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The G5 Sahel: An Insufficient Organization for a Failed Region?

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ABSTRACT

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In the wake of mass kidnapping and terrorist attacks launched by Boko Haram and other extremist groups in the Sahel of West Africa, along with the rise of the Islamic State in Libya that started to have immediate impact on the Sahel's already problematic situation, five states from the region of Sahel decided to create a coalition in 2014 not only to fight insurgencies rampaging in the area but also to work on the development of the region. With a very small capacity in terms of man power and equipment, the G5 Sahel coalition attempts to achieve what other intervening entities had not been able to achieve. Long before the coalition was formed, numerous organizations and operations led by powerful states and institutions were deployed to tackle instabilities and other related issues such as poverty and migration, but they all have been in vain. The resilience of the problems plaguing Sahel had deep roots in the historical, environmental, cultural and political. The G5 Sahel has been more of a failure than a success for two main reasons: 1) The member states themselves are suffering from different internal issues which significantly inhibits any collective initiative 2) It is too insufficient to tackle such a complex situation given its current personnel, financial and equipment capacities. The Sahel, however, is a promising region with an abundance of resource and a growing population young that will make a world top market place. And global power will definitely benefit from fixing and investing in the region

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

With the beginning of the 21st century, the world witnessed an unprecedented rise of

political insurgencies manifesting mostly in terrorism throughout the world and distinctively in

North and West Africa. The international community and individual states have been taking

measures to counter this phenomenon in all its forms. Still, terror represents a great challenge to

the security of all nations. The -Sahara-Sahel region has been a most terror-and-political-

instability infested region since the early 2000s.[1] The road to the spread of transnational threat in

the region was first paved by increase in ethnic sectarian violence, territorial disputes and illegal

trafficking of all kind (drug, weapons and human trafficking). Terrorism in the Sahel has had

severe security and economic implications on the region and has been spilling over that impact to

European countries and beyond.

In 2014, and with the rise of ISIS in the Middle East along with an increase in Boko

Haram led operations in (number and brutality) and a remarkable lack in the securitization of

their borders, five African states namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger

launched an institutional mechanism for fostering security and the development of the region.

The goal was not only to prevent the infiltration of ISIS, now allied with Boko Haram but also to

limit what is already an existential threat posed by groups who claim allegiance to Al-Qaeda and

Boko Haram and, as well as to shut down the smuggling routes that have been used by powerful

criminal organizations to smuggle humans, drugs and weapons. The initiative was endorsed by

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[1] Olivier Walther and Denis Retaille, "Sahara or Sahel? The fuzzy geography of terrorism in West

the international community. But the G5 Sahel only came to establish a military force branch in 2017.

Upon its establishment, the EU collectively and France individually, welcomed the G5 Sahel coalition and expressed readiness to support it financially and technically, and "a delegation agreement for EUR 50 million with Expertise France was signed in August 2017 to provide adequate equipment to the joint force",[2] three years later the establishment of the coalition, and only four months after the Joint Force of the coalition was created in Bamako. Another EUR 50 million was given to the Sahel Joint Force at the Sahel Brussel Conference on February 23rd, 2018. This is in addition to a total of around EUR 500 million that has given to the coalition since its establishment. These financial encouragements were meant to help the five states cooperate to strengthen the security through focusing on the weaknesses of border control apparatuses that some groups used to start some development missions of its own. The financing entities urged the G5 to focus most of their efforts on borders between them` and other countries as well as within the five states themselves. Interestingly, the persistent challenges that the G5 are trying to tackle are very much caused by the lack of borders between these countries, as well as the ambiguity concerning the concept of the 'Sahel' itself and the area it means both geographically (environmentally) and geopolitically speaking.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the different factors that stand as a stumbling block in the path towards fostering security in the Sahel. The paper focuses on the operational area of some extremist groups and other criminal organization whose activities included terrorist attacks, drugs, weapons and human trafficking. It is also to address some inherent economic and political problems that each of these five states faces and that has played a big role in

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[2] See "EU Support to G5 Sahel Joint Force," The EU-Africa Partnership, accessed February 2, 2019, https://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/en/projects/eu-support-g5-sahel-joint-force.

exacerbating the security issues in the region. The paper asks the following questions: What is the security situation of the Sahel? What is the G5 Sahel alliance all about? To what extent is Sahel an important region for regional and global security? What are the security challenges that face this coalition? Are the European Union, the United States and international organizations giving enough support to G5 Sahel? What role are major actors playing? Are those roles helping or not? What stakes does the international community have in Sahel? Is the Joint Force of the G5 of the Sahel an effective organization?

1.1 The Sahel: Setting

A first issue is the ambiguity of the Sahel's geography as well as the concept of 'borders' there. Arguably, no borders separate the countries of the Sahel or separate the so-called *Sahel* from the rest of West Africa and, specifically, the *Sahara*. As the region as a whole suffers from such an ambiguity, so do the countries themselves. The first reason is that it was the colonial powers who drew those borders without much attention to the social coherence of population within each piece of land and the lay out of the cities and habitable areas. Second, the similarities between the cultures – in terms of traditions and life style chiefly dictated by the Sahel's environment and climate– make the borders bound to irrelevance. Third, the very concept of borders is foreign to the populations residing in the desert and the semi-arid areas of the region. Perhaps it is because the Sahel region – unlike Europe – never experienced a 30-years war so that borders become an indispensable element for the keeping of peaceful coexistence between neighboring nations, and eventually making easier collective security in the future. Shortly put, the concept of borders has never been a part of the self-identity of the *Sahara* and *Sahel* populations, and the definition of the region itself is ambiguous. The social fabrics of the

region's communities share similarity and crosses the boundaries set by borders. On one hand, the tribes of Moors occupying Mauritanian, the tribes of Tuareg in northern Mali and Tebu/Tubu in Niger and Chad live on the norther line of the Sahel and share a similar life style in which herding and mobilizing with cattle is a necessity. Under these conditions, these ethnicities have merged in territories separating the states of the Sahel. On the other hand, we have the Sarakolle, Mosse, Hausa and other tribes who live on the Southern line of the Sahel, they are sedentary tribes due to their dependence on farming. Therefore, borders are seen as an unwelcomed barrier.

1.2 Confusion: Sahel or Sahara? Geographically or Geopolitically

One of the major problems of dealing with security problems and other issue of the Sahel is the lack of understanding of the layout of the region itself (by international actors and organizations). Geographically speaking, the G5 Sahel and other organizations which preceded it, are more focused on the Sahel region as environmental and climate factors define it instead of the Sahel region as defined by the spread of insecurity and organized crime. And this is a geographically diffuse problem.[3] This can be seen in the absence of any worth mentioning efforts for future plans to incorporate three key active states in terms of exporting political violence. These three Sahel continuum states are Libya, Algeria and Nigeria. As for Libya, "… it has played as a strategic hub for terrorist groups operating in the Sahel."[4] After the collapse of the Gaddafi regime, Libya turned into a most unstable state and a cradle for terrorism, because of the

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[3] Brice Adler, "The regionalization of counter-terrorism strategies in the Sahel: the G5 as a challenge for transatlantic relations," no.10, CEPOB, June 2018: 2.
[4] Ibid, 2.

increase in the numbers of foreign fighters that have been pouring in Libya to either support the extremist groups or stand with the militants.[5]

To speak of security challenges in any region would invite in one's mind the military or organized threat-related security. However, to speak of security challenges in the region of Sahel – which covers the majority of West and North African territory – would mainly generate a sense of a terrorism-related threat. However, there are other issues that play major roles in exacerbating the situation in the Sahel and which go far beyond the geographical framework of G5 Sahel and still greatly define the security situation in the region.

A distinctive cultural identity is the traditional-easy-to-build relationship between strangers (be it foreigners or locals) and the nomads and cattle herders in the region. In the GSPC hostage-takers incidents of 2003-2004, the terrorist groups had already established relationships in forms of alliances with nomads from southern Algeria to Tibesti (Chad). That is over 3000 km geographical framework which made the terrorist groups mobility easier as they created "friends" all over the region.[6] This gives us an idea about the similarity between the local groups along the Sahel region, in terms of being quite identically too open for establishing relationships with any other groups including criminals and terrorists.

The nature of tribal and social ties makes borders quite difficult to control, or even to draw in the first place, due to the mentality of the societies of the region . For instance, the Tribes of Tuareg, who make 10 percent of the Nigerien population, are concentrated in Northern Niger, but are more socially related to other Tuareg tribes in Southern Algeria and Northern Mali. Same

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[5] Yonah Alexander, "*Terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel in 2014*," Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies (administered by both the International Center for Terrorism Studies at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies and the Inter-University Center for Legal Studies at the International Law Institute), 2015, p., 9.
[6] Ibid, 10.

thing with the tribes of Tebu who live in whose tribal ties are found in Chad, Libya and Sudan.[7] Tribal connections as well as nature of social life that is based on farming and herding require the governments of the region to be flexible with cross-in and cross-out movements that members of these tribes do.

This finds its roots in the environmental instability of the Sahel region itself. In other words, the unstable levels of rainfall and green areas dictated the nature of mobility of the peoples throughout the region. This doesn't negate the historical existence of sedentary populations who lived in ancient Sahel and Sharan cities such as Combi Saleh, Chinguity that were the big cities of the ancient Ghana empire; however, it emphasizes the weakness of the concept of borders and frontiers in the minds and self-identity of the peoples of the region due to the nomadic mobility as well as the nature of trade relations. Another incident that took place in Aleg (Mauritania) in 2007 confirms the same perspective, as the perpetrators who killed 4 tourists were captured a year later and found to have been in Mali and, surprisingly, Senegal which is not a Sahel state – when we speak of a danger-based Sahel region. Interestingly, and after tracking the road map, the terrorist groups used "…some of the most inhospitable environments on the planet…," and, "since then, other terrorists in the Sahel-Sahara have shown a similar tendency to move easily over long distances."[8]

1.3 The Importance of Security in the Sahel

To have a better understanding of the significant economic and political role that the Sahel plays regionally as well as globally, it is very helpful to have a clear image of the region's economic contribution locally (to the African continent) and globally. That is, the stakes that the

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[7] Fransje Molenaar, "*Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger*," *Clingendael CRU Reports* (2017): 7.
[8] Yonah Alexander, "Terrorism in North Africa," 10.

G20 should be at taking part in protecting by make further efforts to foster security in the Sahel. The potential spread of deeply ingrained insecurity in the region and the possibility of it's becoming a safe haven for fleeing members of other terrorist groups such as ISIS in the Middle East or Al Shabab in East Africa puts the interests and the nationals of foreign countries in the Sahel at great risk. Obviously, the US also has its own stakes in the region, but its presence is eclipsed by that of France (as an individual state) and the EU as a collective.

When observing foreign intervention in the Security-related problems of the Sahel, we see that France is by far the most concerned state about the security of the region of the region. Its Operation Serval in 2012 to counter terrorism in Mali as well as its Operation Barkhane 2014 in the Sahel are significant cases to support this statement. This is not because France was a colonizer to all five states in during the first have of 20th century and their administrative dependence after independence, but mainly because of the resources that France has invested in in region, and particularly in Niger. A big picture would show us the relationship between West Africa and the West, particularly the United States, worried about an increasingly active China in Africa would take over the region's markets and resources. Indeed, Europe's intervention to strengthen security measures in the Sahel is not only aimed at guaranteeing Europe's economic dominance over the region; it is mainly for keeping harm at bay from the European territories. This harm could be anything that may spillover from the Sahel region to threaten the European national security; from terrorism to economic migration.

1.3.1 Western Interests/Stakes in Sahel

The involvement of some major western states and major international institutions – as we'll see in more detail below – did not come out of the blue. As a power that had most of the

West African countries under its colonial dominion, it is very normal that France, along with the

European Union still have significant interests there ranging from the protection of their

nationals – who either work there in embassies and the like or just there for other reasons – to

resources they have invested in the Sahel region such as France's uranium mines in Niger as the

fourth biggest uranium exporter in the world.[9] The region is known for its richness in terms of

natural resources

Besides, the consumer base of the region is increasingly growing. Sub-Saharan Africa –

which is home for four of the G5 Sahel countries – is expected to grow by 1.3 billion people over

the next three decades.[10] This makes it an interesting marketplace for industrial powers as well as

rich source labor (known that Africa is the youngest continent currently).

As far as the EU is concerned, European states benefit the most from their trade relation

with West African states as the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and the

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has proved since its creation in

2014.[11] This is because "the agreement provides for asymmetric liberalization of trade in

goods"[12] giving a great advantage to the European states as they import row material from Africa

export different products to the African markets. Three major members of the ECOWAS states

are Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and they represent major consumers of EU exports in West

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[9] Dominic Nasikan, *"Natural Resources Found in West Africa"*, West African Countries (WAC), November 9, 2017, accessed January 27, 2019, https://www.westafricancountries.com/natural-resources-found-in-west-africa/.

[10] Judd Devermont, "The World is Coming to Sub-Saharan Africa. Where is the United States?", Center For Strategic & International Studies, August 24, 2014, accessed February 2, 2019, https://www.csis.org/analysis/world-coming-sub-saharan-africa-where-united-states.

[11] Sylvester Bagooro, "West Africa and Europe trade: Who will benefit more?" Opinion/Europe Al-Jazeera, 22 June 2014, accessed February 9, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/west-africa-europe-trade-agree-2014621155835409177.html.

[12] "Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) With West Africa", June 2017, accessed February 9 2019, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-balanced-and-progressive-trade-policy-to-harness-globalisation/file-epa-with-west-africa.

Africa. And, no doubt, the increasing security challenges in the region will have great impact on the EU economic benefits from the region. This is not to mention the danger European nationals who live in these Sahel countries will be facing. Indeed, it is not only France and the EU that have interests in the Sahel; the US also does but to an extremely low level as its trade relations with Africa grew by 46 % over the last 9 years.[13] This is in an era where African oil started to have influence on the global markets.

A major stake that international actors have in the Sahel is oil, because it is important for the stability of global oil markets and the national security of many nations. The characteristics of West African oil should be encouraging for the EU and the US to further invest in; it is cheap to refine as the sulphur content in it is very low, and it is also very suitable for exporting to North America and Europe.[14] In addition, the oil reserves in West Africa are estimated to be 58 billion barrels.[15] Interestingly, the oil produced in the region significantly exceeds the local demand. For example, more that 85% of Nigeria's nearly 2.2 million barrel per day (bpd) production is exported outside the region.[16] As one of the biggest oil consumers in the world, the United States has more strategic stakes in West Africa compared to the EU if we add the mission to fight global terrorism. Yet, Washington is among the G7 least involved actors in the Sahel and West Africa in general, as its interests are relatively limited to investments in domains such as aviation, banking, construction and some goods and services exchange and the protection of its relation with some West African countries.[17]

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[13] Judd Devermont, "The World is Coming to Sub-Saharan Africa,".
[14] Sam Raphael, and Doug Stokes, "Globalizing West African oil: US 'energy security and the global economy," *International Affairs* 87, no. 4 , 2011, p., 903.
[15] Ibid, 905.
[16] Ibid, 905.
[17] John Njiraini, "AFOA: The US-Africa trade dilemma," AfricaRenewal, accessed May 20, 2019: https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2014/agoa-us%E2%80%93africa-trade-dilemma

The EU relations with the Sahel five states, on the other hand, are increasingly growing with regard to collectively dealing with the security challenges in the region. It is worth noting that Germany is expanding its individual efforts to especially after the German chancellor Angela Merkel visited the Sahel nations in May 2019 and pledged an additional €40m for the coalition to fight terrorism.[18] The increase in German support has the primary goals of curbing the influx in migrants coming from the Sahel and also to help create a much stronger future partners in West Africa.

Since the EU is not directly involved in a capability rivalry against China and Russia like the US is, the United States' strategic stakes in the Sahel dramatically increase as the former two countries expand their influence in the Sahel, especially after Washington has put the region on the shelve, to an extent. Therefore, the expansion of US presence is a necessity for both its strategic interests and the wellbeing of the region as its economic presence will make a huge change.

The United States' look at it interests in the Sahel is significantly focused on direct national security issues. In other word, the US is only concerned about matters that have an immediate impact on United States such as trade. In a study conducted by the Atlantic Council about the security and stability of West Africa and the interests of stakeholders in the region, it is made clear that U.S. activities in the Sahel are limited to its own interest-wellbeing and not necessary beyond. The U.S. main aim in the Sahel, and West African in general, is to guarantee the following four major conditions:

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[18] Nikolaj Nielsen, "EU-Sahel talks next week amid 'unprecedented attacks'," *euobserver,* Foreign Affairs, Brussels, May 20, 2019.

- First, it is of high importance for the United States' national security to prevent any international terrorist organization to use the region of Sahel as a recruitment hub or a safe haven.

- Second, ensuring the safety of the flow of people from and to the region and the safety of shipping and cargo is also a priority.

- Third, Providing the necessary security measure for the infrastructure for oil coming from the Gulf of Guinea and maintaining its flow.

- Fourth, ensuring political and economic stability to protect the region against state failure and eliminating the threats posed by international terrorist organization on key states that are directly overarching to the previous three interest areas.

It is quite surprising to the relative negligence of the United States to West Africa and precisely the Sahel. Recently the US has been paradoxically "…stepping away from the region while the rest of the world is leaning in",[19] forgoing trade opportunities, investment as well as shaping outcomes in the region.[20] Just between 2010 and 2017 nearly 70 countries, including India, China, and Russia increased their trade with the region.[21] Even Japan is looking forward to benefit from the soon-to-be a major economic partner. The country's Prime Minister stated that clearly in a conference in 2016 When he said: "we have a feeling in our gut that in Africa, where possibilities abound, Japan can grow vigorously."[22]

In a world where great powers compete over region of benefit, building relationships with region over economic and security benefits is always a rational act. What a power does not gain

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See "Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development
(TICAD VI)", Saturday, August 27, 2016, Kenyatta International Convention Center (KICC), Nairobi,
Kenya), accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html.

other power will. Russia's recent pivot to Africa – the West part of it in particular – should raise alarms for further complicating a security situation already complicated.

1.3.2 Russia In West Africa and Sahel

Although Russia was entrenched in Africa during the Cold War era, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a large Russian retreat from the continent. However, a growing Russian presence – and the Chinses as well – in the Sahel is now worrisome to the EU and the US alike, because it is showing military and political aspects. As "Russia has been steadily expanding its military influence across Africa,"[23] it is expected that its military presence will soon overwhelm the Sahel, if not contained. Russia is currently involved in arms sales and providing training to programs to autocratic regimes in Western and Central Africa,[24] specifically Burkina Faso. The most recent military measures taken by Russia in the region is sending mercenaries in January to as backup for the Sudanese regime.[25] Interestingly, Russia also has been expanding its trade relations with the region. The Russian trade exchange with Sub-Saharan Africa has grown by 260% between the years 2010-2017,[26] and it is still on the rise.

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[23] Eric Schmitt, "Russia's Military Mission Creep Advances to a New Front: Africa" *The New York Time,* March 31, 2019, accessed April 5, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/31/world/africa/russia-military-africa.html.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Judd Devermont, "The World is Coming to Sub-Saharan Africa,".

CHAPTER 2

THE SAHEL: A FAILED REGION?

The Sahel security problems are spread in multiple issue areas. After some securitization theories opened the debate for including issues other than military threats such as environmental, political and societal sectors, etc.[27], the Sahel turned out to be one of the world's most unstable regions for other security dimensions, including illicit trade, corruption, climate change, poverty and ethnic conflicts etc. These issue areas may be posing far more serious threats to the people of the region and are responsible for the persistence of the main urgent threat which terrorism. The Sahel has been a hub for forms of organized crime other than terrorism.

2.1 Organized Crime (Terrorism and Illicit Trade)

Although it makes a big challenge to the region, the threat of organized crime doesn't seem to be taken very seriously by local government of all G5 states compared to the threat of terror. The involvement of official figures criminal operation led by other groups is one of the reasons why researching organized crime in the region is a "…task fraught with problems and pitfalls."[28] Furthermore, "police agencies seldom record crime statistics and when they do, they fail to distinguish between conventional and organized criminal activity."[29] Whether they fail or deny information upon interviews is a hard a result to draw. Nonetheless, still there is abundant research that proves how drown the region is in organized crime.

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[27] Jonna Nyman, in "Security Studies: An Introduction" by Paul Williams and Matt McDonald, 3rd edition by Routledge, 2018: 102.

[28] Wolfram Lacher, "*Organized crime and conflict in the Sahel-Sahara region,*" Vol. 1. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012: 3.

[29] Gail Wannenburg, "Organized Crime in West Africa," *African Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (2005):5.

Due to the fact that there are very few alternative activities from which large amounts of money can be made over a short time, organized criminal activities have been the shortest road to rapid enrichment.[30] Activities such as smuggling Moroccan cannabis (a type of hashish of which Morocco is the world's top supplier), cocaine, kidnapping in order to exhort ransom, drug and human trafficking characterize the whole region. And, of course, these activities fuel the terrorism as they are a major source of income to the extremist groups rampaging in the region.

Once weapons and drugs started to pour in the Sahel from different parts of the world, terrorist attacks suddenly increased in number and brutality from 2012."From Mauritania to Chad, a score of kidnappings, killings and attacks claimed by Islamist groups have taken place…"[31] Efforts have been made to limit the numbers of such incidents, but the real obstacles are actually laying in different aspects that characterize the very self-identity of the G5 states of the Sahel.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other jihadist groups such as Ansar Dine and the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) found a fertile ground to flourish in in Northern Mali especially in an environment where key officials in the Toumani Touré regime were believed to comply with these groups and other organized crime groups. this has been strongly characterizing Mali before the Mars 2012 coup d'état as well as after it and the Sahel region as a whole.[32] Therefore, what helped these groups initially was the complicity and involvement of Malian officials, as well as the willingness of some Western governments to pay ransoms,[33] as a result, these groups gain the capacity strike in different parts in the region.

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[30] Wolfman Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region," 4.
[31] Olivier and Retaille, "Sahara or Sahel," 2.
[32] Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region", 4.
[33] Ibid, 3.

Although illicit trade preceded terrorism in the region, the latter became another source of income, contributed in providing these groups with networks for mobility.

According to a study conducted by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in February 2019 that assesses the escalation of violence led by militant Islamists, the Sahel has been experiencing an unprecedented wave of terrorist insurgencies since 2009.[34] This is chiefly due to the emergence of new sects in the area. The most recently founded extremist groups are:

- Jamaat Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JSIM) 2017,

- Ansar Dine 2012,

- Macina Liberation Front who is believed to included members from MUJAO was founded in 2015

- Katiba Serma was formed in 2015

- AQIM Sahara is a branch of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb rampaging in North and West Africa too.

- Al Mourabitoun is a group created by a sect who separated from MUJAO

- Ansaroul Islam was founded in 2016

- Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)

- Katiba Salaheddine founded in 2011 and allied with MUJAO.

2.2   Illicit Trade and Drug Smuggling

Illicit trade has existed in the region of Sahel since the early 1960s and throve dramatically after the countries of the Sahel gained their independence. The contraband networks

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[34] See "The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel", by African Center For Strategic Studies, February 15, 2019, accessed February 26, 2019, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/.

that were used back at the time and still used in this moment, firmly connect Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Niger and Libya. These routes were excessively used for smuggling cigarette and created a well-crafted network that consists of two main major routes that strongly interconnect North and North West Africa. The first of the two links Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria.[35] As smuggling is a quick-big-money making activity, AQIM leaders such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar "…acquired notoriety as one of the leading figures in AQIM's Sahelian… to have run a cigarette smuggling racket across the Sahara".[36] To avoid taxation and customs, traffickers of some less dangerous goods such as tobacco and cigarettes built relations with corrupt senior officials based on bribery throughout the region of Sahel and Sahara. The second route is one that connects Niger and Burkina Faso to Libya. Similarly, this route was initially used to smuggle cigarettes and other licit goods. Gradually, traders incorporated drug smuggling to cigarette.[37] Drug smuggling was quite a smooth process with an already corrupt custom systems throughout the Sahel region. Later, precisely after 2012, drug smuggling became a main source of funds to the terrorist groups of AQIM and Boko Haram. And these very two routes are the ones being used currently to smuggle weapons.

After major cocaine seizures in 2007-2008, including 630kg in Nouadhibou and 830kg in Nouakchott, Mauritania, astonishingly huge-quantity-overland-routes started to be commonly and diversely used for drug smuggling starting from 2009. The Boeing 727 that crashed near Tarkint (in Gao's region in Mali) was found carrying between 7 to 11 tons of cocaine.[38] That plane, which was later nicknamed "Air Cocaine" took off from Venezuela and was operated by a network of Moroccan, French, Malian and Senegalese nationals. If this tells us anything, it has to

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[35] Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region", 4.
[36] Ibid, 5.
[37] Ibid,5.
[38] Ibid,7.

be how vulnerable the region of the Sahel was from its southern borders, as there are numerous reports about smaller aircraft carrying cocaine from the southern coasts to Northern Mali.[39] These sorts of drug smuggling operations result in serious amounts of money earned by organized crime figures in the region and eventually widen the capacities of these groups. There is not much evidence that links the thriving of groups such as Boko Haram and AQIM to the spurt in drug smuggling and other forms of illicit trade in the years 2009-2012, but there also is no evidence that refutes this premise either. Certainly, however, is that both from the north and south, smuggling takes place to and through the region.

From north, the Moroccan cannabis resin trade has been posing a serious challenge to the region. This drug is injected into the Sahel region through the Western Sahara and in some cases Algeria. It goes from Morocco to Western Sahara, then gets transmitted over land to Nouakchott then to Nema (south eastern Mauritania) and after that it enters Mali and spreads in the other G5 Sahel states and beyond (to Libya precisely). It is also important to note that the cannabis trade is "…dominated by mixed networks of Moroccan, Sahrawi, and Mauritanian nationals—as well as, allegedly, Algerian army officers…"[40] Big seizures indicated the thriving of the Moroccan cannabis business in 2012 when 2 tons of it were seized in Nouadhibou (western Mauritania), 3.6 tons in Timbedra (eastern Mauritania) and 4 tons in Tripoli (Libya).[41] These seizures give us an idea about the geographical range in the region it moves in in huge quantities. The political problems that the annexation of Polisario to the Moroccan territories plays a major role in such activities, as the Sahara.

After Spain declared it an independent country and withdrew from its territories in 1975, the Western Saharan people declared a piece of land separating Mauritania and Morocco the

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[39] Ibid,7.
[40] Ibid,7.
[41] Ibid,8.

'Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic'. The existence of a new independent country in that place was questioned by the Mauritanian and Moroccan authorities, as each claimed ownership of the land. After a year-long war against the Polisario (a militant organization for the liberation of Western Sahara), Mauritanian recognized Western Sahara as a sovereign state which Morocco never did. Ever since, Western Sahara has been a hub for smuggling stocks of the Moroccan hashish and other types of drugs into the rest of the region.

Over the last decade these extremely illegal businesses dramatically exacerbated the security situation of the Sahel region already posed by emergence of terrorism and the inefficacy of the regimes and local authorities to deal with the problem. The presence of a large body of international organizations that fight against arms trafficking in the Sahel gives a robust idea about how problematic the situation has turned since the Malian rebellion broke out in 2012 and brought about the toppling of democratically elected regime. Since 2012 drugs smuggling in the Sahel caught more attention of the international organizations.

The AIRCOP is a projected supported by the European Union and co-financed by Norway and Japan,[42] 'and it "… brings together the efforts of the World Customs Organization (WCO), INTERPOL and UNODC"[43] that work against the thrive of smuggling activities in the region of Sahel. Mali and Niger are becoming the major hubs for both of drug as well as human trafficking, and that is due to their geographically strategic location and the high level of political instabilities. In 2017 AIRCOP-supported international organizations in the Sahel have led quite worrying drug seizures. According to the United Nations agency, law enforcement in the Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were able to seize more than 35 kilograms of drugs (just within the

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[42] See "Drug trafficking in the Sahel: Mali and Niger make several seizures", by UNODC, West and Central Africa, accessed March 5, 2019, https://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/2017-09-mali-and-niger-drug-seizures.html.
[43] Ibid.

boundaries of these three countries.[44] Although this quantity of drug is less than the one caught

in both 2016 and 2018, it is quite difficult to infer whether this indicates the increasing efficacy

of measures against drug smuggling (because large amounts of it are caught) or whether it

indicates that the quantity seized is just the tip of the ice berg. Looking at the years 2016 and

2019, the same logic can apply as both years witnessed less amounts being seized. Do the small

quantities indicate failures of law enforcement? Or do they prove the decrease is smuggling

activities? Nonetheless, these illegal activities are not the greatest worries; kidnapping has been a

common activity also.

2.3 Kidnapping

A primary reason behind the deterioration of tourism as an economic pillar for the

countries of the Sahel is the influx in the numbers of the people kidnapped by criminal

organizations and terrorist groups. The phenomenon became a top security issue in the early

2000s when European tourists became its first targets. Interestingly, it is extremist groups who

first started the mass kidnapping, demanded ransom, and killed their victims.

"The rise of kidnapping for ransom in the region was closely linked to, and a main driver

of, AQIM's growing presence in the Sahel".[45] Kidnappings were known to take place during and

after the end of the Tuareg rebellion in Northern Mali and North Eastern Niger in the 1990s, but

this criminal phenomenon gained on a higher scale after 2003 when 32 European tourists were

abducted by groups that later became known as AQIM and Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in

West Africa (MUJAO).[46] In August 2012, a total of 42 more people was kidnapped throughout

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[44] Giulio Napolitano, "In crisis-torn Sahel, UN anti-drugs and crime agency helps bolster justice system" *UN News*, March 1, 2018, accessed March 5, 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1003931.
[45] Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region",8.
[46] Ibid,8.

Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, and Niger for ransom estimated at $1.5 to $4 million per hostage.[47] These are the major kidnappings that took place before the beginning of 2014. Starting from 2014 the scale and nature kidnapping changed as groups like Boko Haram took the level of violence to a new level.

Nigeria is not a part of G5 Sahel. However, both from a geographical and security-based map, Nigeria lies at the heart of the Sahel region. The major hot spot of terrorism in the entirety of West Africa is the north-eastern provinces of Nigeria where Boko Haram is most active. That said, the fear of a spillover effect would be a normal reaction from countries sharing Nigeria borders characterized with instability – Niger, Chad and Cameroon. That means, it is very likely that mass kidnappings can take place in any of these countries just as in Nigeria since 2014.

The 14th of April 2014 was a turning point for the scale of kidnapping in the Sahel as 219 girls where taken by force from a local school in the village of Chibok, a village in the state of Borno in Nigeria. The helplessness of the Nigerian authorities and their failure to locate and rescue the girls triggered global condemnation of the status quo of the situation. The fact that high number of victims were school girls was especially disturbing to the international community,[48] and it raised the urgency of the security challenge of the Sahel to the highest levels. The interventions of the U.S., France and the UK were clear reactions to both the inefficacy of the measure taken by local authorities as well as the surprisingly increasing capability of such a terrorist organization. Obviously, Boko Haram exhorted ransom for the kidnapped girls, as the group "…reportedly collected several million dollars in ransoms in

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[47] Ibid,9.
[48] Adjoa Osafo-Binfoh, "Nigeria: A Case For International Humanitarian Intervention?", Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, May 22, 2014, accessed March 5, 2019, https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/nigeria-case-international-humanitarian-intervention/.

exchange for the release of Chibok schoolgirls".[49] Moreover, the groups was able to exchange more than a hundred of the girls for their militants held in the prisons of the Nigerian government.[50]

A more recent kidnapping operation by Boko Haram shook the Sahel region and the world and raised alarm again in February 2018 when 110 girls aged between 11 and 19 years were abducted by the extremist militants. This operation was led in the village of Dapchi in Yobe state, Nigeria. Although 105 girls were rescued a few weeks later,[51] five girls died in the hands of the terrorist group which further ingrained the feeling of fear among the people of the region and reminded the international community of the notoriety of the group and the urgency of the situation.

Interestingly, the 2014 Chibok kidnapping took place shortly after the formation of the G5 alliance. The same scenario unfolded with the formation of the G5 Joint Force that was launched in July 2017. In other words, the attack and the kidnapping of the Dapchi took place not long after the launch of G5 Joint Force. As mentioned, Nigeria is not a member of the Sahel 5, but its territories are a major base of terrorist units in the 5 countries of Sahel coalition. The dangerous security situations and the tough economic circumstances caused by those conditions have led to significant increases in the numbers of migrants and migrant businesses.

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[49] See "Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province", Congressional Research Service, June 28, 2018.
[50] See "Nigeria Chibok abductions: What we know", BBC News, May 8, 2017, accessed March 6, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32299943.
[51] See "Dapchi girls: Freed Nigerian girls tell of kidnap ordeal", BBC News, March 22, 2018, accessed March 6, 2016, https://www.bbc.com/news/43489217.

2.4 Migration and the Migrant Business

Throughout the Sahel and beyond there are networks that smuggle humans as a very profitable business. The migrant business is but a consequence of poverty and the feelings of fear from political instability, and it is a phenomenon that has the most direct impact on the region as well as abroad. The networks of human trafficking in the Sahel are not as complex as those used for arms and drugs. To the contrary; they are very random and chaotic,[52] which makes them difficult for local authorities to deal with and which also puts the lives of migrants at greater risk. Niger is one of the Sahel countries that has been a central player in the migration dilemma which is "…an age-old phenomenon that can only be understood with a view to the tightly interwoven geographic, cultural and economic patchwork that constitutes the larger Sahel and Sahara region".[53] However, to address its roots in the geographical framework of the G5 Sahel, we should examine Niger first, as it is the Sahel's 'migration center.'

The geographic location of Niger makes it a connecting point between West African countries, as it shares borders with Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Chad, Libya and Algeria.[54] Niger is also an essential country to go through for migrant coming for Togo, Ghana and Benin.[55] First, it is easily entered by any nationals of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Second, it shares fragile borders with northern Mali, southern Algeria and Libya. And all of these three states are the first door to North Africa and Europe next (the dream land for most West African migrants). The Nigerien region of Agadez has been a migrant smuggling hub in West Africa,[56] for it is the location where first-phase smugglers meet

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[52] Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region", 6.
[53] Fransje Molenaar, "Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger," 6.
[54] Ibid,4.
[55] Ibid,14.
[56] Ibid,20.

with their clients and refer them to places where they can find other smugglers who will take them through the second phase and so on.

Since 2010, the numbers of migrants from and through the Sahel increased dramatically as Libya became gate number one. The Sahel countries of ECOWAS contribute to the smooth flow of migrants, which is another challenge they pose to the Sahel. Because ECOWAS allows the free flow of goods, services and labor between its members, most countries south of the Sahel pour tens of thousands of migrants into the Sahel and with Europe or any other western country as their final destination. The fragility of Sahel borders, which was worsened by the free flow of labor allowed by ECOWAS and recently encouraged the African Union, further paves the way for migration.

Niger became the starting point of migrants after left ECOWAS in 2002, which resulted in a significant blocking of that part of the region and made it very difficult for migrants to cross. Africa's Europe-neighbors, mainly Morocco and Algeria are by far the most difficult to migrate to or through. But after the collapse of the Qaddafi regime, Libya became the privileged door to Europe. Two of the most serious factors that allow for uninterrupted flow of migrants are the lack of border governance and corruption between officials in the entire region. Corruption plays a primary role in the persistence of this dilemma. The fact that "the strong and historical involvement of Nigerien public officials in human smuggling networks poses important questions as to the state's willingness and ability to address human smuggling networks,"[57] has been affecting the international community's ability and, more importantly, its willingness to assist efficiently to eradicate the problem.

When the colonial powers drew the borders of the newly established states of West Africa, they cut though tribes and ethnic groups in the region in a manner that left minorities in

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[57] Fransje Molenaar, "Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger," 5.

each country.[58] The most politically unstable and insecure part of the G5 Sahel geographical

framework includes northern Mali, Niger, and Chad. An inherent reason behind that is the fact

that this framework is home for the Tuareg and Tebu tribes that spread over the area and whose

connections and ties (which include trade and social relations) with their fellow tribe members

has been made difficult by border control forces which – together with marginalization – result

in deep sense of resentment and rebelling against governments. Niger and Mali suffer most from

this phenomenon, because the regimes that have been in power since their independence have

politically and economically disadvantaged these minorities.[59] Consequently, these minorities

seek to migrate throughout the region and to other countries for better opportunities with security

consequences on the region and abroad.

An important study conducted by the World Bank links the increasing access of the

people of West Africa to the increasing access to iPads, smart phones and the internet to the

influx in migrants who want to go to Europe or another Western country.[60] The availability of

pictures of European and western cities, as well as data about the average income in those

countries, boosts the number of people willing to migrate to Europe, the US and Canada.

Predictably, viewing the new world and comparing their economic prospects to those in

West Africa, leaves people (especially the youth) with compelling incentives to migrate.

Therefore, international migration from sub-Saharan countries has grown dramatically over the

past decade, including to Europe and the United States.[61] The Pew Research Center conducted a

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[58] Ibid,5.
[59] Ibid,5.
[60] See "Munich Security Conference 2018", held in February 17, 2018, 04:00 pm, accessed February 20, 2019, https://www.securityconference.de/en/media-search/s_video/panel-discussion-securing-the-sahel/#main-content.
[61] See "At Least a Million Sub-Saharan Africans Moved to Europe Since 2010", by the Pew Research Center, March 22, 2018, accessed March 10, 2019, https://www.pewglobal.org/2018/03/22/at-least-a-million-sub-saharan-africans-moved-to-europe-since-2010/.

study in 2018 that examined the number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa – which only excludes Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Egypt. The conclusion is that the numbers are in steady increase.[62]

As a countermeasure to the irregular flows of people coming from North and West Africa, the EU "has adopted a complex and multifaceted response" with the 2015 European Agenda on Migration.[63] This agenda resulted in the 2017 Valletta Agreement that allowed the EU and African countries, particularly Niger, to address the root causes of migration in the region and to seek solutions to human and drug smuggling with the Nigerien government. This is because Niger represents a strategic location in the smuggling business and focusing on its border management is crucial.[64] When the Migration EU eXpertise Initiative provided support to the EU's program against migration from Niger in 2016, the Nigerien authorities showed interest in the program and launched their own National Strategy to Counter Irregular Migration.[65] However, it was confirmed that the Nigerien authorities did not take the matter seriously except for a few operations that resulted in the arrest of 47 individuals and the capture of 67 vehicles accused of involvement in smuggling activities. In retrospect, these operations were just to further gain the EU's trust and keep receiving funding for the program.[66]

What makes migration hard to deal with is not only the political and economic circumstances of the Sahel states but also the randomness of routes and the fact that there is very little – if any – willingness from the side of African actors to sincerely cooperate to face such a security challenge, and this is exacerbated by the difficulty to detect and follow specific key networks' heads who lead the business of human trafficking itself. If a group or even one

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Fransje Molenaar, "Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger,"11.
[64] Ibid, 12,
[65] Ibid, 12.
[66] Ibid, 13.

individual want to migrate, say, from Niger to Europe, they will only be able to find a network to take them outside the country through Mali, then they will need to find another network to take them through Mauritania and another person or network to take them from there to the final destination. The only organized routes of transportation between West African states themselves and between them and Europe are those used to smuggle drugs like cocaine that originally come from South America as well as those routes used to smuggle weapons. Not far from the drug business in the Sahel, arms trafficking is surely having the most immediate impact on the regional as well as national security of each of the G5 countries.

2.5 Arms Trafficking

The region of the Sahel has been suffering from the flow of weapons coming from different parts of the world, and notorious international organized crime leaders played a major role in providing arms to both governments and rebels alike.[67] The Sahel trade routes are centuries old, and they were used for mobilizing caravans carrying goods of all type and at the same time connecting West and North African countries.[68] However, it is other illicit trade activities that proved to be very profitable over short periods of time. This fact, along with the rise of migration, created a suitable environment for arms smuggling as the region had just grown more unstable since 2011; that is, obviously, since the collapse of the Qaddafi regime.[69] Qaddafi's weapon's in southwestern Libya, controlled mostly by his own men some of whom originated from different parts of Sahel, were the first to be trafficked to northern Mali and neighboring areas by Tuareg tribe members who backed the Qaddafi regime in the first days of

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[67] Gail Wannenburg, "Organized Crime in West Africa," *African Security Studies* 14, no. 4 (2005):5
[68] Sella Oneko, "Sahel trade routes: Arms, people and drugs," *DW*, January 13, 2019, accessed March 20, 2019, https://www.dw.com/en/sahel-trade-routes-arms-people-and-drugs/a-37125072.
[69] Ibid.

the revolution. But the business was quickly taken over later by transnational criminals after the political situations in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria became more complicated with extremist groups gaining more military leverage.

Just as it is the case with migration, Niger has primarily served as a transit route for the circulation of weapons in the region.[70] From Libya weapons enter Niger and from there cross to Mali and Nigeria, according to the UN Panel of Exports.[71] Notably, weapons entering the region from Libya are mainly converted Turkish-made blank-firing hand gun and AK assault rifles.[72]
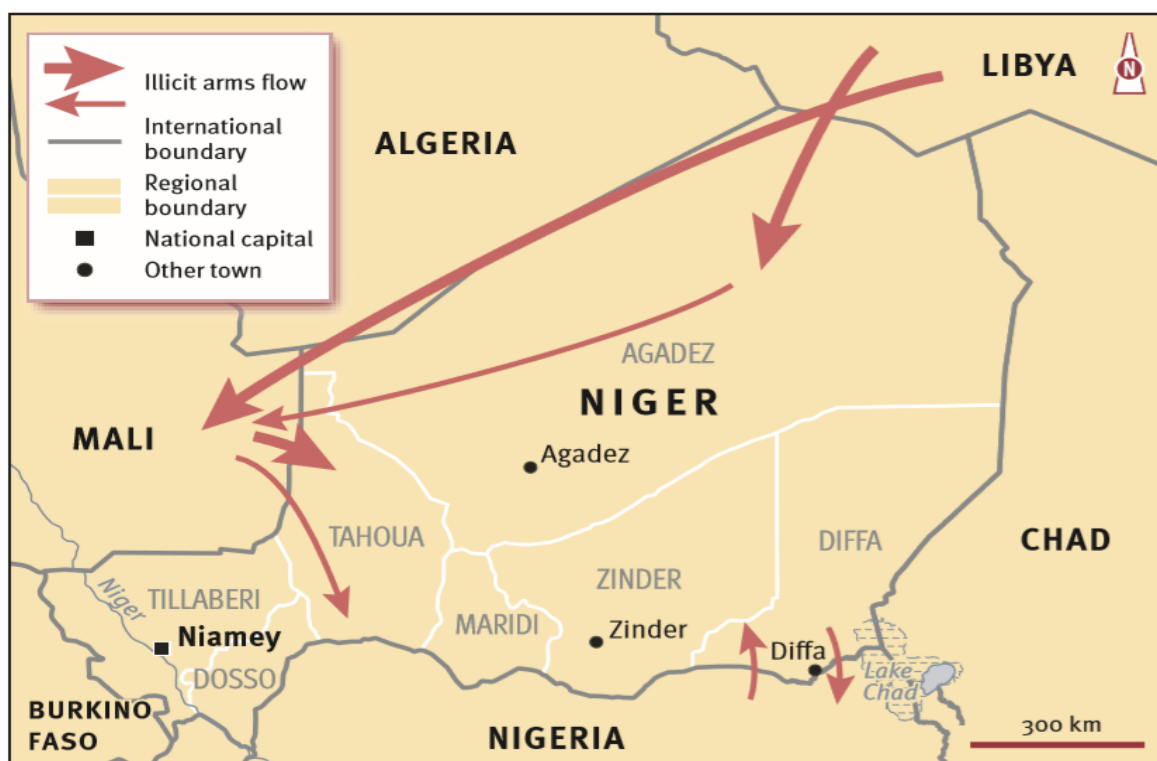
Figure 1. The routes that arms smugglers follow. Source: Savannah de Tessières. *Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger*. Small Arms Survey, 2017.

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[70] Savannah de Tessières, "Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger," Small Arms Survey, 2017: 5.
[71] Ibid, 6.
[72] Ibid, 6.

By following the direction of the arrows that point at the crossing areas of weapons and looking at them parallely with the places where terrorists groups are most active since 2012 (Northern Mali and Lake Chad Basin area), it becomes easy to conclude that weapons go to groups such as MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM as confirmed by the UN.[73] Only with the intervention of the French-led Operation Barkhane weapon traffickers start to experience heavy crackdown.

To measure the impact of the increase in the number of weapons smuggled in an organized crime context, research conducted by the Federal Foreign Office in Niger and led by Savannah de Tessieres observed the increases in armed robbories over the years 2014-2016. As the graph below shows, there is a stready increase from nearly 200 armed robbories in 2014 to around 240 in 2015 to more that 270 armed robbories in 2016.[74]

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[73] Ibid, 6.
[74] Ibid, 9.
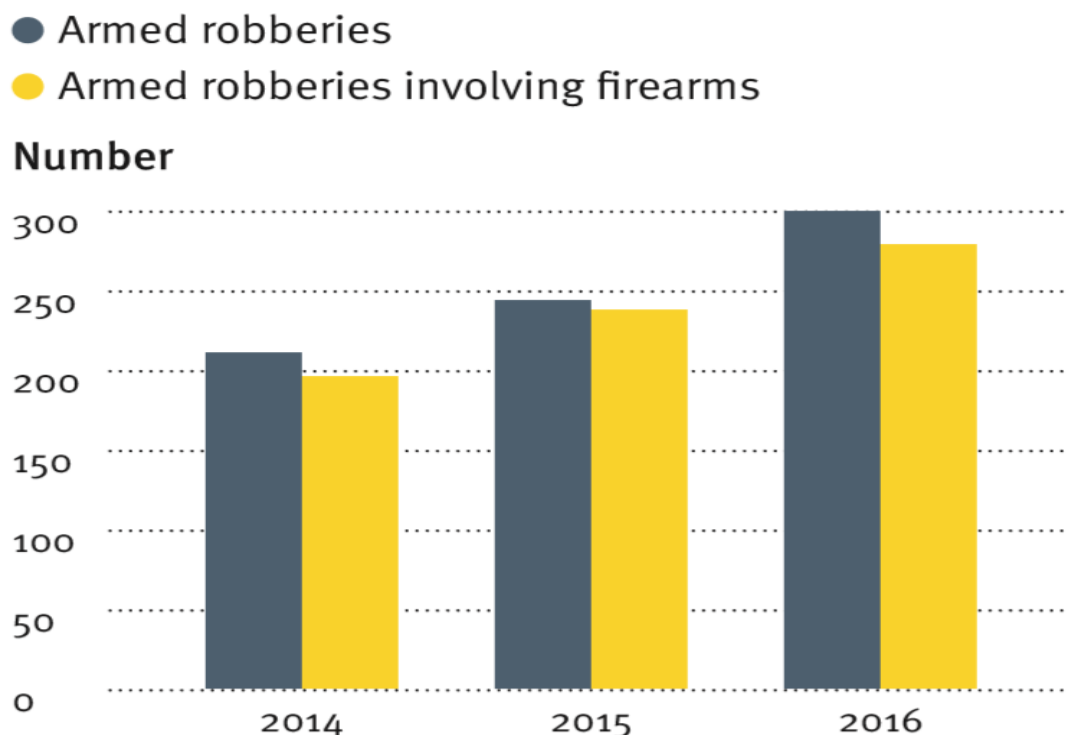
Figure 2. The increase in armed robberies since 2010. Source: Savannah de Tessières. *Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger*. Small Arms Survey, 2017.

2.6 Corruption

A fertile ground for the spread of political and social instabilities is a state plagued by corruption. Corruption is "an abuse of public power for private gain that hampers the public interest,"[75] and "since their inception, West African states have been facing corruption as a major problem."[76] Corruption in the West Africa – including the Sahel obviously – "has attained levels of gross and egregious theft, for which no possible moral or historical justification can be advance…"[77] The levels of corruption in the states of the Sahel is so high that any international

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[75] Samuel Mondays Atuobi, "Corruption and State Instability in West Africa," *CPMRD Newsletter* 1, no. 9 (2007): 5.
[76] Ibid, 2.
[77] Ibid, 2.

efforts to foster security in the region will probably be to no avail, as there will be almost no genuine collaboration from the side of local governments with regard to the issue.

According to the Transparency International index of the year 2016, the five countries of the G5 Sahel are plagued with high levels of corruption.[78] Based on a from-0-to-100 rating, all of the Sahel 5 scored below 45 which makes label them 'very corrupt'. Worse yet, three of them (Mali, Mauritania and Niger) are taking a 'negative trend' which means they are expected to do worse over the next few years. The map below exhibits the levels of corruption in West Africa in general.

Generally, "the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index, published by Transparency International, draws a disturbing picture of the perceived level of corruption in West Africa."[79] The issue with such high levels of corruption is that they totally render domestic and international efforts useless. Security challenges become more difficult to deal with in a region if that region suffer from corrupt authorities and at the same time under conditions of drastic climate change.

2.7 Climate Change

Associating climate change with security challenges is not new, for over time "security analysts and academics have warned for some time now that climate change threatens water and food security, the allocation of resources, and coastal populations, threats which in turn could increase forced migration, raise tensions and trigger conflict."[80] Climate change is one of the

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[78] See "Corruption remains a key challenge for West Africa," by West Africa Brief, February 16, 2017, accessed March 28, 2019, http://www.west-africa-brief.org/content/en/corruption-remains-key-challenge-west-africa.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Brown, Oli, Anne Hammill, and Robert McLeman, "Climate change as the 'new' security threat: implications for Africa," International affairs 83, no. 6 (2007): 1141.

oldest and most persistent problem of the Sahel, and it has been identified by UNSC as a major driver of conflict and violence in the Sahel region.[81] Phenomena such as desertification and water scarcity have deepened enmity between communities that live on farming, fishing and herding as resources become scarce and resorting to violence as a quick solution becomes very probable.[82] A 2017 Security Council resolution links "the dramatic shrinking of Lake Chad to the rise of Boko Haram and other armed groups in the region."[83] Due to reduced rainfall and the increasing demand on water as the population grew larger, the Lake Chad has reduced by 90% over the last four decades creating an environment of conflict between communities.[84] As a consequence, recruitment by emerging terrorist groups also grew in numbers particularly since in 2016 after the creation of the Islamic State West Africa which competes against Boko Haram for more recruits.[85] That said, climate change effects are significantly responsible for the thriving of Boko Haram in the region,[86] and also responsible for the food crises in the region.

2.8 Food Crises

Food problems of the Sahel have been characterizing the region since long before the emergence of terrorism and other forms of political violence. That chiefly goes back the desert-like nature of the region and a decrease in rainfalls that caused significant droughts over the last few decades. Two of the most serious cases of food insecurity that the Sahel recently

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[81] See "Climate change affecting stability across West Africa and Sahel: UN security council," by Climate Home News, January 31, 2018, accessed March 11, 2019, https://www.climatechangenews.com/2018/01/31/climate-change-affecting-stability-across-west-africa-sahel-un-security-council/.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Sam Ellis, "How Islamist militant groups are gaining strength in Africa: Terrorist groups are destabilizing countries all over the continent," VOX, June 21, 2018, accessed March 15, 2019, https://www.vox.com/2018/6/21/17484188/isis-islamist-militant-terrorism-qaeda-africa-boko-haram.
[86] Ibid.

encountered are the 2012 food crisis when up to 18 million people's life war at risk to perish and the following year when 11 million people still faced the same plight.[87] The Sahel's tough environmental condition in the region is also responsible of the 2018 food crisis that the people of the five countries of the Sahel had to face – and are still facing. At least 7.1 million people throughout these states "…are in need of urgent food and livelihood assistance."[88]

The food crises of the region are being managed, but far too slowly. The United Nations has intervened and assisted with funding and management by UN personnel. However, still the slow progress towards better food security in the region leaves much time for militants and extremist groups to increase in number and pose more security challenges. Groups like Boko Haram take advantage of situation created by climate change and food crises to recruit more fighter or convince individual to for services including committing crime or becoming members of extremist group in exchange for protection, food and shelter. Notably, these activities are more common on border areas in the region.[89]

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[87] Andre-Michel Essoungou, "The Sahel: One region, many crises", AfricaRenewal, accessed March 22, 2019, https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2013/sahel-one-region-many-crises.

[88] Christin Roby, "Nexus of climate and conflict exacerbates Sahel food security crisis", DEVEX, August 13, 2018.

[89] Gail Wannenburg, "Organized Crime in West Africa,",11.

CHAPTER 3

THE SAHEL 5: INHERENT PROBLEMS OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

To have a good idea of the G5 Sahel countries, the table below give each a profile based on geography, GDP, population, polity level as well as military capability and spending.

Country	Burkina Faso	Chad	Mali	Mauritania	Niger
Geographic size	273,600 Km2	1,259,200 Km2	1,220,190 Km2	1,030,700 Km2	1,266,700 Km2
Population	6.5 million	15.5 million	19.5 million	4.5 million	22.5 million
GDP	$ 12.87 billion	$ 9.98 billion	$ 15.10 billion	$ 5.02 billion	$ 8.12 billion
GDP per capita	$ 688	$ 823	$ 762	$ 1,300	$ 395
Military spending (per year)	$ 291 million	$ 216 million	$ 457 million	$ 152 million	$ 209 million

Table 1. Geography, GDP, population, polity level as well as military capability and spending.

The five states that compose the Sahel G5 are plagued with problems that create huge obstacles on the path to better security in the region. Each of these five states have domestic issues of its own, and unless are fixed first, devising a stronger security apparatus will be difficult if not impossible. A brief introduction of each of the five Sahel countries helps acquire a better image on the problems they share to assume direct or indirect responsibility for much of the region's security. But, indeed, the security challenges that each of the five states differ. Based on that, the discussion below will briefly address key problematic and security related characteristics of the G5 countries.

3.1 Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a West African country with a geographical size of 273,600 Km2 and a total population of more than 6.5 million. The location of Burkina Faso puts it in a very hot spot. Jammed between states from which drugs come crossing to North Africa (Ghana, Togo and Benin), and Mali and Niger to its north as major exporters of political violence and extremism, Burkina Faso finds itself at the heart of a security challenging region with limited access to natural resources including ocean waters.[90] Furthermore, Burkina Faso is located at the door step of an encroaching desertification coming from the north which exposes its agriculture-dependent economy – on which 80 percent of the population depend – to a significant danger.[91] Thus, Burkina Faso is very vulnerable and will tremendously be affected by any intense food crisis and/or an insurgency spillover from Mali or Niger, which is already the case. As far as climate change and environmental degradation are concerned, a similar fate that threatens agriculture in Burkina Faso already poses an irreversible damage problem to the economy and security of Chad.

3.2 Chad

Chad is a country located in West Africa with a total geographical size of 1,259,200 Km2 and a population of more than 15.5 million people. Political violence is a one of the most plaguing problems Chad suffers from since its independence. The major internal political turmoil was in 2008 when "in February 2008, approximately four thousand rebels from eastern Chad travelled a thousand kilometers across the entire country to attack the capital, N'Djamena, with the aim of

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[90] See "Key challenges, opportunities and risks in Burkina Faso," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, accessed March 22, 2019, http://um.dk/en/danida-en/strategies%20and%20priorities/country-policies/burkina-faso/key-challenges-opportunities-and-risks-in-burkina-faso/.
[91] Ibid.

ousting President Idriss Déb."[92] But they failed, and that was the catalyst of insurgencies to come. The Chadian president who has been in power since 1990 has oppressed the opposition and enforced and authoritarian rule of law since his arrival to power,[93] which is causing resentment towards the regime particularly in the wake of the Sudan revolution. But still environmental degradation and the shrinking of Lake Chad pose the most serious security threat as they have caused mass displacement of people and spread of terrorism.

3.3 Mali

Mali's territory is about 1,220,190 Km2, it is home for nearly 19.5 million people. The Malian states has been going through a very problematic situation since the toppling of its democratically elected regime in 2012. This is not to say that Mali was not already plagued with domestic problems before 2012 however, but it is to say though that the change of the regime in 2012 catalyzed many internal clashes caused by the nature of social groups that make its population.

Mali has inherently been plagued with serious social problems that exert direct impact on the security of country as well as that of the region as a whole. Oddly enough, "Mali's population consists of diverse sub-Saharan ethnic groups, sharing similar historic, cultural, and religious traditions,"[94] was not able to mitigate the atrocity of its ethnic conflict. Given the nature of its internal instabilities, Mali deeply suffers from lack of national integrity. That is because northern Mali is mostly inhabited by Tuareg tribes who make 10% of the Malian population and whose

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[92] Jennifer Giroux, Lanz David, and Sguaitamatti Damiano, "The tormented triangle: The regionalization of conflict in Sudan, Chad, and the Central African Republic," (2009):1.

[93] Daniel Eizenga, "The unstable foundations of political stability in Chad," (2018):7

[94] See "Tuareg-Mali", Global Security, accessed March 23, 2019, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/tuareg-mali.htm.

life style is different from the sedentary life style the people of the south, as the Tuareg are semi-nomads who prefer living in the deserts of the Azawad region of Mali moving with their cattle.

The fact that the vast majority of the members of the rebels and extremist groups in Mali consists of locals from northern Mali made the inhabitants of that part of Mali potential terrorists or pro-extremists. This has resulted in an ingrained resentment towards the ethnic groups that are associated with Islamic militants, because many of the victims that fell over the last 8 years were Malians civilians and tribe members who belonged to different part of Mali. This disintegration between ethnicities has been taken advantage of by some Islamic militants, as "…groups affiliated with al Qaeda and ISIS have moved deeper into central Mali, exploiting existing ethnic divisions and sowing chaos."[95] The most recent consequence of such internal divisions is the March 2019 massacre.

The Malian people had to deal with the aftermaths of the "unspeakable act", said the French ambassador to the UN, of the 25th of March 2019, that left 134 people dead after an attack targeted at a village of Fulani ethnic group. The casualties of the attack were mostly woman and children.[96] The impact of this internal act of violence will – along with others that preceded it – still inhibit future efforts to stabilize Mali and the region as a whole, for there always have been retaliatory acts following such kind of assaults.[97] Since an uncorrupt governance of a country is a prerequisite for the successfulness of stabilization measures, Mali will always face difficulties in setting its internal conflicts due to it corrupt governance.

Mali has been suffering from the ramifications of endemic corruption that the country experienced during the Amadou Toumani Touré tenure between 2002 and 2012 when "…a small

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[95] See "Africa-Mali: Attack Analysis," CNN, accessed, March 23, 2019,
https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/25/africa/mali-attack-analysis-intl/index.html.
[96] Ibid.
[97] See "Mali: UN genocide adviser warns of reprisals against Tuareg and Arab populations," UN News, February 1, 2013.

elite hoarded the country's political power and economic riches,"[98] leaving the northern sides of

Mali, known as Azawad, subject severe economic and political marginalization. And this is a

primary reason behind the political violence in that part of Mali. In retrospect, major

interventions in Mali like Serval and Barkhane were not able to contain the situation, because of

their mere focus on military intervention. A UN report argued that "a military solution alone is

not enough to create durable peace and stability," and continued warning that "if the

international community does not sufficiently invest in addressing the root causes of the conflict

and support recovery and development in northern and central Mali, peace and security will

remain elusive."[99]

3.4 Mauritania

Looking at the political legacy of this country, the majority of its regimes came to power

via coups d'état. Over a period of 30 years Mauritania witnessed 14 coups d'état. The first

democratically elected president of this country was ousted in 2008 by the military forces – who

are still ruling the country incidentally – after being in power for only one year. The country of

Mauritania is also still facing problems that relate to the history of its societies. Lately, the

ethnic-oriented discourses have been on the rise.

The current population of Mauritania is more that 4.5 million within a total land area of

1,030,700 Km2. Since 2011, the country has been undergoing unprecedented increasingly

separatist discourse established over the societies history with slavery practices that left a large

category of the population subject to extreme poverty and deprivation from modern education

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[98] Sergei Boeke, and Bart Schuurman, "Operation 'Serval': A strategic analysis of the French intervention in Mali, 2013–2014," *Journal of strategic studies* 38, no. 6 (2015): 806.
[99] Joe Penny, "The G5 Sahel Force, Failing the Region and Failing Itself," Fordham Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, December 16, 2018.

and, eventually, denial of the rights to be in the governmental institution relatively with other ethnicities. This social situation has been significantly responsible for the high rates of poverty and unemployment in the country. Indeed, corruption also is impacting all aspects of state, as Mauritania is the second most corrupt country in the entire West African region.[100]

Corruption in Mauritania has its own implication on the entire region, for it is a major drug smuggling area. Arguably, the decreases in drug and weapon seizures on Mauritanian territory are a result for more corrupt senior officials who have been able to conceal drug smuggling operations from media and research organizations. In fact, there were allegations about high ranking officials' involvement in the business in the May 2012 Timbedra (an eastern city in Mauritania) drug seizure.[101]

Nonetheless, still Mauritania is the least politically unstable compared to the other members of the G5 Sahel despite the fact that it is a most vulnerable, as it shares more than uncontrolled 1200 kilometers border length with an unstable Mali. This makes a scenario of violence spill-over from the rest of the region almost unpreventable, if it was to happen. In a Foreign Travel Advice report by the UK government it is made clear that Mauritania is no exception from reach of terrorist attacks. "Terrorist groups continue to mount attacks on beach resorts, hotels, cafes and restaurants visited by foreigners,"[102] indiscriminately throughout the countries in the region.

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[100] See "Corruption remains a key challenge for West Africa," West Africa Brief.
[101] Wolfram Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region":10.
[102] See GOV.UK, "Foreign travel advice: Mauritania," accessed March 26, 2019, https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/mauritania/terrorism.

3.5 Niger

Despite being geographically the largest country between the G5 with a total land area is 1,266,700 Km2 and with a population of about 22.5 million people with one of the world richest uranium soils, Niger is among the top 10 poorest countries in the world.[103] The most internal security challenging attribute of Niger however is "the ethnic tension that has resulted in multiple armed rebellions over the past 30 years…"[104] A major reason behind this is that the country "has seen long periods of political stalemate and military rule since its independence,"[105] Since 1990, Niger has been dealing with the armed rebellion led by some Tuareg separatist communities in the same manner its neighbor Mali has. Niger also receives its own share of religious extremism pouring for Nigeria and still deals with the side effects of the collapse of the Libyan state.[106]

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[103] See "Areva's Uranium Mines, Niger," by Environmental Justice Organizations, Liabilities and Trade ejolt, July 20, 2015, accessed March 22, 2019, http://www.ejolt.org/2015/07/arevas-uranium-mines-niger/.
[104] Savannah de Tessières, "Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger,":4.
[105] See Peace Insight, "Niger: Conflict profile," accessed March 2, 2019, https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/niger/.
[106] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVENTIONS IN THE SAHEL

Despite the fact that most of the interventions that took place in Sahel were mainly focused on Mali, the end goals of the intervening entities were mainly to limit the influence of Islamic militants and other forms of military-related threats. Islamic militancy has not affected only Mali, but rather the entire Sahel and beyond. Therefore, engaging terrorist groups in a part of the Sahel means engaging them all over the Sahel. Terrorism in the Sahel involves a network that operates from Libya in the north east to Morocco in the north west to Burkina Faso to Chad, and of course, Mali in the middle, which put Niger at the heart of the quagmire. Major military interventions in the Sahel started in 2012 and has been dominated by European actors, the United Nations, and other African organizations. The United States did intervene in the Sahel too, but to a remarkably lesser extent.

4.1 Operation Serval

France is by far the most active foreign power in of Sahel. This manifests itself in its numerous intervention operations, including Operation Epervier in Chad and Operation Sangaris in the CAR. Yet, it is operation Serval that stands out as a major French led Operation in the region with some bilateral support from the U.S., the UK, Denmark, and Belgium.[107] Launched in January 2013, operation Serval had three main incentives. First, political turmoil in Mali from March 2012 on led to the fall of a democratically elected government while the northern parts of the country fell under the rebel and terrorist groups control. As a result, the United Nations

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[107] Christopher Griffin, "Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French counterterrorism and military cooperation in the Sahel," Small Wars & Insurgencies 27, no. 5 (2016): 22.

Security Council (UNSC) adopted Resolution 2071 that enabled the establishment of an African-led force to intervene in Mali against these groups.[108] This resolution legitimized – though very indirectly – the French quick response to the Malian interim-president's request for help against the rebels and terrorists in the northern cities. Also, motivating the French reaction was its Ministry of Defense's concern with possible attacks by the terrorist groups before the deployment of UN forces as mandated by Resolution 2071, and accordingly the urgency to send air and ground forces to "locate jihadist command nodes, fuel depots and logistical centers."[109] France's readiness for military intervention in the region also had its roots in the massive uranium mines operated by the French government.

The discovery of huge deposits of uranium in the western part of Niger in the 1960s[110] was of significant interest to the French government as those deposits helped boost its access to nuclear energy. The issue with these uranium-rich mines is, however, that they are located near politically unstable Malian territories. "Niger's uranium provides 20 per cent of the fuel for France's 58 nuclear reactors, which are in turn responsible for generating nearly 75 per cent of France's electricity."[111] That said, the French military intervention in Mali also reflected concerns including an increase in migration from the region had the insurgency been left unintended. Finally, the French intervention sought to protect its Francophone allies, especially after Boko Haram started to move out from its conventional area of operation in 2014 and pledged its allegiance to the Islamic States.[112]

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[108] Sergei Boeke, and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval,": 810.
[109] Ibid, 810.
[110] See "Areva's Uranium Mines, Niger," 2015.
[111] Sergei Boeke, and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval," 806-807.
[112] Christopher Griffin, "Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French counterterrorism and military cooperation in the Sahel," 27.

According to some French government officials of the Francois Holland presidency, Operation Serval was successful because of the damages it caused to the Islamic militants at the time.[113] A third of an estimated 2000 Islamic fighters were confirmed killed, and the rest retreated in the northern Chad deserts. Nevertheless, the success of Operation Serval is frequently questioned, because it never tried to solve the socio-political problems that caused the rebellion against the government and gave much ground for extremism to flourish again in northern Mali after France pooled back and the African Union (AU) deployed the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA).[114]

4.2 African-led Intervention Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)

AFISMA was a military coalition force that included the majority of the African Union (AU) member states and consisted initially of more than 6000 troops[115] The late formation of this African led-force was caused by pessimistic comments made by the UN and the US alike about the reliability of AFISMA due to the increase in the Tuareg and AQIM control over northern Mali. In retrospect, AFISMA was not capable of doing much, for lack of proper coordination in response to militants' move, which led it to join United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA).[116] After the United Nation's Security Council (UNSC) gave the green light, MINUSMA) was established on the 25th of April 2013.

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[113] Sergei Boeke, and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval," 802.
[114] Ibid, 802.
[115] See "AFISMA Transfer its Authority to MINUSMA," by African Union Peace And Security, July 2013, accessed February 28, 2019, http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/afisma-transfers-its-authority-to-minusma.
[116] Ibid.

4.3 MINUSMA

Like Operation Serval, MINUSMA was a reaction to the turmoil that Mali had been undergoing since March 2012. The main goals of the mission, however, were to "…support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilization of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap."[117] But MINUSMA had broader areas to address in Mali than the French-led operations. Aside its military activity, MINUSMA helped develop sectors in the Malian government and organized training for the country's officials and troops. Ultimately, MINUSMA consisted of more than 15,000 personnel about 13,289 of which were contingent troops.[118] Later the AFISMA forces where added to these troops. Sahel states also forged their own coalitions with this regard such as the MNJTF.

4.4 The Multinational Joint Task Forces

The Multinational Joint Force Task Force (MNJTF) is a military coalition established by Chadian, Cameroonian, Niger and Nigerian authorities to combat terrorism threatening these four countries and, more specifically, the Boko Haram insurgency. The headquarters of this alliance is located in the capital city of Chad, N'djamena. Although the initiative dates back to 1994 when Nigeria launched it to counter militants rampaging in eastern Nigeria, and later expanded it to include Chadian and Niger troops, it was only until 2015 that the other three neighboring countries officially joined after Boko Haram kept gaining more ground and became a huge threat in the entire region, as it"…overwhelmed Nigerian and allied troops and overran

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[117] See "MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission In Mali," by United Nations Peacekeeping, April 22, 2019, accessed April 24, 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusma.
[118] Ibid.

the Multinational Joint Task Force base in northeastern Nigeria…"[119] on January 4, 2015, killing many troops and civilians and displacing more than a thousand others. The MNJTF has succeeded over time, particularly since 2016, in regaining 80 of the territories that were under Boko Haram control and in cutting significant supplies coming to the insurgency.[120]

Other than France, the AU, and the UN, many other stakeholders have been concerned with the security situation in the Sahel region. The United States, the EU, Chad, along with the G5 Sahel, have been taking part in dealing with the region's plaguing security problems. For instance, when the Tuareg rebel forces – that became chiefly controlled by AQIM leadership after they seized northern Mali – started to push further to the south in 2012, the EU felt an urgent need to back the Malian army. Under that condition, the European Council authorized the deployment of European Union Training Mission to Mali (EUTM) on January 17, 2013.[121] The number of the personnel sent in this mission ranged from 400 to 500 personnel and was deployed right after the French Operation Serval engaged the rebel forces and extremist groups and began pushing them to the northeastern Malian territories.

4.5 Barkhane Force

As mentioned previously, France, as an intervening actor, has dominated the region with its military presence compared to the rest of actors. On August 1, 2014, France launched its

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[119] Bill Roggio, "Boko Haram overruns Multinational Joint Task Force base," FDD's LONG WAR journal, January 4, 2015, accessed April 12, 2019, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/01/boko_haram_overruns.

[120] Usman Tar and Adejoh Sunday. "Military Alliance and Counter-Terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Multi-National Joint Task Force in Perspective." Covenant University Journal of Politics and International Affairs 5, no. 2 (2017): 8.

[121] Sergei Boeke, and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval," 818.

Operation Barkhane by deploying 4000, not including the 7515 troops France had already spread over the region.[122]

Nonetheless, sending the French Barkhane forces to the Sahel was seen as a clear attempt by the French government to bring the region back under its colonial control. This accusation reverberated in the nationalist psyche in the region. The French reaction was that of its Foreign Minister statement that "…it is not for a country outside of Africa, even for a country that is as close a friend to Africa as is France, to substitute for the Africans[123]" Despite the trouble it caused to the rebels and extremist groups in the region, "Operation Barkhane may be doing more harm than good, since it provides crucial support to the repressive governments that are at the heart of the Sahel's problems."[124] In addition, the French large-scaled military intervention provoked at least three terrorist groups to form an alliance against what they believe to an invasion by the "crusaders". The Islamic militants' declarations of alliance and war against France-led Operations in the region were a major reason behind the establishment of the Sahel G5 Coalition which was supported and indorsed by many countries and organizations.

4.6 The EU Support for the G5 Sahel

The European Union stepped up close cooperation with the G5 Sahel since its 2014 initiative. EU support has given to G5 Sahel countries help to counter political instability and such related problems as terrorism and "extreme poverty, frequent food and nutrition crises, conflict, irregular migration and related crimes such as human trafficking and migrant

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[122] Christopher Griffin, "Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French counterterrorism and military cooperation in the Sahel," 10.

[123] Ibid, 4.

[124] Nathaniel Powell, "A Flawed Strategy in the Sahel: How French Intervention Contributes to Instability," Foreign Affairs, February 1, 2016, accessed March 11, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/west-africa/2016-02-01/flawed-strategy-sahel.

smuggling…"[125] Therefore, the support has had to address several areas of development along with its military side.

The EU and the G5 have a strong political partnership which is confirmed by the regularly held annual meetings between the two institutions. This support manifests in three major domains: political backup, development assistance as well as security and stability support. The total amount of financial funding allocated to West Africa by the EU is €8 billion over the period 2014-2020. This of course is for the entire region of West Africa, and it includes financial support for all three domains within and outside the G5 alliance framework. Strangely enough, however, the EU has only allocated $ 100 million to the G5 Joint force ever since its launch in July 2017,[126] not to including the still promised financial support decided after the 2018 G5 Summit in Nouakchott, Mauritania. But, as far as the EU's commitment to the security of the region, the EU has had major contribution to foster measure against violence and extremism.

The three major defense policies that the EU led throughout some of the Sahel countries give us a good understanding of the EU contribution to the security of the region. The European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger (EUCAP) was a very important initiative as it was launched in 2012 to provide "…advice and training to support the Nigerien authorities in strengthening their security capabilities."[127] The mission trained 6000 Nigerien personnel, including armed forces. Its focus was on training trainers so that expertise, knowledge, and skill can be sustained. However, the EUCAP in Niger had to be extended later by the EU Council from July 2016 to July 2018, because it was seen necessary to keep providing advice and training

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[125] See "The European Union's Partnership with the G5 Sahel countries," Brussels, June 16, 2018, accessed March 11, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-mali/46674/european-unions-partnership-g5-sahel-countries_en.

[126] Ibid.

[127] See "EUCAP Sahel Niger: mission extended, budget agreed, mandate amended," Brussels, July 18, 2019, accessed March 12, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_km/

in the wake of escalating security challenges, as the region of Agadez in norther Niger still

suffered from terrorism and organized crime operations. That is, unlike operations such as Serval

and Barkhane, the EUCAP in Niger was not an armed force intervention by the EU, quite similar

to EUCAP Sahel Mali.

The EU presence in Mali was not very different from that in Niger, because it was also a

mission "providing expertise in strategic advice, training and equipment to the Malian Police,

Gendarmerie and National Guard, and the relevant ministries in order to support the restructuring

of the Malian Internal Security Forces and reform in the security sector."[128] The mandate of the

EUCAP mission in Mali was approved by the Council on April 15, 2014 and was to last until

January 2019. Along with other ends, the initiative's major goal was to strengthen the Malian

forces to fight terrorism and organized crimes. This was in the wake of major terrorist operations

in the region such as the mass kidnappings carried out by Boko Haram in neighboring Nigeria.

The EUCAP in Mali outlasted the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) which was

deployed in 2013 through 2017 to train Malian forces and elaborate the first Defense Programing

Law to be adopted in Mali.[129] In addition to the efforts already made by the EUCAP in Mali, the

EU also initiated another mission in the summer of 2017. Named 'Regionalization of CSDP

action in the Sahel', its goal has been to combine civilian and military activities with the final

objective to enhance the capabilities for co-operation of the five G5 Sahel countries.[130] The

support of the EU to Sahel countries was not exclusive to Mali and Niger and the alliance of the

G5 as one body, but also to each of the five countries alone.

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[128] See "The European Union's partnership with the G5 Sahel countries," Brussels, June 18, 2018, accessed March 12, 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/eucap-sahel-mali/46674/european-unions-partnership-g5-sahel-countries_en.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

EU funds for the G5 Sahel countries' development and security have been substantial as shown below for the period 2014 through.

Country	Funding total per country
Burkina Faso	789 million Euros
Chad	737.6 million Euros
Mali	989.8 million Euros
Mauritania	368.55 million Euros
Niger	997.5 million Euros

Table 2. EU funds for the G5 Sahel countries.

These funds were aimed at improving many sectors in all of the five countries. For Burkina Faso, these funds are allocated to support good governance, sustainable agriculture, food security, clean water, and sustainable energy.[131] In Chad the focus was more on the security of nutrition, the management of natural resources and the consolidation of the rule of law.[132] For Mali, the assistance was to reform the state and rebuild peace in the country, for rural development, infrastructure as well as food security.[133] Mauritania, as the least country suffering from political violence, was urged to improve its infrastructure in its south, reinforce its food security and the health system.[134] Niger, however, was urged to focus with these funds on infrastructure for its regions that are at risk of conflict and insecurity – for being at the front of

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[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

insecure Malian territories – and improve its food security and peace consolidation measures.[135]

The variations in the funding allocated to each of the five countries are to a great extent based on

the economic and political circumstances of that each particular country and also based on the

geographic as well as demographic size of each country.

4.7 The United States' Presence in the Sahel

The United States also has its own stakes in the region as well as its intervening strategies

despite being the least involved. The US's military presence in the Sahel dates back to more than

a decade ago. The US's African Command initiative (AFRICOM) that was launched in 2007 has

had the objective of developing enduring partnership with the African continent through. helping

African governments establish secure, prosperous and stable African countries.[136] AFRICOM

consists of uniformed personnel of 7,200 people. But these personnel are not focused on the

Sahel region only. AFRICOM is not dealing only with the security issues of the entire continent,

including various issue areas of development. However, the number and nature of personnel

allocated to West Africa reflects the strategic importance of region to the United States compared

to some other parts in Africa. Nonetheless, the capability allocated to the Sahel region tells a lot

about the US's the negligence of the region when the force and personnel allocated to the Sahel

are compared to those other actors such as the UN, the EU and France (independently) are

putting forward for the region.

Up to now, the total deployment of US forces and experts in the Sahel is merely 1,000

personnel. It is also important to point out two characteristics of these forces. First, 800 of them

are located in Niger with the balance spread throughout Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Burkina

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[135] Ibid.
[136] See "U.S. Africa Command 2007 – 2018," accessed March 13, 2019, https://www.africom.mil/our-tenth-anniversary.

Faso. Second, the exact locations of the AFRICOM bases in the Sahel countries (except for in Niger) and the exact type of missions being conducted are unknown, because AFRICOM itself "…has fallen short of providing concretes information…"[137] with this regard and, thereby, left the scope of the US military presence in the Sahel quite blurred.

What was clearly stated about the AFRICOM troops is that their mission is to provide training and equipment to the Nigerien troops particularly and not involve in any combat except under critical conditions.[138] Since the attack on Nigerien and US troops near the village of Tongo that left casualties on both sides, the US approach has become even more prudent.

In October 2017, four American forces were victim to an ambush set by a group of militants in Niger where several other Nigerien troops were killed too. With already minor interest in direct military confrontation in the Sahel, the killing of four American troops just made US officials – including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and AFRICOM head Thomas Waldhauser – come to the decision to keep the US troops presence very limited and take measures to eliminate any chances of direct confrontations between US forces and the militants group in the region and keep their activities limited to training Nigerien troops and personnel.[139]

Several major factors play a significant role in the minor interest from the US towards the Sahel. For one, the US is focused on its rivalries with Russia and China in the Middle East and other parts of Asia. Added to this, the Sahel is of lesser strategic importance to the US current security and economic agendas than is the case with other regions. Besides, the fact that the Trump administration is quite too concerned about the issue of migration sets the Sahel as a very

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[137] Nick Turse, "U.S. Military Says It Has A 'Light Footprint' Africa. These Documents Show A Vast Network Of Bases," The Intercept, December 1, 2018.
[138] See "U.S. Africa Command 2007 – 2018,"
[139] Nick Turse, "U.S. Military Says It Has A 'Light Footprint' Africa. These Documents Show A Vast Network Of Bases," The Intercept.

secondary region, because the region is not the main source of immigrants coming to the Unites

States in the same way South America and the Middle East are.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT CHANGED? THE G5 SAHEL AND THEIR JOINT FORCE

On February 16, 2014, the summit held in Nouakchott, Mauritania brought together five states from the region of the Sahel and resulted in the launch of an organization named of G5 Sahel for Security and Development. The establishment of this organization was precipitated not only by the increasing brutality of terrorist groups like Boko Haram, but also because of the rise of ISIS and its unification with Al-Qaeda – which already had a branch in the Islamic Maghreb – as well as Boko Haram's claim of allegiance to ISIS which was followed by unprecedented wave of violence by the group.[140] The changes in the positions of these sects in West Africa raised fears of these groups expanding their area of operation further throughout the Sahel. Although it is not explicitly expressed in the literature addressing the issue of the security situation in the Sahel, a significant incentive to form the coalition was the fall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya, which provided ground for ISIS to set foot in North Africa and opened the gate to a border-less West Africa. However, only after establishing an armed alliance, was the G5 Sahel able to lead operations against insurgents in the region. And just as was the case with the launch of the coalition itself, the major actors in the region endorsed its military branch which consist of nearly 5000 troops supported by the French-led Barkhane Force**.**

5.1 The G5 Military Force Operations

The G5 Military power consits of nearly 5000 personnel which include a certain number of troops by each the five countries. This capability is obviously too small for such a task as confronting terrorism and other forms of organize crimes in the Sahel region and help in other

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[140] Jason Hanna, "Here's how ISIS was really founded," CNN, August 13, 2019.

domains such as development and conflict resolution. A reason beyhind this shortage in militray power can first be found in the limits of the five states' armies. The table below shows each country and the its military power as well as their troop contributions to the G5 Joint Force, accoridng to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

Country	Military Power of the country	The contribution to the G5 Joint Force
Burkina Faso	9,100	550 soldier and 100 gendarmes.
Chad	30,300	550 soldiers and 100 gendarmes
Mali	15,570	1100 soldiers and 200 gendarmes
Mauritania	17,000	550 soldiers and 100 gendarmes
Niger	14,200	1100 soldiers and 200 gendarmes

Table 3. Each country's military power and troop contributions to the G5 Joint Force.

So far, the Joint Force has led 6 operations. On October 28, 2017, the Joint Force launched its first operation a month after four US soldiers and other Nigerien troops were ambushed and killed. The Operation's goal was "…to achieve an area of control in this region of three borders to fight against armed groups and trafficking, in order to allow the return of a level

of security favorable to the tranquility of the populations."[141] Other operations have had the same goal; to control key point on the borders shared Chad and Niger, Niger and Mali, and Mali and Mauritania. The reason is because these are the places insurgents are most active.

The G5 coalition receives most of its funding from external actors. The European Union, as a collective, as well as France, and the US and Germany are the major contributors. They contributed with the most significant financial, military as well as logistic aids so far. After the joint force was launched in July 2017, the five commanding African countries requested support in mainly two forms (financial and technical) from the international community.

In a 48-hour summit that took place in the capital city of Mauritania on December 6, 2018, the EU and France were able to ramp up their funding for the G5 Sahel anti-terror alliance to € 1.3bn. "Half of this sum is for projects already planned or underway," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said, with, "the other half [to] be awarded quickly over the next two years to enable you to meet your priorities."[142] Another 700 million was also pledged for future projects planned for the Joint Force. The G5 Joint Force has received only €414 million amount of the totality of the money pledged so far. The fact is that the available funds are too small to help in organizing troops deployment, and other different military activities in the region,[143] makes the Joint Force quite useless for the time being and, consequently, gives more time to extremist groups and criminal organizations to respond and put forth counter measures to this crackdown against them.

The United States also has contributed funding. According to the AFRICOM leadership, the United States gave the G5 Joint Force financial assistance on two occasions. First, in October

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[141] See "G5 Sahel launches military operation in African scrublands," World News, November 2, 2017, accessed March 15, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahel-launches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS.
[142] Benjamin Fox, "EU and France ramp up €1.3bn support for G5 Sahel," Euractiv, Dec 7, 2018.
[143] Ibid.

2017 when the US pledged $60 million after United Nation Security Council 2017 resolution called for international support,[144] and, second, in 2018, with another $51 million allocated further support.[145]

There have been several summits held by the G5 Sahel member states to further discuss and plan for the future cooperation and coordination regarding not only security issues of the region but also economic development matters, as the latter factor has lately been integrated as an indispensable element toward better securitization of the region. One of the most important summits that Shel 5 have met in was the one held in Bamako, Mali, in February the 6th, 2017. This summit paved the way for the creation of the joint force, for it was deemed crucial to engage insurgencies and siege them. In April 2019 the Brussels summits was held in support of the G5 Sahel where representatives from the members of the G5 met with EU and members as well as other international organizations members. The main focus of the summit, however, was to help "… reinforce the nationals government's presence in areas that are prone to conflict and hunger," and not necessarily boost the coalition military power.

This was to further emphasize other issue areas the region lacks. It was agreed upon by the leaderships of the states of the Sahel, as well as the majority of the donor entities, that this coalition should include other security related sectors such as economic as social development. Under these issue areas lie infrastructure as well as education and others. But, of course, the priority is still the fight against terrorism. And given the extremely limited funds available even for the fight against terrorism alone, these other sectors remain neglected and are unlikely to be addressed any time soon.

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[144] Fergus Kelly, "US counter-terrorism assistance to G5 Sahel member states almost doubles to $111 million," The Defense Post, November 5, 2018, accessed March 20, 2019, https://thedefensepost.com/2018/11/05/g5-sahel-us-assistance/.
[145] Ibid.

"The biggest concern with the future of G5 Sahel is inadequate resourcing and support from a major power in the region,"[146] said Seth Jones, director of transnational threats in Washington. Jones also stated that "none of the G5 countries have sufficient money or competence by themselves or even in cooperation to do what is necessary to significantly weaken terrorist groups in the region."[147]

Less than a year after its launch, the G5 Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré – a city near Mopti located in the area separating northern and southern Mali – was struck by a surprise attack waged by terrorists. On June 29, 2018, a two-man suicide bombing left two Malian soldiers and two civilians dead at the headquarters.[148] This attack seems to have been the main reason why the G5 Joint Force headquarters was moved later to the Malian capital Bamako, although the officials in charge of the headquarters stated that moving the headquarters was necessary because it "…must be where communication sand links are the best…"[149]

Ultimately, the G5 Sahel has not been able to change the steadily exacerbating status of the region. The Joint Force proved unable to deter terrorists to launch further attacks on Sahel cities. To the contrary, its launch emboldened the militants roaming in the region which led to an attack on its headquarters in Sévaré, Mali. A major problem of the G5 Joint Force is that "there is no clear indication of which terrorist armed groups (TAGs) the force will target or prioritize."[150] The coalition was endorsed by the UN because it was believed that it would "…strengthen

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[146] Fatiha Belfakir, "G5 Sahel Force Struggles with Funding, Coordination," Extremism Watch, December 27, 2018.
[147] Ibid.
[148] See "New Terrorist Attacks against the G5 Sahel force headquarters," The Economist, July 10, 2018.
[149] See "Mali: the strength of G5 Sahel moves its headquarters from Sévaré to Bamako," African Daily Voice, September 29, 2018.
[150] Natasja Rupesinghe, "The joint force of the G5 Sahel: an appropriate response to combat terrorism?," *conflict trends* 2018, no. 2 (2018): 16.

regional administration and development while relieving the United Nations mission in Mali of those burdens."[151]

Given the number of issues it addresses and its extremely limited equipment, personnel and experience, the G5 Sahel is not expected to address two of the major exporters of political instability in the entire region. Arguably, if the extremist groups in Libya and Nigeria are not fought, the Sahel will continue to struggle with its current situation. Although these two countries may not be considered as part of the Sahel geographically, they are surely shaping its security situation. "A counter-terrorism strategy in the Sahel needs to reinforce domestic social cohesion and police missions, while being more comprehensive through an expansion of its geographical scope."[152]

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[151] See, "The G5 Sahel Force, Failing the Regio and Failing Itself,".
[152] Brice Adler, "The regionalization of counter-terrorism strategies in the Sahel: the G5 as a challenge for transatlantic relations," p., 2.

CHAPTER 6

KEY PLAYERS CASE STUDY: LIBYA AND NIGERIA – FUELING INSTABILITY IN

SAHEL

Libya and Nigeria are key states for security in the region, because of their role as the major exporters of international violence. It should be obvious that a primary goal of the G5 Sahel states is to block weapons pouring in from Libya, and to fight off the insurgencies, as the ideological discourse coming from Nigeria's Boko Haram which has been increasing its recruitments in the region. In the case studies below, I discuss how instabilities in these two countries spillover and significantly delay local and international efforts to move the region towards stabilization.

6.1 The Case of Libya

The urgent issue of stabilization in the Sahel parallels that of Libya. In other word, fostering Sahel security requires fixing the Libyan state first. The Libya occupies a large portion of the Sahel region both environmentally and politically speaking. The upheavals that Libya has witnessed since the beginning of this decade have had a significant impact on the security of the entire West and North Africa. It was only until the Qaddafi regime was toppled that the extremists in the Sahel gained increasing more influence in Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Pondering on Colonel Qaddafi's relations with rebels in the entire region may clarify why Libya's has become source in many problems of the Sahel and, more specifically, Mali. This has its root in Qaddafi's strong support for some rebels and militant groups in the region.

Qaddafi supported Polisario rebel group in the Sahara, on the borders between Mauritania and Morocco which plays a critical role in the instability characterizing border shared by Mauritania, Morocco and Algeria.[153] The Qaddafi regime also backed the Malian rebels, which he equipped with weapons, and supplied significant numbers of troops when his regime faced uprisings in 2011. After NATO intervened and helped end Qaddafi's 40-plus years rule, most of the Tuaregs who fought for him returned to Northern Mali after his death, bringing with them an abundance of weapons taken from Libya. In retrospect, these armed rebels were chiefly responsible for taking over the Azawad region of Mali in 2012. Libya's collapse as an autonomous state resulted in a "weakness of national government institution and security forces,"[154] making it a hub for transnational criminal and terrorist threats. This is when the Libyan political situation started to be so critical for the security of the Sahel region.

As an unintended consequence of NATO's intervention in Libya, Libya was left with a huge and hard-to-fill power gap. As some observers have described the development of the Libyan quagmire, the ferocious rivalry between "(1) the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HOR, elected in June 2014) and 'Operation Dignity'/Libyan National Army (LNA) forces and, (2) the Tripoli-based remnants of the General National Congress (GNC, elected in July 2012) and 'Libya Dawn' force"[155] state was difficult – if not impossible – to solve. The fact that Libya has been extremely politically unstable created a perfect environment for notorious ISIS to open itself a branch in Northern Libya in 2013 before it first found its feet in Iraq even.[156]

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[153] See, "Investigating Cross-Border Weapon Transfers in the Sahel," Conflict Armament Research, November 2016, p., 6.
[154] Blanchard, Christopher M. *Libya: Transition and US policy*. No. CRS-RL33142. Congressional Research Service Washington United States, 2016, p., 3.
[155] Ibid, 3.
[156] Hollie McKay, "ISIS, squeezed out of Iraq and Syria, now 'regrouping' in Libya, analysts say," Fox News, July 30, 2017.

This sort of strategy adopted by such terrorist groups as ISIS, organizing some cells in politically unstable region, guarantee the availability of terrains to resort to in case they undergo heavy crackdown. Based on that, the Sahel's vulnerability region makes it easy for any of the well-known terrorist organizations in East Africa, the Middle East and Central Africa to settle. But still the most urgent threat in this region is the infiltration of ISIS fighters from the Middle East through Libya. Furthermore, a collapsed Libya poses a serious problem as a main source of the weapons which have been used to traumatize the Sahel. In early 2019, UK Foreign and Commonwealth reports confirmed that "Qaddafi's stockpiles after his fall played a major role in the Tuareg and Islamist insurgencies in Mali in 2012."[157]

Evidence provided in these reports emphasizes also that Qaddafi's stockpiles of weapons – which were concentrated in south western Libya where most important pro-Qaddafi sects and tribes were located – "has allowed armed actors operating throughout the Sahel region—including in Chad and Niger, and possibly in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire—to acquire weapon systems including small arms and man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS)."[158] Interestingly, the flows of weapons from Libya to the Sahel follow very well-known route. Yet, the efforts made by the international actors as well as the G5 Sahel have not been able to disturb these flows significantly. The map below shows traffic routes from Libya to the heart of the Sahel.

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[157] John Campbell, "Weapons in the Sahel," Council on foreign Relations, November 22, 2016, accessed April 3, 2019, https://www.cfr.org/blog/weapons-sahel.
[158] See, "Investigating Cross-Border Weapon Transfers in the Sahel," p., 7.
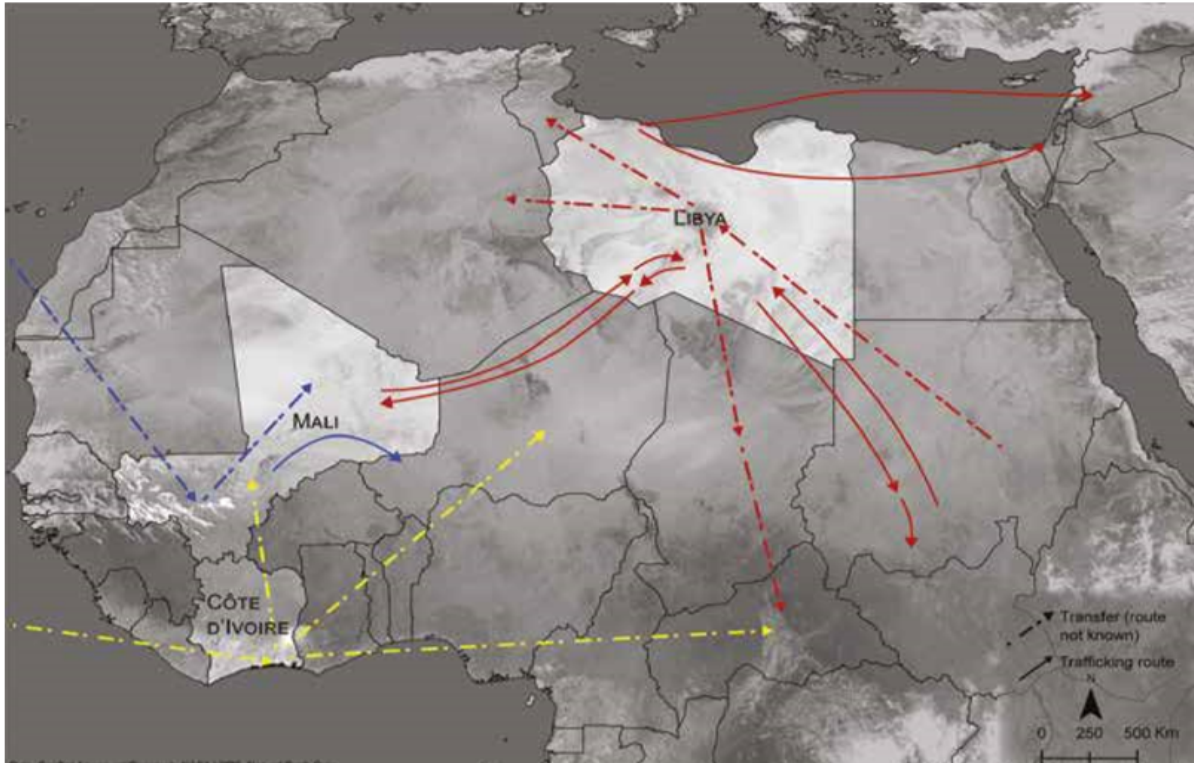
Figure 3. Weapon flows from Libya. Sources: CAR field documentation in the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, and Mali, 2014–15; confidential source, Sudan; confidential source, Côte d'Ivoire; UNSC (2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2016a).

6.2 The Case of Nigeria

Nigeria is by far the most populated country in Africa, with more than 190 million people[159] spread in land area of 910,770 km2. This makes it the densest area in the Sahel too. Nonetheless, still the major obstacle that this country and, incidentally, the whole region faces is its mix of two religions.[160] This in itself should not be a serious problem, but because the relationship between religion and politics is increasingly intertwined in Nigeria, the country has suffered from significant security problems. The fact that the Nigerian population is

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[159] See, "The 10 Most Populated Countries in Africa," World Facts, accessed April 3, 2019, https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-10-most-populated-countries-in-africa.html.

[160] Danoye Laguda, "Religion and politics in a pluralistic society: The Nigerian experience," *Politics and Religion Journal* 2, no. 2 (2008), p., 128.

proportionately divided into two major religious group, namely Muslims and Christians, generates much anxiety although the Nigerian state never adopted any religion as its national religion.[161]

There have been increasing clashes between the Christian and Muslim groups in Nigeria. Their most worrying aspect is that the country's youth is increasingly committing violent acts against each other. For example, in October 2018 a collision between young Muslims and Christians left 55 people dead.[162] Not do religious groups grow hostile; they form gangs of cattle herders and farmers that literally go to battle. Consider, for example, the killing of 71 people in May 2018 "in a village of Kaduna state when the men on motorcycles roared in, opened the fire on its fleeing inhabitants, before setting fire to homes and hacking children to death."[163] Yet, despite this turmoil, terrorism remains the major threat to Nigeria's national security, with the notorious Boko Haram in the center of that threat.

Leaving the disagreements over the origins of Boko Haram, what is most important is that its prime target is the Nigerian government and any other western "crusader" presence in the country or region, as well as civilians. In other words, Boko Haram looks at every one as an enemy, thereby raising the situation to a high security challenge level. In reaction to the stance taken by this terrorist group, what concerns the Nigerian government most is the crackdown against the ongoing military threats it poses.[164] Extreme poverty and corruption are major obstacles for the states of the Sahel to confront terrorism and organized crime in general.

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[161] Ibid, 129.
[162] See, "Nigeria's Kaduna state: 55 dead after row at market," BBC News, October 21, 2018.
[163] Adrian Blomfield, "The bloody cattle conflict pushing Nigeria to the edge of civil war," The Telegraph, June 17, 2018.
[164] Simeon Alozieuwa, "Contending theories on Nigeria's security challenge in the era of Boko Haram insurgency," *Peace and Conflict Review* 7, no. 1 (2012), p., 1.

Poverty and a lack of opportunity in Nigeria – as with all of the Sahel countries – have paved the way for terrorist groups to grow significantly. Boko Haram takes advantage of the existence of large numbers of vulnerable people in Nigeria as well as in neighboring countries. The "sect was widely known to have mobilized its membership from women and children, school drop-outs and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates, most of who tore up their certificates."[165] Incidentally, economic circumstances, access to education as well as job opportunities in the Sahel region are very low relative to the size of the population and the cost of living, in addition to dramatically increasing poverty. As "the number of people living in extreme poverty is becoming concentrated in some of the most unstable and populous parts of Africa, raising the risk of political violence and devastating disease outbreaks,"[166] criminal organization and terrorist groups are increasingly considered as valid options for desperate youth, especially in Nigeria where Boko Haram is mainly located. The scales of recruitments by terrorist groups goes up as poverty and despair absorb people, and eventually the number of attacks rises as well as the numbers of casualties they cause.

There is a clear correlation between the increase in poverty levels and the enlargements of terrorist groups in the Sahel, particularly in and with Nigeria's Boko Haram. "New reports by global development institutions show that human capital spending in Nigeria – the poverty capital of the world after recently overtaking India – is among the worst in the world."[167] The Commitment to Reduce Inequality index ranks Nigeria at the bottom. The extreme deterioration of economic conditions in Nigeria is reflected in the increase in Boko Haram's attack over the

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[165] Ibid, 1.

[166] Betsy McKay, "Extreme Poverty Concentrates in Sub-Saharan Africa," The Wall Street Journal, September 18, 2018.

[167] Yomi Kazeem, "Nigeria is set to stay the word's poverty capital for at least a generation," Quartz Africa, October 12, 2018, accessed April 2, 2019, https://qz.com/africa/1421543/nigerias-poverty-crisis-is-worsening-oxfam-world-bank-data/.

years 2016 and 2017 which resulted in larger numbers of victims not only in Nigeria but also in neighboring countries.

According to BBC, the year 2017 was an especially brutal year. In 2016, the number of attacks by Boko Haram totaled 80 in Nigeria, 26 in Cameroon, 3 in Chad, , and 18, with a combined total of nearly 900. By comparison, in 2017 the number of attacks in Nigeria reached 109 and 32 in Cameroon. Meanwhile, 2 in Chad and 7 in Niger, with a total number of deaths over 950.[168] The ongoing internal conflicts in Nigeria can also be traced and explained through the nature of the social fabric and the inequality that characterize the distribution of the country's economic assets.

Like most others in the region, Nigeria is a tribes-oriented country. The increase in tensions between the social groups is not inherent, however; it is chiefly a result of the unequal distribution of the state's economic wealth and particularly oil.[169] Oil and gas extracted from the Niger Delta region (in southern Nigeria) account for 40% of the Gross Domestic Product.[170] But after two decades of extreme marginalization by the government and oil companies towards the people of the region – particularly after they have been subject to environmental degradation and pollution caused the chemical emissions – armed rebellion broke in rejection to the statue quo.

Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of the terrorist attacks in Nigeria since 2011 were close from the borders of Chad and Niger alike.[171] That is, geographically/environmentally speaking, the terrorist attacks that have been taking place in Nigeria are seen to be in the heart of the Sahel strip. Chad and Niger receive are the most implicated by terrorist groups in Nigeria.

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[168] Mark Wilson, "Nigeria's Boko Haram attack in numbers – as lethal as ever," BBC News, January 25, 2018.

[169] Olakunle Michael Folami, "Ethnic-conflict and its manifestations in the politics of recognition in a multi-ethnic Niger delta region," Cogent Social Sciences, Volume 3,2017.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Kevin Uhrmacher and Mary Beth Sheridan, "The Brutal toll of Boko Haram's attack on Civilians," The Washington Post, April 3, 2016.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

7.1 The G5 Sahel: What Before and What After?

Obviously, the G5 Sahel is not the first initiative to take military action to foster security

in the region. But it is clear also that its size, around 5000 troops, is just too small to make a

significant difference in a vast geographical area of around 5 million square kilometers for the

five states' territories. Comparing its size to earlier military initiatives in the Sahel countries, the

G5 Joint Force is unlikely to be able to repel terrorism and organized crime in the near future.

Instead, the number of terrorist attacks and other organized criminal operations has kept

escalating steadily in some of the Sahel states since 2012, despite the interventions of United

Nations, the EU, France, the United States and other international organizations. Interestingly, all

of the initiatives designed to stabilize the region have proven more capable than the G5 Joint

Force even though they, too, failed to end the security challenges of the region. The table below

compares the G5 Force to major initiatives deployed in the Sahel for the same purpose – security

and development – over the past six years.

Initiative	Personnel Deployed	Location of Deployment	Budget (per year)
EUCAP in Niger	13,200	Niger	$36 million
EUCAP in Mali	6,140	Mali	$38 million
EUTM in Mali	12,580	Mali	$34 million
MINUSMA	15,900	Mali	$1.07 billion
Barkhane Operation	4,500	Sahel (entire region)	$797 million
G5 Sahel Joint Force	5,000	The Sahel 5 Countries	$130 million

Table 4. Comparison of the G5 Force to major initiatives deployed in the Sahel for the same purpose – security and development – over the past six years.

No wonder if the international actors have been quite thrifty with regard to their financial support to the G5 Sahel. These have engaged militants in the region and tackled development issues while mobilizing their own personnel on the field. And yet, they have not achieved major advancements towards defeating extremism, poverty, and underdevelopment. From their perspective, therefore, paying huge amounts of monies to such weak G5 Sahel organization seems futile.

The heavy presence of international troops and personnel in the region has some advantages, but it also has significant consequences. The presence of foreign troops triggers extreme nationalism and ethnocentrism as renewed thoughts of colonialism re-emerge. Eventually, that might generate sympathy with some extremist militants, and facilitate new alliances (as it already did with AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO) as their acts of violence gain additional public legitimacy. Foreign assistance is, of course, needed, but it would be better if it

was only training, funding and equipment. One of the best things about G5 Sahel is that it is an initiative by the people in the region. However, looking back at what changes it has brought, economic achievements have been few and geopolitical gains against terrorism scarce. Insurgents still launch attacks in different parts of the G5 states, and the scale of the attacks and their victims (killed and kidnapped) has increased. The graph bellow, which shows evolution of fatalities since 2009, confirms that the launch of the G5 has not been able to decrease the casualties even if these have not risen significantly either. Furthermore, since the launch of the G5 Joint Force, at least four terrorist organization have emerged including Ansaroul Islam, ISGS and a number of unaffiliated groups. Divisions in the Joint Force stand in the way of coordination in response to the attacks launched by militants. With the G5 coalition lacking coordination, and also short of experience, training, equipment and technology, [172] "the number of reported violent events linked to militant Islamic group activity in the Sahel has been doubling every year since 2016."[173] Below are the totalities of victims killed by militant groups within the G5 Sahel area per year.

- 2016, the number of fatalities reached 90

- 2017, the number of fatalities reached 194

- 2018, the number of fatalities reached 465

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[172] See "Munich Security Conference 2018", held in February 17, 2018, 04:00 pm.

[173] See, "The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamic Groups in the Sahel," The African Center for Strategic Studies, February 15, 2019, accessed April 10, 2019, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/.
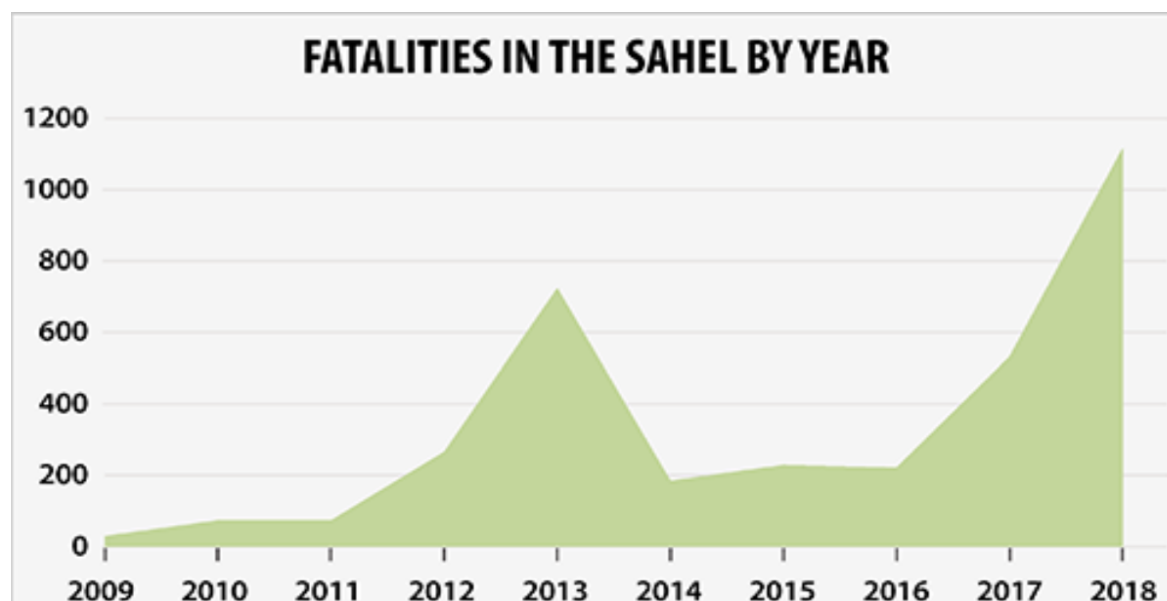
Figure 4. The growing military capability of terrorist groups in the Sahel. Source: "The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamic Groups in the Sahel," The African Center for Strategic Studies, February 15, 2019. Accessed April 10, 2019, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/.

Nonetheless, there are measures that, if taken, will certainly increase the effectiveness of the coalition. First, the number of troops and personnel needs to be boosted. The current level of 5000 cannot do much in such a large geographic area. For a significant increase, Nigeria, the largest military power in the region, is crucial: its military consist of 181,000 troops,[174] which is more than all of the G5 states combined, and Nigeria's contribution would transform the Joint Force and give it legitimacy to tackle one of the major sources of instability in the region, Boko Haram.

Additional contribution from Morocco, the rising power in the region with much influence on North and West Africa, will also bring significant results. And so would support

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[174] See, "Nigeria: Global Military Strength – Nigeria Ranked 43," All Africa, September 3, 2018, accessed April 10, 2019, https://allafrica.com/stories/201809030146.html.

from Algeria whose southern desert is a safe haven for Tuareg rebels and some Islamic militants including AQIM.

As more is done by the Sahel countries and their neighbors, less military presence will be needed from the EU, France, and the US. This may sound quite unrealistic as it would leave an incredibly vast area open to militants and terrorist groups, but that need not be the case if the process is carried out gradually, replacing foreign fighters with local ones and keeping foreign experts and trainers while forming local ones. Along with this, international actors should also provide equipment and technology, because most of current coordination and response to crisis problems come from poor technology and equipment, as Rwanda president, Paul Kagame, stated in the 2018 Munich Security Conference.

A failed Libya will not be able to do much to the coalition. Instead, the Libyan quagmire has been tempting for criminal organizations to smuggle people and drug. A total shutdown against the Libyan borders is a best solution to eliminating ECOWAS should take measures to curb the free flow of labor. The fact that ECOWAS allows for free movement of labor throughout the region facilitates human trafficking which is highly highly related the influx of migrants pouring from West Africa in the Sahel and then to the quagmire of Libya then to bottom of the Mediterranean or Europe.

As to the United States, it will surely benefit from a long-term pivot to the Sahel. Indeed, the United States should consider the idea of 'mini Marshal Plan-like' towards West Africa not only for its own direct interests but also because if the US is absent, China, Russia and India will move into the area. Lastly, Morocco and Algeria should break the psychosociological barrier that makes these two countries see themselves as not being a part of the region. Their inclusion, along with Niger, will give the new G8 Sahel/Sahara a huge potential to eradicate political violence

and make it difficult for extremism to spread in the region and, surely, give the Sahel a better chance to stabilize the region to the benefit of all.

As discussed above, fostering Sahel security requires the economic and military contribution of Morocco and Algeria from north and that of Nigeria from south. Although the sooner two countries have their own records of economic and military failures – in terms of alliance building – brought by the failure and decline in the economic relations between the Middle East and North Africa based on the Regional Trade Agreement of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA),[175] This failure has left a large gap economic that the EU and the US can take advantage of for both their advantage and that of the Sahara/Sahel countries. Furthermore, the fact that West Africa an oil-rich region makes enhancing its security into a necessity for global energy security.[176] More economic investments in the Sahel will benefit the region and reduce poverty as well as have the investing entities be more cooperative to deal with security issues with the respective country to protect their own assets in that country.

The economic and military strength of Morocco, Algeria and Nigeria reflect to what extent these countries can contribute to improving Sahel's economic and security situation particularly with the likelihood of endorsement from the EU and the UN. The positions of Algeria and Morocco among the region's states make them indispensable for the benefit of the Sahel should they take part in its security measures. Algeria's population is more that 40 million with a military power of 280,000 troops of with 130,000 are active personnel.[177] Its geographic size, which provide extremist groups with much land as a safe haven, is about 2.4 million km2. Morocco also will have the potential to make a great contribution with its military power ranking

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[175] Allen Dennis, "*The impact of regional trade agreements and trade facilitation in the Middle East and North Africa region*," The World Bank, 2006.
[176] Raphael Sam and Doug Stokes, p., 903-902.
[177] See, GFP Algeria Military Strength 2019, accessed May 25, 2019
https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=algeria

third in Africa after Egypt and Nigeria. The size of its military is 373,000 troops a 175,000 of which are active personnel.[178] As far as economy is concerned, Algeria and Morocco are faring better than all G5 Sahel countries combined. Morocco's annual GDP is about $110 billion, and that of Algeria is more than $170 billion.[179] With this potential, these two countries can be crucial donner states. But, to bring the pieces of the mechanism together by creating a much stronger sense of cooperation between the states of the Sahel and West North Africa will require endorsement and support from strong actors such as the US, the EU and the UN. Although this will regenerate a sense of new colonialism.

The colonial heritage, and the conspiracy theory aspect of new colonialism that is built over the narrative that developed countries are luting the resources of the undeveloped world, hinders the process of cooperation between the Sahel countries and the external powers. Even if the governments of the Sahel states do not blame the struggles of the region on the colonial heritage, the elites and the influential political parties throughout the five countries do hold the colonial heritage chiefly accountable. It is believed that "African modes of thought, patterns of cultural development, and ways of life were forever impacted by the change in political structure brought by colonialism."[180] Africa, especially its west and north parts, where not isolated from the rest of the world economically.[181] Prior to the arrival of the colonial powers, empires such as those of Ghana and Mali had a significant economic weight globally supplying Europe with row materials and manpower. This historical narrative that portrays West and North Africa as an equal partner with the rest of the regions of the world in the past, and the current difficulties

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[178] See, world news, "Morocco," 2018, accessed May 22, 2019 at: https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2018/10/254980/gfp-ranks-morocco-55th-in-2018-military-strength/
[179] See, Trade and Economics "Algeria GPD 2019," accessed May 22, 2019 at: https://tradingeconomics.com/algeria/gdp
[180] Settles, Joshua Dwayne. "The impact of colonialism on African economic development." (1996).
[181] Ibid, 1.

West Africa experiences are mainly caused by the exploitations exerted by external powers. Viewing western companies and troops in West African countries invites images of colonialism and further ignites the sense of new colonialism both in jihadists and the elites opposing such presence. That said, the Sahel has an irreversible historical issue with foreign actors which greatly impinges on the efficacy of any external assistance. Nonetheless, it should not be an obstacle that prevents further security and development efforts.

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https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/west-africa-europe-trade-agree-2014621155835409177.html.

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APPENDIX

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<sas@smallarmssurvey.org>

Dear Beder (if I may),

Many thanks for your e-mail! We'd be happy for you to use this map (am I correct that it's the map from this Briefing Paper? If so, just noting that its title is '*Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger*'--not 'arms trade' :)). We just ask that you cite the Small Arms Survey as the source, so:

'Map 1 Main flows of illicit weapons to and through Niger'. de Tessières, Savannah. 2017. Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Niger. Briefing Paper. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. March. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP1-Niger.pdf>

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Kind regards,
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Hello madam/sir
My name is Beder and I'm a student in International Relations at Old Dominion University in Virginia, USA. I would like if you allow me to use a map that you have on your work "Measuring Illicit Arms Trade: Niger" to support a case in my thesis project. Thank you in advance.

Best regards,
Beder El Khou

--
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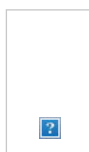
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VITA

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Beder Dine El Khou has completed an MA in International Relations in 2019 at Old Dominion University. His final project is a research discussing the G5 Sahel Coalition potentials. Now, he's starting a PhD program at the same school with a concentration on Transnationalism, Interdependence and Power.