



G5 - CHALLENGES OF TERRORISM IN G5 SAHEL POTENTIAL RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The reality grounded in disintegrating and dismantling Daesh solid organization structure, while increasingly becoming dwarfed into few yet scattered groups catapulted by fragmentation impact into close confinement sent a powerfully compelling message of the ability to roundly defeat terrorism and eliminate affiliated groups that hold onto vast territory. With such positive messages resonating all over the globe, however, certain areas have expressed higher levels of fears and anxieties about the fragmentation and disintegration of such organizations in that they have snowballed into a terrible threat to their national and regional security. The G5 Sahel has experienced the same line of concern; as the consequential events have led up to the infiltration of elements of such organizations into this vulnerable territory, especially due to the problematic border control and associated surveillance operations.

In addition to the risk factor of infiltrating, slipping and sneaking into areas in the immediate vicinity, the greatest threat to the countries of the region is triggered by the existence of multiple and overlapping organizations, which increased the risk of reintegration. While some terrorist organizations have made successful attempts in infiltrating countries and societies, and have been able to recruit and undermine their security and stability, the bitter reality is that new approaches must be sought to confront and eradicate such boomerang organizations.

This report reveals the underlying reality of terrorism in the G5 Sahel. It also narrates the experience of the G5 Sahel in countering terrorism through common policies and tangible efforts aimed at reducing its existing and potential risks while mitigating its devastating effects at all levels.

Terrorist Organizations in the G5 Sahel

The G5 Sahel is one of the most important regions experiencing the increasingly

growing threat of terrorism and organized crime over the first decade of the current century. The peacefulness in the G5 Sahel has undergone a spate of more conflicts triggered by a plague of multiple extremist groups. Increasingly, the number jumped beyond 64 active terrorist organizations in Africa. Strikingly enough, such organizations are glaringly mushrooming, while holding fast to retain their identity, steering clear of being stuck into a vortex of major transnational organizations, such as Daesh and Al-Qaeda. Here is a brief profile of each of the selected key terrorist organizations across the region.

1. Africa Daesh

The state of West Africa was born following the pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made by Abi Bakr Shikaw, leader of Boko Haram, in March 2015. It lasted no more than one year; in August 2016, Daesh dismissed Abu Bakr Shikaw and appointed instead Abu Musab al-Barnawi, who was the Official Spokesman and son of the founder of the Movement Muhammad Yusuf. As a result of Shikaw's rejection of such a decision and his adherence to Boko Haram, the branch then bifurcated into two parts: one headed by Barnawi with about 3,500 fighters, and one led by Shikaw with about 1,000 fighters.

The disintegration or fragmentation grew further worse over the last three years. Shikaw has been relocated in central and southern Borno State (eastern Nigeria), including the Sambisa Forest, which is the historical stronghold of the Movement. Barnawi's supporters extended their activity north of Borno State in the Lake Chad Basin.

In March 2019, disputes further deepened following the ouster of Abu Musab al-Barnawi two years after he took over the leadership. He was succeeded by Abu Abdullah Omar al-Barnawi. Observers attributed such a measure to accusing him of being too moderate, especially as he focused his attacks on military sites; unlike Boko Haram that draws no line between civilian or military targets while carrying out attacks and does cut areas any slack whatsoever.

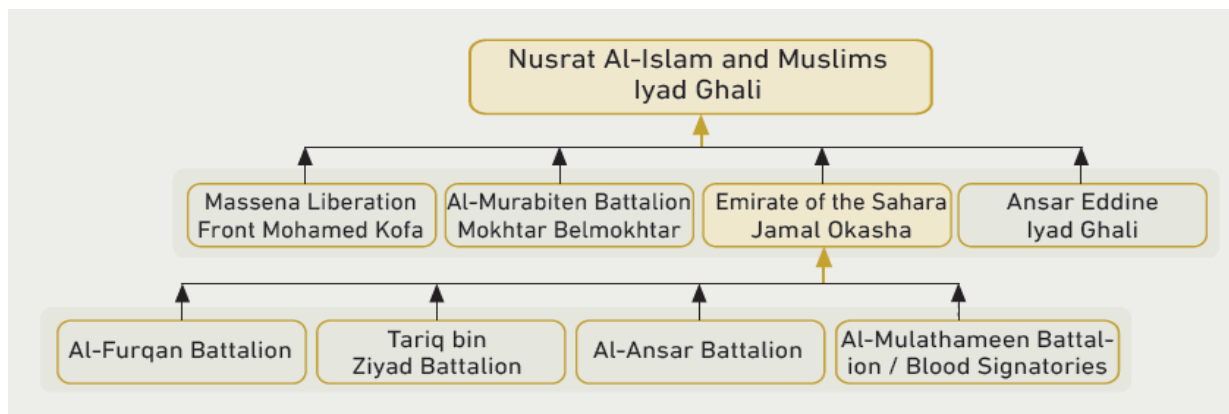
The Sahara branch (the Islamic State in the Sahara) emerged following the pledge of allegiance to Daesh Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made by Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi, the official spokesperson of the Tawhid and Jihad Movement in West Africa, and Member of the Al-Murabiten Affiliate of Al-Qaeda. The foregoing allegiance per se brought about the dismissal of Sahrawi and his supporters from the Organization (Al-Murabiten). This branch is limited and confined to the border triangle between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, most of its activities focus on targeting border police stations. The most notorious attempt that bungled risibly was the helpless efforts to storm a prison in Niamey, capital of Nigeria, in mid-October 2016.

2. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Countries

The branch of the organization is associated with the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which in 2006 officially declared its affiliation with Al-Qaeda. It then was renamed (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Countries) and is led by Abdelmalek Droudkal, also known as Abu Musab Abdel-Wadoud. Leader Mokhtar Belmokhtar took over the supervisory responsibilities for the Group in the Sahara, bordering Mali and Niger, before defecting. The Branch is the primary source of logistical support for terrorist groups operating in West Africa.

3. Support for Islam and Muslims Group

In March 2017, four extremist groups operating in the G5 Sahel announced they merged into one organizational entity, nicknamed Nusrat Al-Islam and Muslimeen, led by Iyad Ghali. The Group seeks to establish itself as a dominant actor in the face of the growing influence of the Islamic State (Daesh) and strengthen its capacity to counter government efforts in the G5 Sahel.



Nusrat Al-Islam and Muslims announced the pledge of allegiance to Al-Qaeda Leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab Al-Wadud, Emir of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Countries, and Hibatullah Akhundzadeh, prince of Taliban.

G5 Sahel

Given the fact of the increase in terrorist activity and the critically enormous threat that has become a bitter reality today, the will of five countries has come together closer to establish G5 Sahel in 2014, which created a joint force of 5,000 troops the following year to be deployed in three border areas between Mauritania and Mali in the west, and in the joint border areas between Niger and Chad in the east, and between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso in the central region. The foregoing joint forces aim to combat and counter attacks by extremist militants on Mali and the neighboring countries in the immediate vicinity and to further pursue their perpetrators across the border.

Each of the G5 Sahel countries committed to 10,000,000 euros. Driven by such efforts, the success still requires considerable international support and more concerted efforts.

UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, warned that the joint forces of the G5 Sahel would not be able to stop the spread of terrorism in West Africa, and that a more resolute collective response is critically needed and that the international community should work out methods to fully support the G5 Sahel. Mr. Guterres regretted that he had not been able to meet the request of the G5 Sahel (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad) to include their joint forces under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

At the recent African Summit in Niger, the host country called on the participating countries to adopt the idea of forming an international coalition to fight the Boko Haram Group in Africa, which can be very much similar to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. However, the conclusions and recommendations at the Summit were less than expected.

International Support to the Community of G5 Sahel

The international community has provided support to the G5 Sahel, with the EU making a contribution of 100, 000,000 euros to the military force, and 8,000,000,000 euros to support the development of the G5 Sahel between 2014 and 2020. A summit was held in Brussels in 2018 with 60 international delegations, including 25 heads of state and government, to further push for political and military support for the G5 Sahel force, and the necessary funds for its launch, initially estimated at 250, 00,000 euros, then at least 60, 000,000 euros a year.

Of great note, the Saudi support is the most generous for financing the war on terror in the G5 Sahel. The Kingdom has donated € 200,000,000 in two installments.

The US support is mostly evident in intelligence and logistical support, and security coordination for the African-led Multinational Joint Task Force, made up of Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Benin and Cameroon, all countering and combating Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin.

France played the most prominent and vital role on the battlefield; France intervened militarily in Mali in 2012. Then a military operation followed in the region known as BARKHAN. However, it could not counter entirely terrorism alone, and rushed to the

initiative to form a joint military force of the armies of the G5 Sahel Member Countries. To this end, it held Paris Summit in December 2017.

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Obstacles to G5 Sahel Forces

Two of the most significant obstacles to addressing the threat of terrorism in the region are: funding and concerns associated with troops, while other reasons may be deemed less influential.

1. Financing

The five countries participating in the force do not have the financial potential to complete the necessary funding; a reality which traps them into a spate of serious challenges affecting their future. Therefore, many countries provided generous funding, led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with 200,000,000 euros; followed by the European Union 10,000,000; the United States 60, 000,000; France 58000,000; the UAE 30,000,000 in addition to other countries.

2. Obsessions

Regional and international reservations have arisen regarding this military force, and were mostly manifested through the following:

(A) Preventing the US veto at the UN Security Council level. Washington has made a strong reservation on it and has rejected a request by the Secretary-General of the G5 Sahel to the Security Council to grant power to the necessary logistics.

(B) Algeria viewed this force with suspicion; French and American security and military activity in the region is a threat to its interests and influence.

(C) The reluctance of the countries of the region to take the initiative, and some of them expressed disinterest in the formation of force because of the reluctance of the West to provide financial support to counter terrorism.

(D) Not taking into account successful counter-terrorism experiments in the region, such as the Mauritanian army's battles with terrorists through the Special Intervention Forces, which include between 200 and 300 soldiers deployed in small units carrying out long-term missions in the vast desert across Mauritania-Mali broder.

Consequences of Confrontation

The failure of regional security in countering the increasingly growing terrorism has become glaringly evident; likewise, it was obvious in the call made by Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou to create an international coalition to eliminate terrorist groups.

This has been also referred to by a UN and international official. In addition to the stalemate or sluggishness in the confrontation, the terrorist organizations have become the fastest movement towards the merger or large federations (the Federation of Terrorism) to unite their efforts and coordinate their operations across the countries of the region.

It is noteworthy that signs of coordination between Daesh and Al-Qaeda have emerged in the African section, as opposed to the existing hostility between Daesh and Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

The fact that Daesh elements infiltrated and migrated to the region has led to increased interest in the region and increased terrorist activity. The G5 Sahel force is a model for a regional system that aims and seeks to address a major challenge, facing regional intersections, international tensions, and logistical and financing difficulties. To this end, it is necessary to create an international environment and realize consensus on its mandate and work according to acceptable input, including: finding regional support for the operations of the G5 Sahel forces in coordination with the neighboring countries and understanding their security concerns and interests. This also include cooperation and consensus with major countries concerned in the region to ensure that no conflicts of interest and disruption of business shall be observed. The mandate and objectives include providing the international and legal umbrella to the G5 Sahel force, and its actions locally and globally. In addition, securing the necessary resources and funds through international coordination is also vital to the action. Equally important, this includes respect for the sovereignty of States and ensuring that they are partners in planning and implementation, not just a subsidiary or executive body. It is critically important to prioritize the need for the States of the region to launch operations to reaffirm its sovereignty and its important role in countering terrorism, as well as provoking hostile feelings in the event of blatant interference by a foreign state in the matter directly and crudely.

It is critically noteworthy to underscore the fact that the military solution is not the only effective treatment to eliminate terrorist organizations and eradicate terrorism, but should be accompanied by political reform and economic development, or national reconciliation to remove the reasons leading up to emergence or growth in the community.

Foreign direct intervention in general exacerbates the problem, deepens the conflict, and raises national sensitivities to the deposits of old colonialism. Therefore, local or regional forces from the G5 Sahel should be relied upon and placed at the forefront of operations, after logistical and training support is provided. It is very important carrying out any military operations to be short-term, simply because the length of time of

military operations along with the ineffectiveness of the methods of fighting terrorism is not reflected in grassroots support, which may lead up to the transformation of these organizations. It is also important to exploit Daesh infiltration into the region by splitting terrorist organizations, increasing their fragmentation, and creating a state of infighting among themselves, with a view to seek power and control exclusively, and the conflict within Boko Haram is typically a case in point.