_saharawi\\_refugees\\_in\\_Algeria](https://real.mtak.hu/83783/1/Besenyő_saharawi_refugees_in_Algeria)
- Gondwe, F. (2021). CT Integration into Teacher Education: Teacher Educators' Experiences of Policy at Two Teacher Education Institutions in Malawi. 29, 117-128.
- James, R. (2007). *Social Equity in a Mass, Globalised Higher Education Environment: The Unresolved Issue of Widening Access to University* (Vol. Faculty Dean's Lecture Series). University of Melbourne.
- Levesque, J., Carnoy, M., Tan, S., & Channa, A. (2020). *Cost-Benefit Analysis of Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Working Paper.
- Mattos, M., & Sitabkhan, Y. (2016). *Early Grade Reading Activity in Malawi: Final Report*. RTI International.
- Miletics, P. (2017). *Országismertető – Marokkó és Nyugat-Szahara, Budapest.*. Honvéd Vezérkar Tudományos Kutatóhely (HVK TKH). Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://real.mtak.hu/83720/1/orszagismertetomarokko.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST). (2008). *National Education Sector Plan (2008-2017)*. Lilongwe: Malawi Government.
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST). (2016). *National Standards for Teacher Education in Malawi, Draft Version*.
- Mkandawire, M., Phiri, P., & Chirwa, W. (2018). Teacher Deployment and Pupil-Teacher Ratios in Rural Malawi: A Case Study. *African Education Review*, 15(2), 234-248.
- Mtika, P., & Gondwe, F. (2023, February 15). *Analysis of the Provision of Primary Education in Malawi*. Comparative and International Education Society Conference, Washington DC.
- National Statistics Office (NSO). (2020). *The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS) 2020 Report*. National Statistical Office. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <http://www.nsomalawi.mw>
- Pitchford, N. J. (2015). *Unlocking Talent: Evaluation of the impact of early grade numeracy and literacy apps*. Lilongwe: Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).
- Popova, A., Evans, D., & Arancibia, V. (2018). Training Teachers on the Job: What Works and How to Measure It. In World Bank Policy Research Working Paper (Ed.).
- Ravishankar, V., El-Kogali, S., Sankar, D., Tanaka, N., & Rakoto-Tiana, N. (2016). *Primary Education in Malawi: Expenditures, Service Delivery, and Outcomes*. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/340961468185650405/pdf/104337-PUB-PUBLIC-education-in-malawi.pdf>

- Sharra, S., Veverka, C., Onundo, D., Kadzamira, E., Meke, E., Chudgar, A., Thawani, A., Muralidhran, K., Evans, D., & Kapanda, Y. (n.d.). Cost-benefit analysis: Improving the quality of primary school education in Malawi –. In.
- Tampu, S., & Babos, T. (2023). NGOs for Global Security (The Human Security and Health Security Role of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta in the International Field). *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, 13(1), 99-110. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47459/jssi.2023.13.10>
- Tampu, S., & Juhasz, P. G. (2022). Clean water in the slums of East Africa. *Insights into Regional Development*, 4(3), 34-47. DOI: <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.38146/BSZ.2023.3.4>
- United Nations (UN). (2015). Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *United Nations*.
- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2019). *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement, and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls*. UNESCO.
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). (2022). Are Children Really Learning? Exploring Foundational Skills in the Midst of a Learning Crisis. *UNICEF*.
- Vajda, N. (2023). Mi közöm hozzá? - Társadalomról másként. In M. Á. Pónusz & V. Bodza (Eds.), *Szociális és egészségtudományi alapismeretek: Károli Junior Akadémia* (pp. 87-94). Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem - L'Harmattan Kiadó.
- World Bank. (2016). *Primary Education in Malawi: Expenditures, Service Delivery, and Outcomes. World Bank Study*. World Bank. Retrieved December 11, 2024 from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/items/c6460bfa-6c31-5557-bb3e-9c3fd20819a4>

## Book Review: The State in North Africa after the Arab Uprisings, by Luis Martinez<sup>12</sup>

Zsolt Szabó<sup>3</sup>

The book of Luis Martinez is a very interesting work about the North African region. It is a relevant and old question that how the nation state is formed or is non-existent in this area. The book also tries to evaluate the different types of social factors that influenced the democratic movements after the Arab Spring. The work is suitable to comprehend either by average readers, or by scholars as well. The theme is current and the problem is important in order to understand the underlying processes that surround the North African issue. The book is well-designed, thorough, and gives a full perspective of the question of national cohesion concerning the area. The chapters are logically structured, they go through every single country and endeavour to give a full picture about North Africa and the nation state.

The first chapter relates on the nation-building of the North African countries. It postulates that after their independence, these countries firstly embraced nationalism, and tried to subdue democratic issues by the way of autocratic tendencies. According to the chapter, the first signs of democratic changes developed after the Arab Spring in 2011, which was a new phenomenon in the Arab World and North Africa as well (p. 21.). The author also enlightens the reader that with the emergence of these models also came the revitalization of Islam, or Islamism that had also a radical wing which had a definite effect on the formulation of these nation states in the area. The radical wing could be called jihadism and according to the book, it intertwined with the emergence of the social ramifications of the Arab Spring.

The second chapter comments on the social transformation that took place in North Africa since the 1990s. Martinez tells us that the social changes were the consequence of a long and hard process, political and other grievances that hit the society. In the 90s, the Islamists were excluded from political life and this caused upheavals in the public life, thus justice was sought. The book enumerates a lot of factors that contributed to the formation of the new social ethos: increasing influence of younger generation, demographic boost, and increasing urbanization, growth of informal economy, high corruption, social violence and terrorism and uncertainty of the youth (p. 41.).

After discussing the effects of social transition in North Africa, the book examines each country in the area to understand the social movements that took place after the

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.259>

<sup>2</sup> Martinez, Luis: *The State in North Africa after the Arab Uprisings*. London, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2020, 221. pp., \$US44.34 (paperback, hardcover), ISBN: 9781787382961.

<sup>3</sup> Africa Research Institute, Óbuda University, Researcher; ORCID: 0000-0002-6226-2626; zsolt.sza86@gmail.com.

Arab Spring. In the third chapter, the author describes the situation in Tunisia. As for the author, the toppling of the Ben Ali-regime had major consequences. The Ennahda Islamist party won the elections and the Islamists became widespread in the country. However, the country was prepared for the radicals and in 2017 a large clampdown was issued against them (p. 55.). The emergence of radical Islamism was however well handled by the army and the security forces, and in 2018, a new election was called, which was a more significant turn to democracy in the country.

The fourth chapter is about Libya, and the events that took place in the country after the Arab Spring. With the death of Gadhafi, the Libyan society dissolved, and tribalism and jihadism blossomed in the country (p. 59.). Radical Islamism became the followed example in Libya and armed militias took over regions and towns where they could expound their views and take control of the society as much as they were able to. Although in 2012 elections were held, Islamism became the most influential ideology in the country and jihadism prevailed. The Libyan nationalism lost its previous sense of communalism and democracy was far from reach. Instead of democracy, tribalism became the norm and militias took over the lead in several towns and regions. By 2018, military forces were able to reconquer some parts of Libya, but since then, uncertainty is significant in the North African state.

The fifth chapter concerns Morocco, and it describes how the Moroccan situation developed after the events of 2010/2011. There was an upheaval in 2011 called the 20 February Movement, but the monarchy retained its power and resolved the situation quite peacefully by implementing reforms, although radical jihadism became prevalent in the country. Although social reforms were enacted in Morocco in the 2000s, the radical Islamism sprang up in the area and AQIM and IS (or ISIS) became widespread. Counteracting the jihadist threat, in 2015 the Moroccan ulema presented a fatwa against the radicals (p. 89.). However, on October 2016, a movement named Hirak came to being, which disturbed the otherwise peaceful life of Morocco. At the end, the revolt was subdued, and the monarchy continued to be the significant form of statehood.

The sixth chapter deals with the situation in Algeria. The country didn't experience revolts because of the resentment that arose due to earlier radical Islamism in the 1990s. The problem – according to the author – in Algeria is that people think that the change to democracy would give rise to Islamist extremism, thus the government tries to implement moderate Islam to counter the jihadist threat (p. 99.). For example, in Algeria, the region of Kabylie was the source of insurrections, but also Christian evangelization became present in the area, which turned out to be less influential than Islam. The author thinks that the (democratic?) future depends on what will happen after the death of Bouteflika, will there be a softer society after he passed away. However, Algeria could not escape the demonstrations either, as in 2019, uprisings began in the country. Democracy's fate is in the hands of the future.

The seventh chapter concerns the deconstruction of nation-states. Martinez thinks that the Arab Spring and the events related to it only gave way to the radical Islamism, and that the catalyst for these terrorists was the 2012 Malian intervention of the French,

which increased the hatred against foreign intruders. Because of this, the author thinks that the jihadist groups destabilized the former nationalist states, and a confused situation developed in North Africa. According to him, the jihadist groups are successful, because they understand what ordinary people want and they exploit their grievances. People feel that the state abandoned them, and these groups present themselves as an alternative (p. 123.). Weak states and saudization of Islam also contributed to the spread of radicalism in North Africa and the Arab Spring also gave way for the Islamists.

The last, eighth chapter deals with regional disintegration and security breakdown. Libya is cited as a role model for state disintegration, where the radical Islamists created a stronghold. The spread of radicalism is also said to be one of the main causes of the high-number migration towards European countries. In addition, the demise of the border control and the weakening of the security apparatus gave way to the spread of AQIM, MOJWA, Ansar al-Dine and the like (p. 138.). Operation Serval in Mali weakened the states as well and the common Algerian-Libyan border control became porous and radicalism thrives in these areas. Martinez thinks finally, that the deconstruction of the nation-state and the weak prospects of peace are the consequences of the rise of the radical jihadism.

Finally in his summary, Martinez assesses the situation in North Africa after the Arab Spring and comes to the conclusion that because of the radical movements, there was only one state in the area which came somewhat close to democracy, and this was Tunisia (p. 155.). Nevertheless, Martinez thinks that the democratic thoughts became present in the minds of the local people, only the circumstances make it impossible to become reality, and also jihadism is a great obstacle in the way of democratic changes. However, the author is concerned that these factors prevent effective nation-building in the North African region.

To conclude, I would like to add that the book is an important and inspirational work, and I would recommend it not only for the ordinary reader, but for researchers who are interested in the topic. Martinez provides us with a thorough and thoughtful comprehension of the topic and he gives us important insights into the social and democratic processes that have undergone in recent years in North Africa.

## Review of the book: Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring<sup>12</sup>

Szilvia Veress Juhász né<sup>3</sup>

The volume titled "Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring" is part of the Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development book series, published in 2022. The purpose of this book series is to assist policymakers by providing a platform for international and African experts and researchers to publish their findings in the fields of politics, economics, social issues, as well as environmental and energy topics.

This particular volume offers a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the neoliberal transformations affecting the peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa. The authors conducted in-depth research in the region to explore the effects of capital investment and neoliberal economic policies on local agricultural communities. The main theme of the book is the penetration of capital into peasant economies in Southern and Eastern Africa and the resulting socio-economic transformations. The authors provide a thorough explanation of how neoliberal reforms have reshaped local economies and social structures, focusing on changes in land ownership, agricultural production methods, and the lifestyles of peasant communities. Through case studies, Mazwi, Mudimu, and Helliker demonstrate how neoliberal policies have strengthened capitalist interests at the expense of peasant economies. Their analyses shed light on the impacts of land privatization, marketization of agricultural products, and reductions in state support. They reveal how the penetration of capital leaves local farmers vulnerable, as they lose their land and livelihoods.

One of the book's key findings is that neoliberal transformations have not only brought about economic changes but have also resulted in deep social changes. The authors highlight how traditional community structures have weakened and, in many cases, contributed to growing inequalities.

The strength of the book lies in its detailed empirical data collection and thorough analysis. The authors meticulously document the changes that have taken place in the region, offering a comprehensive picture of the peasantry's situation. Case studies provide specific examples to illustrate the theoretical findings, offering insights into how local economies and societies are being transformed by global capital, as well as the

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.297>

<sup>2</sup> Mazwi, Freedom, Kirk Helliker & George Tonderai Mudimu: Capital Penetration and the Peasantry in Southern and Eastern Africa - Neoliberal Restructuring. Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development. Springer, 2022. ISBN: ISBN 978-3-030-89823-6. ISBN: ISBN 978-3-030-89824-3 (eBook).

<sup>3</sup> Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, Óbuda University, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: 0000-0003-0421-6119; juhaszne.szilvia@uni-obuda.hu.



challenges faced by peasant communities during this process. The authors' research and analysis represent a valuable contribution to the academic literature on the subject. This volume is an essential read for professionals, researchers, and educators interested in agricultural transformations in Southern and Eastern Africa.

The book is divided into four chapters. Chapter I introduces the book's subject and deals with theoretical and practical approaches to the effects of capitalist development in the region. It raises several key questions about the historical and economic role of the peasantry in the region. It discusses how capitalist economics began gradually penetrating rural areas in Southern and Eastern African countries since colonialism. The economic systems introduced by colonial powers fundamentally transformed local economic structures, and the globalizing market economy gradually attracted more local actors. This capitalist penetration had a major impact on the rural population, particularly smallholders and subsistence farmers. The chapter shows how traditional agricultural production was transformed by market demands and discusses the social, political, and economic consequences of this shift. The emergence of a market-oriented economy not only reshaped production structures but also reorganized social hierarchies and relationships. The chapter provides theoretical frameworks for examining capitalist penetration, drawing on Marxist, postcolonial, and globalization theories that address the transformation of agriculture in Southern and Eastern Africa. These theories emphasize that capitalism is not merely an economic system but also deeply transforms social and political relations. Capitalist penetration was not without conflict, and the chapter discusses how the relationship between the peasantry and capital was often fraught with conflict, though cooperation could also emerge in certain cases. This relationship is complex and region-specific.

Chapter I lays the foundation for the subsequent chapters of the book, which provide a deeper analysis of different aspects of capitalist penetration and its impact on the lives of local smallholders and rural farmers in the region.

The second part of the book delves deeper into the specific economic, social, and political effects, as well as the responses of rural economies to neoliberal restructuring in different parts of the region. Through case studies, the authors examine changes and current situations in Sub-Saharan African countries. They emphasize that land is the foundation of livelihood for the local population, and consequently, land privatization processes linked to the influx of large capital have severely disadvantaged the rural population and the smallholder class. In the case of Uganda, land reforms since the 1980s have taken place under the banner of "land acquisition for development," raising questions about what development goals are served by measures that involve the state confiscating land ownership rights from rural farmers. This chapter discusses the history of capitalist development in South Africa's agricultural sector, where large capitalist farms gradually displaced smaller peasant farms during the colonial period. It shows how the apartheid regime transformed land relations and created a dual economy, consisting of large-scale, white-owned farms and a landless local peasant class. The analysis also covers the failure of land reforms and the agricultural crisis. Using the

example of Namibia's land reform, the authors clarify that land does not guarantee prosperity, and when a state does not view it as a collective resource, its negative consequences are felt in rural and communal areas.

Chapter III reviews various agricultural policies resulting from the neoliberal process. The chapters demonstrate that the struggle for land, mostly between foreign investors and the local population, has led to increased food insecurity in both Malawi and Zimbabwe. The 2002 land reform in Malawi saw the state implementing strict rules to prevent violent land seizures while supporting land expropriation by foreign investors. In Zimbabwe, the influx of foreign investors led to increased food exports, but this process severely weakened the role and food security of rural, grain-producing households. The authors revisit neoliberal transformations in Zimbabwe in the final chapter of Part IV, focusing on the impact of large capital in the tobacco industry. Unlike other regions, the situation of small-scale Zimbabwean tobacco farmers is somewhat exceptional, as the dominance of white commercial farmers in the region seems to have been challenged by the influx of large capital. Over time, local smallholders became the dominant class in tobacco farming, but this transformation exposed them to the global market, causing periodic income disruptions due to market fluctuations.

The situation of the Zambian smallholder class did not improve either, as a result of neoliberal restructuring. One of the chapters in Part II presents a case study from Chibombo, Zambia, showing how neoliberalization, through structural adjustment programs such as opening up farms to direct capital, deregulating prices, and privatization, weakened the smallholder system.

The next chapter discusses the impact of colonial agricultural policies and structural adjustment programs on Kenyan farmers. It analyses the effects of neoliberal processes and highlights how the political system, rural development challenges, and climate change have contributed to the marginalization of smallholders.

In the fourth part of the book, the analysis of the impact of neoliberal economic restructuring on rural smallholders continues. The first chapter focuses on processes in Mozambique, detailing case studies to show that, despite efforts to integrate smallholders into rural development processes, the smallholder class continues to face alienation and exclusion. Similar processes occurred in the Kingdom of Eswatini, where the introduction of irrigation farming in the 1990s was considered a success, yet overall food security declined. The authors show how the neoliberal reforms supporting sugarcane production, which began in the 2000s, affected rural smallholders and subsistence farmers. Neoliberalism in Eswatini aimed to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial farming, with the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty. However, the focus shifted to export products, causing a decline in grain production and significant disadvantages for the rural smallholder class. The chapter provides an overview of the Kingdom's sugar industry, the effects of neoliberal reforms on this sector, and offers recommendations for further detailed analysis of the links between neoliberalism and the pillars of food security (availability, access, utilization, and stability).

The book provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of the appearance of big

capital in post-apartheid Africa and the evolving situation of African rural landowners, small-scale farmers, and subsistence agriculture. It presents various interpretations of the concept of neoliberalism and supports the theories that, while the influx of big capital into Africa has created jobs and achieved development goals, it has nonetheless led to the marginalization of the rural local population, backed by concrete case studies. The book serves as a valuable study for all economic, political, and social science professionals and researchers who focus on post-apartheid Africa's development and the socio-economic impacts of the influx of big capital.

## Review: Africa and Its Historical and Contemporary Diasporas<sup>12</sup>

Csaba Szeremley<sup>3</sup>

The subject of Africa and Its Historical and Contemporary Diasporas is particularly close to me, as my personal experiences have deeply connected me to the issues of diaspora and Pan-Africanism. I began my work in Malawi in 2005 as a volunteer, where I spent six months. From 2009 onwards, I lived there continuously for more than four years. My wife is also from Malawi, and I was a member of the Limbe Rotary Club, where I participated in several aid projects over the years.

My work was not limited to Malawi – I was active in several other sub-Saharan countries as well. In Uganda, I collaborated with the Jane Goodall Institute on joint projects, while with the Planetrise Association, I participated in tree planting, food security, education, and water purification projects in Malawi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Kenya. Additionally, as a local coordinator, I took part in 13 medical missions to Malawi and Ethiopia.

The experience I gained over the years, my close relationship with the region, and my active involvement in local communities have provided me with profound insights into the challenges African countries and diasporas face. Thanks to these personal experiences, I can critically assess the questions raised by this volume

The book spans 217 pages and presents the work of eight authors across eight chapters.

The volume *Africa and Its Historical and Contemporary Diasporas*, edited by Tunde Adeleke and Arno Sonderegger, is a fundamental collection that thoroughly examines various aspects of Africa's historical and contemporary diasporas, particularly emphasising their global significance. The authors adopt different approaches to exploring the diaspora's history and present-day challenges, covering economic, political, cultural, and religious factors related to the African continent and its diaspora.

The work plays a pioneering role in shifting the concept of diaspora beyond the history of slavery and colonization, placing it within broader, modern contexts. It is particularly important for readers interested in diaspora studies, postcolonial theories, and African history, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of African identities, cultures, and communities' roles in today's globalised world.

The book's structure is well-organized, featuring historical analyses and chapters addressing contemporary issues. The authors come from diverse academic backgrounds,

---

<sup>1</sup> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceas.2024.4.3-4.315>

<sup>2</sup> Adeleke, T. and Sonderegger, A. (eds.) (2023) *Africa and Its Historical and Contemporary Diasporas*. Lanham: Lexington Books. ISBN 9781666940206 (ebook).

<sup>3</sup> Junior researcher at Africa Research Institute, Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences, Óbuda University, Budapest, Hungary; ORCID: 0000-0002-1819-243X; szeremley@gmail.com.

resulting in a wide variety of perspectives. The chapters focus on the history, cultural expressions, and global political roles of African communities in the diaspora. One of the book's significant merits is its examination of both historical and contemporary contexts, offering a holistic view of the dynamics of the diaspora.

The authors' writing style is varied yet maintains a balance between academic rigour and accessibility to readers. However, the book's typographical presentation is perhaps overly minimalistic, as the text is accompanied by only limited illustrations and maps.

From my perspective, one notable shortcoming is the limited use of visual elements—such as images, graphics, or comprehensive maps—which would enhance the depth and complexity of the subject matter. Only one illustration is included (Figure 4.1: Pantheon of Vodou Spirits (c. 1990) by André Pierre – page 67), along with a few tables that assist in the analyses. Expanding the visual content would not only enhance the reading experience but also elevate the academic value of the volume.

For example, I would recommend:

Historical maps – illustrating the evolution of the African diaspora and the various migration waves across the Atlantic region.

Charts and infographics – depicting the socio-economic impact of the diaspora, such as labour market participation or access to educational systems.

Portraits and documentary photographs – of key figures discussed in the volume (e.g., Kwame Nkrumah or W.E.B. Du Bois), bringing these historical personalities closer to the readers.

Cultural representations – such as images of festivals, religious ceremonies, or memorial sites, helping readers grasp the cultural diversity of the diaspora.

These illustrations would complement, not replace, the academic content, making the analyses presented in the book more accessible and understandable for its audience.

From a critical perspective, the book offers valuable contributions to the discourse on African diasporas, although some conclusions may be subject to debate. In certain cases, the authors might overemphasise the positive aspects of the diaspora, while internal contradictions receive less detailed discussion. However, this does not detract from the book's merits; instead, it encourages readers to engage in further research and discussions on this topic.

Tunde Adeleke's opening chapter, "Diaspora: Paradigm Shift and Implications for Pan-Africanism in the Twenty-First Century," examines how the concept of the diaspora has evolved over the centuries, particularly in light of globalisation and modern migration. Adeleke argues that the diaspora can no longer be considered a homogeneous, unified community, as individuals from the African continent and the diaspora have diverse cultural, social, and political experiences. He also highlights that globalisation poses new challenges for African communities, especially in terms of identity, which becomes even more pronounced through education.

Based on my experiences working with different African communities, I fully agree that the diaspora cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity. The local community projects I observed in Uganda and Malawi clearly illustrate how difficult it is to establish

unified identities in today's globalised world.

Felix Kumah-Abiwu's chapter, "Trends and Complexities of the Africa-Black Diaspora Nexus," calls for a redefinition of the concept of diaspora, considering new migration waves and the diversity within the African diaspora. Kumah-Abiwu explains that the diaspora is not limited to historical communities forcibly displaced through the transatlantic slave trade but also includes newer, voluntary migrants who have settled in Europe and North America after the colonial era. He emphasises that education plays a crucial role in both the cultural integration of these diaspora communities and the preservation of their identities.

This chapter is particularly relevant to my research in Malawi, as improving education there can reduce rural migration and enhance food security. Furthermore, in my personal experiences in Malawi and other countries, I often encountered cultural differences and tensions related to the diaspora. These varying identities and expectations within African communities sometimes create challenges, particularly when implementing development projects.

Alma Jean Billingslea Brown's chapter, "New Dimensions of Diaspora, Modernity, Heritage Tourism and the 'Black Star of Africa,'" explores the reformation of diaspora identity through the example of Ghana. Brown explains the significance of heritage tourism and education for diaspora communities, particularly in processing the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade. Through education, diaspora members can reassess their African roots while participating in the modern global world.

This approach draws an excellent parallel with the Malawian education system, where one of the goals of education is to promote the economic and social integration of local communities. Based on my own experiences with aid projects and community development in Malawi, I have observed similar challenges to those Brown describes: visitors and volunteers from abroad often arrive with different expectations and goals, which do not always align with the needs of local communities.

Kyrah Malika Daniels's chapter, "An Assembly of Twenty-One Spirit Nations: The Pan-African Pantheon of Haitian Vodou's African Lwa," discusses the religious and cultural dimensions of the diaspora. Daniels provides a detailed account of how the spiritual world of Haitian Voodoo unites and honours African heritages, helping to preserve the cultural integrity of the diaspora. Voodoo maintains African traditions and connects them with modern diaspora experiences, highlighting the importance of education in the process. Ensuring that African culture and identity are preserved and transmitted through educational systems is crucial for diaspora communities. While working in sub-Saharan Africa, I also observed the pivotal role of local religious traditions and rituals in community identity and cohesion. This cultural diversity is an essential aspect of understanding the African diaspora, as it underscores the complex ways in which traditional beliefs contribute to both individual and collective identity formation.

Dominik Frühwirth's chapter, "'Nya-Binghi!' Rastafarian Pan-Africanism from Moscow to Ethiopia," discusses a remarkable example of the global mobility of the





diaspora. Frühwirth demonstrates how the Nya-Binghi movement became a driving force of Pan-Africanism, connecting the Jamaica-born Rastafari movement with Africans on the continent.

The Nya-Binghi movement originally emerged in East Africa, particularly in Rwanda and Uganda, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It began as a political and spiritual resistance against colonial rule and local oppression. Rooted in African spirituality, the movement stood in opposition to both foreign colonizers and internal despots. The term Nya-Binghi is linked to a female spiritual leader who became a symbol of resistance.

The Rastafari movement, born in Jamaica in the early 20th century, was largely inspired by Marcus Garvey's ideas, promoting the return of Black people to Africa and the reinforcement of African identity. At the heart of the Rastafari movement was Haile Selassie, the Emperor of Ethiopia, regarded as a divine savior by its followers.

The connection between the Nya-Binghi movement and Rastafarianism interestingly developed through a propaganda message falsely claiming that Haile Selassie was the leader of a secret anti-colonial conference in Moscow. Although the story was untrue, it resonated deeply with Rastafarian communities in Jamaica, who embraced it as a symbol of a global movement uniting Black struggles across continents. As a result, the Nya-Binghi name and spirit became integrated into Rastafarianism as a symbol of resistance and spiritual power.

Rastafarian communities began holding Nya-Binghi ceremonies, which were spiritual gatherings aimed at fostering communal unity and honouring Haile Selassie. This integration further strengthened the movement's alignment with Pan-African ideals and the philosophy of Black liberation. Frühwirth emphasises that these diaspora communities actively participated in Africa's independence movements and economic development through education and cultural awareness. This chapter highlights that education is not only a fundamental part of migration processes but also a vital tool for diaspora communities to maintain their connection with Africa and contribute to its development.

Babacar M'Baye's chapter, "'Jes Grew' as a Metaphor for African American and Pan-African Resistance in Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*," delves into the religious and cultural consciousness of the diaspora, focusing on the theme of cultural resistance. In my work across various African countries, I often observed how cultural identity and local traditions play a crucial role in social change, particularly in education and community development.

M'Baye's analysis of Reed's novel demonstrates how African traditions empower diaspora communities to engage in cultural resistance and preserve their identities. The chapter underscores the role of African-derived religious traditions, such as Vodou, in fostering and sustaining diaspora consciousness. These traditions not only provide spiritual guidance but also serve as pillars of cultural identity, helping diaspora communities navigate the challenges of modernity while maintaining a connection to their African roots.

The final chapters of the volume address the political consciousness of the diaspora and Marxist interpretations of Pan-Africanism.

Arno Sonderegger's chapter, "Questioning Diaspora: George Padmore, Colonial Fascism, and the Route to Marxist Pan-Africanism," analyses George Padmore's Marxist version of Pan-Africanism. Padmore argued that the solidarity between African and diaspora communities stemmed from shared colonial experiences rather than cultural or racial unity. Sonderegger's analysis highlights the need to rethink the concept of diaspora, considering that these communities are no longer homogeneous and have diverse historical and cultural experiences.

From my experience, particularly in development projects and medical missions, I agree that community cooperation often requires a pragmatic approach beyond ideological frameworks. Projects with different stakeholders, including diaspora communities, must balance ideals with practical solutions to effectively meet local needs.

Saheed Adejumobi's chapter, "On Memory, Reckoning, and Speculative Futures: Pan-Africanism, Afropolitanism, and Afrofuturism," examines the legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois, with a focus on how his ideas contributed to the political and economic awareness of the diaspora. According to Adejumobi, education was one of the most crucial tools that enabled diaspora communities to achieve political and economic consciousness. Du Bois believed education was key to the liberation and development of African and diaspora communities.

In my own work, I have observed that communities often shape their visions of the future creatively, drawing inspiration from concepts similar to Afrofuturism. In such projects, respecting local needs and perspectives is essential, as this ensures that development initiatives align with the aspirations of the communities they aim to serve.

### *Summary*

The volume *Africa and Its Historical and Contemporary Diasporas* provides a rich and detailed analysis of the historical and contemporary status of African diasporas. The authors explore the cultural, political, and economic challenges faced by the diaspora through diverse approaches, emphasising the role of education in shaping the identity and consciousness of diaspora communities. One of the key conclusions is that education plays a crucial role in empowering diasporas, both culturally and economically. Education positively impacts the cohesion of communities, a finding that aligns with my own research on rural primary education in Malawi.

While the volume's references are detailed and relevant, I believe one essential work should have been included in the analysis: Zeleza's 2019 study on the evolution of the global African diaspora (Zeleza, 2019). Additionally, as noted in the introduction, the most significant shortcoming of the volume is the near-total absence of images, documents, and illustrations, which would have greatly enriched this subject matter.

This volume is especially useful for those seeking a deeper understanding of the connection between African diasporas and education. Several chapters highlight the importance of education in preserving cultural identity and facilitating the integration



of diaspora communities into global society. The book serves as a valuable resource for both researchers and the wider public interested in learning more about African diasporas and their contemporary challenges.

### *Bibliography*

Zezeza, P.T., 2019. African Migrations: Reshaping the Global African Diaspora. New York: Routledge.

- This book offers an in-depth examination of African migration patterns and the transformation of diasporic identities

## African solutions to African problems

### The Most Recent Chapter in the War Diary of Eeben Barlow.<sup>12</sup>

Bálint Pongrácz<sup>3</sup>

The failure to contain the growing instability in the Sahel and the persistence of numerous conflicts both in the Mediterranean and the Sub-Saharan regions of Africa necessitate the re-evaluation of the conventional and largely dogmatic understanding of the continent's security environment. In this new approach, a revised conceptualisation of the contemporary privatisation of force is an inevitable requirement warranted by not only the appearance of new and influential private actors such as the Russian Wagner Group but also by the recognition of previous erroneous characterisations of private military and security companies (PMSCs).

While foreign entities like the aforementioned Russian company and, albeit to a lesser extent, its American, British and Chinese counterparts are often discussed in academic publications and media reports, African private military companies (PMCs) are largely neglected. Similarly, the PMSC industry is almost exclusively portrayed as a means of foreign interference in Africa, ignoring the local demand and rationale for the employment of such actors. This general disregard for local agency is one of the historically entrenched oversights analysts and commentators continue to make. To address this shortcoming, academics, journalists and policymakers must pay particular attention to indigenous, African PMCs and local, African security requirements. In other words, the new approach to understanding the continent's security environment must account for *African solutions to African problems*.

Few people played a greater role in shaping the modern African private military industry as Eeben Barlow. A veteran of both conventional and covert units of the South African Defence Force (SADF), Barlow founded and chaired what was the most influential and controversial private military company of the 1990s, Executive Outcomes (EO). Between 1989 and 1996 EO was engaged in a number of African conflicts. Most notably, in 1993 the company was contracted by the government of Angola to provide *train, advise and assist* (TAA) services to the Angolan Armed Forces fighting UNITA<sup>4</sup> rebels. Three years later, in Sierra Leone, EO gained international fame - or infamy - when the PMC engaged in counterinsurgency operations against the Revolutionary

---

<sup>1</sup> Doi: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.323>

<sup>2</sup> Eeben Barlow, *The War for Africa, Conflict, Crime, Corruption & Foreign Interests*, 2nd ed. (2020; repr., 30° South Publisher, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> PhD candidate at the Defence Studies Department of King's College London; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6226-2626>.

<sup>4</sup> National Union for the Total Independence of Angola or in Portuguese *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*.



United Front (RUF) on behalf of the Freetown government. These deployments and by association Executive Outcomes and its chairman were subjected to harsh criticism by Western governments and media outlets. Eeben Barlow addressed these accusations in his first book titled *Executive Outcome: Against All Odds*.<sup>5</sup> Drawing on his extensive experience as a SADF officer and a pioneer of the African PMSC industry he developed his own approach to strategy and operational design specifically adjusted for the African environment. This work has been published under the title *Composite Warfare: The Conduct of Successful Ground Force Operations in Africa*.<sup>6</sup>

The subject of this paper is Eeben Barlow's third book, *The War for Africa, Conflict, Crime, Corruption & Foreign Interest*.<sup>7</sup> First published in 2020 and a revised edition by 30° South Publisher in 2024, this book should be regarded as the most recent chapter in the war diary of Eeben Barlow. Its coverage begins shortly after the author's departure from Executive Outcomes and the company's closure in 1996. The revised edition concludes with thoughts on events as recent as the 2023 coup in Niger and the subsequent expansion of Russian influence in the country. The book is predominantly focused on the deployments of Special Tasks, Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP), a South African PMC chaired by Barlow between 2009 and 2020. However, it also contains the author's personal thoughts on the contemporary state of Africa and its troubling role in the ongoing global power struggle. While the book is divided into no less than 33 chapters, four major sections can be identified: (1) Barlow's failed attempt at retirement and the birth of STTEP, (2) the overview of the company's first major contract, Operation *Viper* in Uganda, (3) a short-lived deployment to Nigeria, Operation *Anvil* and (4) an assortment of unrealised opportunities, the accounts of which are dispersed throughout the book.

The first section of *The War for Africa* begins with a concise introduction of the events that led the author to direct yet another private military company. These initial chapters outline Barlow's personal and professional background, his endeavours following the departure from EO and his interpretation as to how Africa fell victim to foreign interests post-Cold War. Furthermore, it is in these chapters that the reader is presented with the genesis of STTEP. Albeit chaired by Eeben Barlow for over a decade, the company was not founded by the author. In fact, the idea of the PMC was conceived by three SADF veterans while briefly incarcerated in Chikurubi Prison in Harare, Zimbabwe. Harry Carlse, Simon Witherspoon and Louwrens 'Loki' Horn founded STTEP in 2006 guided by their belief that foreign business and state interests only fuel conflicts on the continent often taking the form of peacekeeping efforts mounted by the United Nations (UN) or former colonial powers such as France. As the author recalls: "African solutions to African problems was at the forefront of their thinking"<sup>8</sup>. When the aforementioned

<sup>5</sup> Eeben Barlow, *Executive Outcomes* (Galago Publishing, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Eeben Barlow, *Composite Warfare: The Conduct of Successful Ground Force Operations in Africa* (Pinetown, South Africa: 30° South Publishers, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Eeben Barlow, *The War for Africa, Conflict, Crime, Corruption & Foreign Interest*, 2nd ed. (2020; repr., 30° South Publisher, 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.102

three founders - two of whom were previously employees of Executive Outcomes - approached Barlow in January 2009 and invited him to chair their company, it was primarily this shared perspective that compelled him to do so.

The first contract the book covers took STTEP personnel to Uganda to train and assist the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) in their struggle to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). A notable strength of Barlow's style of writing is his thorough efforts to provide a concise historical background to each conflict referenced. In this particular case, readers are familiarised with the LRA, its leader Joseph Kony and the militia's practice of abducting children as young as eight years old to serve as child soldiers. Only after introducing the context does the author begin to discuss how STTEP became involved in the conflict. In an unorthodox fashion, the South African PMC was approached by a US-based non-profit organisation (NPO), the Bridgeway Foundation, to devise an operation to rescue LRA child soldiers in Uganda. Barlow's detailed account of how negotiations with the NPO and the UPDF unfolded provides a rare insight into the corporate background of the operations of PMCs. The numerous meetings, lengthy proposals, setbacks and breakthroughs that precede a private military company's deployment are seldom discussed in publications concerned with the PMSC industry. This novelty borrows the book a unique corporate note. As all aspects of the deployment's context are sufficiently introduced the author proceeds to give a dynamic and engaging account of Operation *Viper*, STTEP's efforts to establish, train and deploy with a UPDF unit subsequently christened Special Operations Group (SOG). While these chapters provide mounting evidence of the inadequate training UPDF troops have previously received, Barlow's account of STTEP's training testify to the determination of Ugandan soldiers and tells a tale of a growingly amicable relationship between the contractors and the SOG personnel. As the offensive stages of Operation *Viper* unfolded and the newly established unit began its pursuit of the LRA and Kony, difficulties emerged. SOG operations were repeatedly compromised by the failure of the UPDF's private contractor to provide crucial airlift. The American company explained this deficiency as inability due to various external factors while Barlow viewed it as unwillingness resulting from political constraints dictated by Washington. Despite these difficulties, SOG achieved notable accomplishments against the LRA in the initial stages of Operation *Viper*. The premature end of STTEP's engagement in Uganda and the termination of its contract with the Bridgeway Foundation was due to a visit of the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to the NPO's US offices and what the author describes as "US [...] pressure on the UPDF for our [STTEP's] departure"<sup>9</sup>.

The second STTEP deployment the book covers is Operation *Anvil*, which saw contractors establishing and training the 72 Mobile Strike Force (MSF) of the Nigerian Army. As previously stated, the author places great emphasis on outlining the context of each conflict. In the case of Operation *Anvil*, this entails a chapter on Boko Haram and the kidnapping of 276 mostly Christian girls from their secondary school in Chibok,

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p.261





north-east Nigeria on the 15th of April, 2014. In Nigeria, STTEP acted as a subcontractor to Conella Services, a Nigerian private entity whose managing director was Cobus Claassen, a former Executive Outcomes employee. Initially, the PMC was tasked with training and assisting a hostage rescue team of the Nigerian Army to rescue the Chibok Girls. However, an imminent Boko Haram offensive forced the Nigerian authorities to shift priorities and reassign STTEP and the freshly - albeit very poorly - equipped MSF to reinforce Nigerian forces in the vicinity of Maiduguri. A testimony to the transparency of Barlow's account is the description of the events that unfolded when the MSF attempted to link up with the Nigerian main force. The inadequate *identification friend or foe* (IFF) training of the Nigerian Army and the absence of shared standard operating procedures between the main force and the STTEP-trained Strike Force resulted in a *blue-on-blue incident*. After the Nigerian main force at Maiduguri misidentified the MSF as hostile combatants, it proceeded to ambush the Strike Force column. A Nigerian T-72 tank engaging a Conella-supplied Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle killed two contractors and wounded a number of MSF members. Although STTEP continued to provide support to the Nigerian Army following the incident, the private military company's contract was terminated soon after the 2015 Nigerian national elections, which were won by Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari, known for his pro-American stance, favoured U.S. military assistance over the outsourcing of training to private actors.

While the previously outlined two deployments are the primary subject of *The War for Africa*, a number of fascinating endeavours are also featured, such as the author's "short lived quasi-diplomatic career"<sup>10</sup> as the unaccredited honorary consul of São Tomé and Príncipe to South Africa, as well as his friendship with Taba Amin, son of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Furthermore, in the book Barlow periodically describes unrealised business opportunities that would have taken place in Madagascar, Sudan, Libya and both the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as the Republic of Congo. It is in the margin of one of these accounts that the author briefly and in a very reserved manner alludes to the reason for his departure from STTEP. Upon learning that two directors of the company have joined a competitor, Dyck Advisory Group in Mozambique while Barlow negotiated for an STTEP contract in the country, the author felt that "I [Eeben Barlow] no longer had a role to play in the company."<sup>11</sup>

Overall, the book is best understood as the most recent chapter of Eben Barlow's war diary. As such it gives a personal, often witty yet indisputably forthright account of both *boots-on-the-ground* realities of PMC operations in Africa and the author's interpretation of the political headwinds he and the company were forced to fight. The book is accessible to a wide audience due to its language and Barlow's careful efforts to contextualise the events and actors. However, academics and those who wish to gain an in-depth understanding of the African PMSC industry ought to read this book as a companion to analytical publications. For them, *The War for Africa* gives a unique

<sup>10</sup> Ibid p.481

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.504

opportunity to familiarise themselves with the ideas and observations of a seasoned practitioner. On that note, it is important to offer a word of caution. Readers must recognise that Eeben Barlow is not without prejudice. He is a staunch advocate of the African PMSC industry and an individual with a past many find controversial. Therefore, it is the responsibility of readers, and an explicit duty of academics, to exercise rigorous scrutiny when engaging with the text.

## Bibliography

- Barlow, Eeben. *Composite Warfare: The Conduct of Successful Ground Force Operations in Africa*. Pinetown, South Africa: 30° South Publishers, 2016.
- ———. *Executive Outcomes*. Galago Publishing, 2010.
- ———. *The War for Africa, Conflict, Crime, Corruption & Foreign Interest*. 2nd ed. 2020. Reprint, 30° South Publisher, 2024.



## New and Old Ideas: African Military Marxism

### Book review: Adam Mayer: *Military Marxism: Africa's Contribution to Revolutionary Theory, 1957-2023*<sup>12</sup>

János Besenyő<sup>3</sup>

Adam Mayer has tackled a Herculean task with this book, a history of ideas around African Military Marxism, encompassing both guerrilla fighters and putchists. After a theoretical introduction, Mayer draws an overview of most cases when Military Marxist governments actually ruled in an African country, and also the cases when insurgencies tried to take power (ultimately without success). This means that he includes Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, Jerry Rawlings' Ghana, Sékou Touré's Guinea Conakry, the Cameroonian insurgency and the Ambazonian insurgency, Modibo Keita's Mali, Moktar Ould Daddah's Mauritania, Cabral's Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, Babu's Zanzibar, Nyerere's Tanzania, Macías' Equatorial Guinea, Sudan under Nimeriri, Benin under Kérékou, Angola, Mozambique, Mengistu's Ethiopia, Somalia under Siad Barré, Madagascar under Ratsiraka, Uganda under its „move to the Left” in the late sixties under Obote, its Gang of Four, Zambia, Burkina Faso in the 1980s under Sankara, Seychelles, and rebellions such as the Simba rebellion after Lumumba's demise in Eastern Congo, the Communist Party of South Africa, Namibian Communists, Kukoi Samba Sanyang in the Gambia, and others. This is a maddeningly complex history and Mayer executes the task well, if briefly, in a single chapter, making it jam packed with detail.

The core chapters of the book are on thinkers though: African Military Marxist theorists who may or may not have ruled. Nkrumah did, Cabral almost did, Mondlane almost did, Sankara did, Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu did, Sam Moyo almost did, Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba did (the latter left a Harvard University professorship to lead a militia in Eastern Congo in the 1990s!). Others such as Walter Rodney, Samir Amin, Issa Shivji, Dani Nabudere, Ruth First, Mahmood Mamdani, Stephanie Urdang, Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, Bernard Magubane were rebel academics. Moyo was the brain behind Mugabe's radical land reform in Zimbabwe. Yash Tandon, a former Ugandan Gang of Four member, came to represent various East African nations at the GATT, to in turn become the harshest critic of free trade regimes for Africa. Thandika Mkandawire, Olufemi Taiwo, Olufemi O. Taiwo, Biodun Jeyifo, and many others are in the United States, but their work touches on militant and Military Marxism, as Mayer

<sup>1</sup> Doi: <https://doi.org/10.12700/jceeas.2024.4.3-4.338>

<sup>2</sup> Adam Mayer: *Military Marxism: Africa's Contribution to Revolutionary Theory, 1957-2023*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2025

<sup>3</sup> Head of Institute, Africa Research Institute, Óbuda University; ORCID: 0000-0001-7198-9328; besenyo.janos@bgk.uni-obuda.hu.

shows.

Mayer even successfully proves how the Sankarist coup leaders in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have drawn from this tradition in creative ways. He also demonstrates the relevance of secular radical politics in South Africa (with Economic Freedom Fighters), Kenya, Sudan, Nigeria, and other countries today.

I would argue that he perhaps goes a bit too far in celebrating non-democratic solutions in Africa though. Today, when conflict, hunger and the threat of hunger hangs above much of Africa again, when human rights violations are on the rise, we must not let our guard down when it comes to tolerating anti-democratic solutions even implicitly. Where are the checks and balances in Military Marxist systems? Where is the popular will? Where are human right such as the right to assembly? Mayer waxes lyrical about the Cold War record of these systems as well, when Ethiopia had its own Red Terror (memorialized in a Museum dedicated to it in Addis Ababa, as well as numerous statues), when most Military Marxist states have since degenerated into oligarchies (as in Angola and Mozambique), when today's Marxian junta in Burkina Faso has chased away even the United Nations? Relying on cooperation with North Korea will not make up for what these countries have lost in France, the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations!

That said, this is a magnificent history, most of which is unexpected and radically innovative in light of the prevailing consensus on especially the Cold War record of these states. Mayer draws on 1970s US analysis to dig out positive aspects to these systems successfully, challenging our notions that they contained only bad policy decisions. They conducted public health as well as mass literacy campaigns, built prefabricated homes for many urban people, and fought off mercenary incursions successfully, on numerous occasions. Every Africa watcher is familiar with Mad Mike Hoare, Bob Denard, and other early mercenary commanders in Africa. Mayer shows the other side of the coin: the arguments and the driving forces behind anti-mercenary activity.

This brings me to another aspect of the book. Especially given that these thinkers are mostly Communists or at least radicals, it is surprising how nationalistic they tend to be. This contradicts our notions on the internationalism of Marxism, socialism, Communism, and generally the left.

This book does as much as establishing, or attempting to establish, a new paradigm around African Marxism, and claims that its thinkers are theoretically sound, sophisticated public intellectuals who knew their societies intimately. I suspect that this book will become a standard go-to reference work on African Marxism, and also African state socialist systems, and especially the thinkers behind them. Certainly it is a great addition to any library worth its salt on African history!