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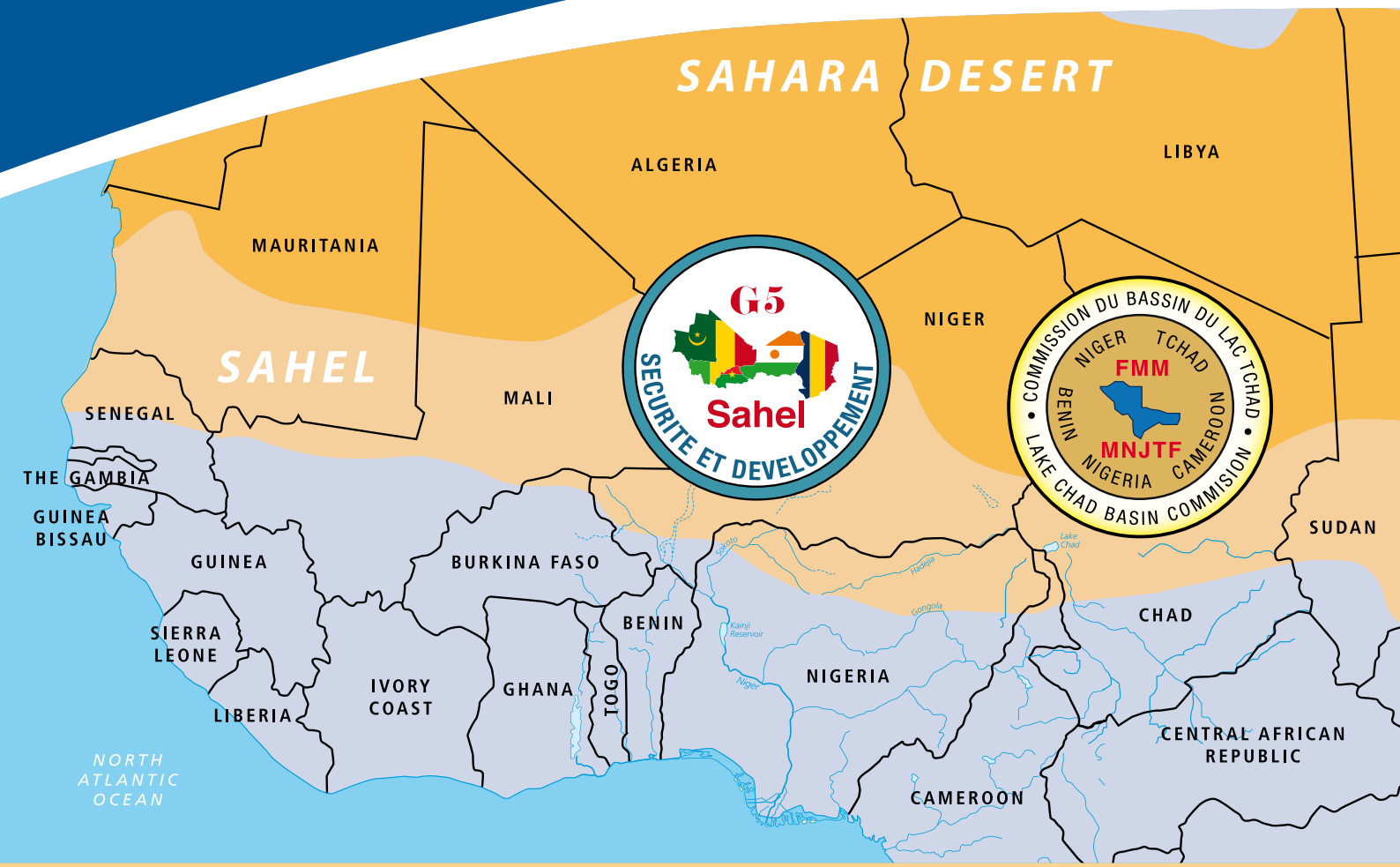
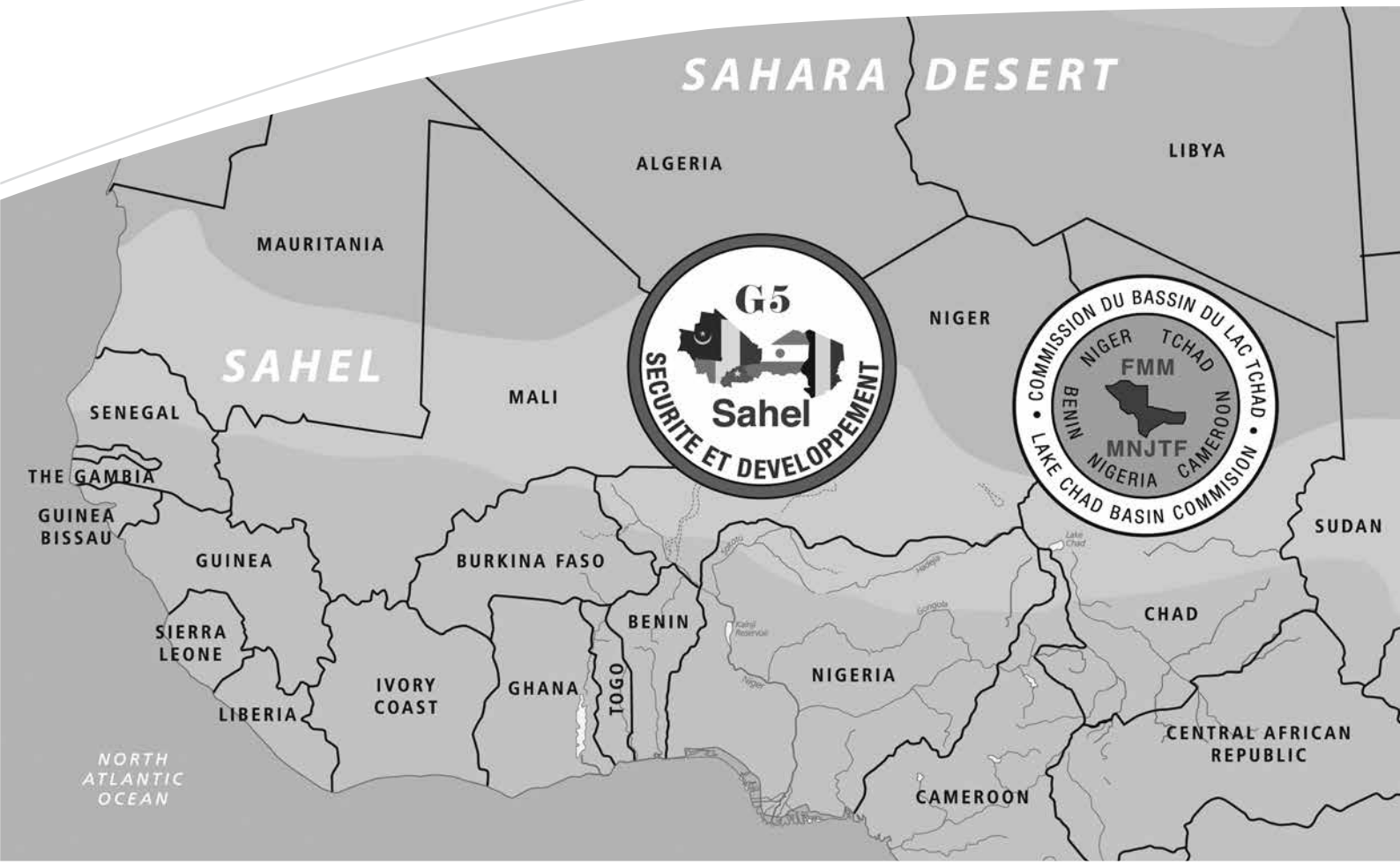


Olawale (Wale) Ismail and Alagaw Ababu Kifle

New Collective Security Arrangements in the Sahel: a comparative study of the MNJTF and G-5 Sahel

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

NEW APPROACHES TO COLLECTIVE SECURITY



Olawale (Wale) Ismail and Alagaw Ababu Kifle

New Collective Security Arrangements in the Sahel: a comparative study of the MNJTF and G-5 Sahel

About the authors

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CONTENTS

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This publication is the product of rigorous scientific research carried out by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security Centre of Competence Sub-Saharan Africa (FES PSCC), on cyclical political and economic interactions between organized crime and terrorist groups in the Sahel. Its aim is to propose new approaches and responses with regard to collective security.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACSRT	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism
ASF	African Stand-by Force
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AQIM	Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drug and Crime
MUJAO	Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
SGPC	Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat
GFAT	Burkina Faso's Counter-Terrorism Task Force
CEMOC	The Joint Military Staff Committee
UFL	Fusion and Liaison Union
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahelo-Saharan States
CISSA	Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa
MISAHEL	African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel
NARC	North African Regional Capacity
UN	United Nations
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
OSES	Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Sahel region
MINUSMA	United Nations Integrated Multi-dimensional Mission for Stabilization in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
EU	European Union
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
HCUA	High Council for the Unity of Azawad
MAA	Arab Movement of Azawad
CMFAPR	Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
TCC	Troop Contributing Countries

SUMMARY

This paper is an analysis of the security challenges in the Sahel in their structural context. It reflects on the various security regimes and collective security arrangements by a variety of Sahelian and extra-Sahelian actors over time, in particular a comparison of the recent experiments by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G-5 Sahel. Broadly speaking, it argues that the Sahel epitomizes a confluence of local, national and international security challenges and their individual and collective dynamics that continue to shape the security trajectories of the region. Importantly, the solution to the security challenges in the Sahel lies in the Sahel as indicated by identifiable lessons of what works or is likely to work in regional security cooperation experiments from the MNJTF. Of course, the MNJTF is not without its limitations and internal challenges. It highlights key lessons that the G-5 Sahel force could draw from the MNJTF experiment to include the role and need for regional leadership, especially by a 'nodal' state in the mould of Nigeria in the MNJTF. Other lessons are the need to embed a civilian and non-state component given the asymmetrical nature of insecurity in the Sahel; the urgency of adapting to regional sensitivities in terms of strategy and operations; incremental approaches that prioritizes targets; and clear sense and perception of regional ownership, as opposed to the security interests and agenda of foreign powers.

The possibility of the G-5 Sahel replicating some of the modest operational gains of the MNJTF will depend on the ability of G-5 Sahel to navigate a number of challenges, including the capacity to generate a fairly robust military and security forces with sufficient force enablers; ability to track the rapidly changing dynamic in the Sahel, especially the ever-changing configuration of armed groups; the extent to which it engages with local population and communities, especially in border regions; and the integration of military-security operations into a wider strategy that address structural issues such as climate change, poverty, governance problems, and corruption.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sahel connects countries of the Sahara and those of Sub-Saharan Africa, two regions that are very different in their natural environment and social composition. The Sahel encompasses Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and parts of Libya and Algeria. At a level, the Sahel can be disaggregated into Upper (comprising parts of Algeria, Mauritania, Libya, and Niger) and Lower (Chad, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Cameroon) Sahel. It can also be viewed as comprising of Eastern Sahel (made up of Sudan and countries in the Lake Chad Basin area, namely, Chad, Nigeria, and Cameroon); Western Sahel (comprising Mauritania, Algeria, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire); and Central Sahel (comprising Mali, Niger and Libya). In political-diplomatic parlance, the Sahel transcends countries sharing geographical connections to also include states directly affected by the ebb and flow of security threats and challenges in the Sahel. This underscores the inclusion of countries such as Cameroon and Cote d'Ivoire in the description of the Sahel. This classification is essential to understanding the evolution, changes and continuities in the security dynamic of the Sahel over time.

Incontrovertibly, the Sahel has been the epicentre of layered and interconnected security challenges that need to be understood in their complexity (Strauss, 2011). The Sahel epitomizes a confluence of local, national and international security challenges and their individual and collective dynamics that continue to shape the security trajectories of the region. Some of the known security challenges in the Sahel include organized crime, drug smuggling, and terrorism, and underlying structural conditions such as climate change and economic vulnerabilities, and governance failure in responding to the needs of citizens. A compressive analysis of security threats at each level requires empirical substantiation that is beyond the remit of this paper. What is attempted here is the analysis and situation of security challenges in the Sahel in their structural context. More importantly, this paper reflects on the various security regimes and collective security arrangements by a variety of Sahelian and extra-Sahelian actors over time, in particular a comparison of the recent experiments by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G-5 Sahel. It argues that the solution to the Sahel lies in the Sahel as indicated by identifiable lessons of what works or is likely to work in regional security cooperation experiments from the MNJTF.

II. THE CONTEXT OF THE SAHEL

The Sahel`s already arid and extreme climate has been challenged by the climatic trend unfolding in the last three decades. A consistent trend in this regard has been a rise in temperature, recurrence of drought, flooding and extreme rainfall variation (Crawford, 2015). By one account mean seasonal temperature in the region has increased by about 1 degree cent grade since the 1970s which is twice the global increase and that drought has become a recurrent feature of the region occurring in 2005, 2010, and 2012 (Ibid.). A large part of Niger, Mali, Chad and Mauritania has faced between six and ten drought seasons in the period between 1982-2009 while in some areas it even increased in the range of 11 and 15. Top soil erosion combined with temperature rise, flooding and variability in rainfall result in a decline in yield in agricultural products, reduction of pasturelands and the drying up of important water bodies (INSCT, 2014; UNEP, 2011). These factors in turn increase competition and conflict to access these resources among communities who have limited alternative means of livelihoods (Strauss, 2011; UNEP, 2011). Due to climatic factors Pastoralist increasingly move to southward especially during dry seasons while farmer sought to cultivate pastoralist pathways and further encroached to the North. This has remained a source of conflict between pastoralist and farmer as well as within each group, which, at times, acquire ethnic dimensions. What is worrying is the lack of adaptive and responsive capacity on the part of the states of the region while communities lack the capacity to resist such changes (Crawford, 2015).

One apparent societal response to such changes has been migration where many Sahelians, mainly those of Tuareg origin, migrated to Libya (Robin-Edward Poulton and Ibrahim Ag Youssouf, 1998; UNEP, 2011). While those with financial resource migrate to Libya, others were forced to migrate to urban areas increasing the proportion of urban population living in a slum like situation. In recent years, the Sahel has become a major migration route to Europe (crossing the Mediterranean Sea through Libya and Morocco) for migrants from other Sahelian states, especially from Sub-Saharan African countries such as Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, etc. Since the fall of the Gaddafi government in 2011, Libya's lack of effective central authority has made it attractive for a number of organized criminal networks involved in human trafficking which has also been accompanied with an increase in the number of missing persons. In 2016, according to the Missing Migrants project, the number of deaths and missing persons from the multitude seeking to cross into Europe through North Africa, especially Libya, topped 5,098. This represents about 35% increase over 2015 levels, and 40% over 2014 fatalities (Munich Security Conference, 2017; Aljazeera, 23 December 2016).

Other Sahelian communities have attempted to adapt to changes in climatic conditions and other environmental challenges by diversifying their lifestyles and occupations, especially through the adoption of agro-pastoralism. This has led to new inter-communal conflicts or accentuated existing ones. In their attempt to diversify their means of livelihood the peasants of Niger, for instance, expanded north ward cultivating areas used as transit route for pastoralists. The latter`s trespassing of cultivated land in turn become a source of inter-communal conflicts. The convergence of livelihood options has also challenged the norms of natural resource management that was previous applicable either for pastoralist or farmers. Resentment over those who have better social and

finical capital access to better quality land, for instance has become a source of conflict in Niger while previous conflict over access to and control over land pastoralist passage seems to be further exacerbated (USAID, nd). A similar process is observable across the Sahel including Mali and Burkina Faso. While the wider national and regional security implication of this will become apparent as the discussion proceeds, the immediate local level insecurity outcome has been increasing communal competition and conflict for the control of and/or access to these resources.

Second and related to the above, the dynamics of security threats in the Sahel has also been largely shaped by the geography of the region. The region has a large expanse of sparsely populated areas that render border control extremely difficult. Mali for instance, has a land mass of 1,240,192 square kilometres and is bordered by seven countries, including with Algeria (1,359 km), Burkina Faso (1,325 km), Cote d'Ivoire (599 km), Guinea (1,062 km), Mauritania (2,236 km), Niger (838 km) and Senegal (489 km) (https://www.graphicmaps.com/mali). The huge landmass and borders makes it is difficult for the Malian state to monitor and control events in its border regions, especially in the North (Mauritania, Algeria and Niger) (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2013). While the dessert makes population control challenging, its mountain chains, caves and valleys that crossed to Niger and Algeria render the fight against any armed group surmounting.

Third, an inseparable part in the discussion of the evolution of security threats in the Sahel is, the contested governance realm of Sahelian countries. The governance practice of these countries remain problematic, specifically the failure to provide social services for citizens, poor economy, failure to maintain law and order, etc. Others include the lack of effective diversity management, including the failure to develop a perception of equal treatment among the various groups of within the state. Each of the states of the Sahel has been affected by a host of governance problematics in terms of accommodating discontented ethno-linguistic groups. Mali in particular has been at the epicentre of these challenges. Throughout its post-independence history, the country has been confronted with the Tuareg ethno-nationalist demand for greater autonomy and greater economic and political engagement leading to at least four episodes of armed rebellion, for example, in 1963-1964, 1990-1996, 2006-2009, and 2012-2013.

These episodes of rebellion have been driven by the perceived and actual marginalization of Northern Mali and the Tuareg community, the recurring drought that endangered the livelihood of many of the community in the Sahel, the repressive responses of the government, and regional dynamics related to the Tuareg connection with Libya (Straus, 2011). While a number of measures to integrate armed movements in the national security apparatus, grant greater autonomy for northern Mali, and improve the economy of Northern Mali have been initiated in each round of peace agreements, the implementation of these agreements has always been below the expectation of the Tuareg community leading to other rounds of rebellion. Hence, many of the deeper drivers of these rebellions remain more or less intact while new factors emerge as manifested in the 2012 Tuareg rebellion alongside the rise of violent extremist movements.

The crisis in Libya and the influx of a large number of Tuareg better armed with weapons and the operation of more disciplined and better organized Islamist movements has been

added factor. The successive peace agreements have not also been helped by the internal division within the Tuareg community, especially along status and clan, and this has precluded any cohesive stance vis-a vis the Malian state (Pezard and Michael, 2015). The drought of the 1970s and 1980s weakened the social fabric of Tuareg communities and forced young Tuaregs to emigrate to other countries mainly Libya. This younger generation called Ishumar, a French word translated to the unemployed, has a different vision of Tuareg communities compared with those held by older generations and traditional leaders. Similarly, the Tuareg society`s division into clan and status ushered in the factionalization of armed movements in the course of brokering a peace agreement (Ibid.).

With its own significant Tuareg population, Niger was also affected by Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s, though the response of the government and the spatial distribution of the Tuareg in Niger are different from that of Mali. While Tuareg grievances over the environmental effects of Uranium exploration and generalized state of marginalization from the national political and economic process has been deep rooted, it has not manifested into a level of rebellion as serious and repeated as in Mali. In the 1990s the discontented Tuareg rebellion in Niger was ended through a peace agreement that envisioned greater participation and involvement of the community in the national political process. The poor implementation of this agreement especially the failure to integrate former combatants in a background of growing discontent over slow economic growth, trafficking networks led to the emergence of an armed movement called MNJ that sought to capitalize on the Tuareg cause (International Crisis Group, 2013). However, the strong military response of the government combined with the de-legitimization of the movement on the ground (linked to claims that some of MNJ top leaders were involved in drug trafficking) helped the regime to easily diffuse the rebellion (Ibid.).

The different trajectory of Mali and Niger in their relation with the Tuareg community is reflected in the way they are affected by the Libyan crisis where a significant number of Tuareg of Mali and Niger origin with military experience returned to their respective countries. Niger adopted a strategy that combined border control with attractive rewards for the leaders of the returnee groups and thus prevented the outbreak of armed conflict. Conversely in Mali, the situation degenerated into an armed conflict. The success of the Nigerien measures was also helped by the geographic dispersion of the Tuareg community in Niger, as opposed to Mali where they are concentrated in the Northern area. This seemed to limit the opportunity for collective ethno-national mobilization, even if significant disparity in the representation of the Tuareg in areas such as health and education is prevalent in Niger (Ibid.). The experiences of young Tuaregs in Niger over the past decade led to their migration into and membership of armed Tuareg groups in Northern Mali (Ibid.).

Mauritania has also been a country besieged by factionalism within the military, social and racial division and economic downturns. Its Arabic population has been the dominant force in the country's history while the light skinned Hirtan group and Afro-Mauritanian (those of Africa origin) have been excluded from the political process and also systematically marginalized from state institutions and some of the Afro-Mauritanians were expelled from the country by the previous Junta (Boukhars, 2016). While there has been a move to reduce such imbalance, the pace of reform is such that political

trends and questions in the country are increasingly radicalized. Nothing shows this more explicit than the protest that followed when an anti-slavery activist burned a section of the Muslim religious law that condoned the oppressive social order and when the court meted the death penalty for a certain journalist who wrote against the oppressive elements of some of the Islamic laws (Ibid). Hence, contestations in the governance processes of these countries have been an essential ingredient in the evolution of security threats, often as sources of conflict in and of themselves and also render the countries vulnerable to externally-induced threats such as terrorism, organized crime and drug smuggling.

III. CONTEMPORARY SECURITY THREATS IN THE SAHEL

Drug Smuggling and Organized Crime

There seems to be a consensus that drug smuggling has become a Sahelian security issue since roughly the mid-2000s when the cocaine trade of Latin America targeted West Africa as a transit route to Europe. Prior to this, the Sahel was a smuggling route for illicit products ranging from cigarette, petrol, powdered milk, dates, and drugs such as hashish and cannabis (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2013). In this context, subsidized products in Algeria such as powdered milk and petrol were taken to Mali and Niger, and products such as cigarette was smuggled into Algeria and Europe. Cigarette specifically was imported through Mauritania and smuggled into the Algerian and Moroccan market through Mali and Niger (Rao, 2014). The illicit smuggling trade expanded considerably since the 1980s and crystallized into the emergence of organized smuggling gang and syndicates operating across the Sahel, especially between Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria. These gangs were tasked with merchandizing Cigarette from Mauritania, Mali, and Niger to Algeria which maintained intact the network that would easily be utilized for other purposes. One of the key agents of AQIM, Mokthar Belmokthar, for instance, used to run cigarette smuggling racket (Lacher, 2012).

While the security implication of this might be disputed, the introduction of cocaine smuggling in the Sahel aggravated the security implication of the trade. The Sahel was incorporated into the narco-trade conundrum of Latin American gangs; the Sahelian route include the arrival of narcotic consignments into West Africa

through Guinea Bissau from where they are moved through the borderlands of Mali and Mauritania to enter into Northern Mali (Titi, 2014). From Northern Mali part, illicit drugs are moved to Niger and all the way to Egypt and the Middle East or through Algeria and into Europe (Ibid.). In the process key hubs developed along the route; in Mali, for instance, the narco-smuggling hubs include Bou Djebeha, Lere, and Ber, in the region of Timbuktu; Menaka, Tarkint, Almoustrat, and Bourem in the region of Gao; and Anefis, In Khalil, Tinzaouaten, Aguelhoc, Tessalit, Talahandak, Boghassa, Intadjedit and Tin-Essako in the region of Kidal (Ibid.). While the exact time when these pre-existing networks were adapted for smuggling cocaine is difficult to pinpoint, most observers trace the issue to mid-2000s. Vigh (2012), for instance, did not find any document mentioning cocaine smuggling between 2000 and 2004 while between 2005 and 2010 he was able to locate 223 reports, article and bulletins focusing on the issue in the region. Similarly, interviews from local community in Mali indicate that they became aware of the issue in the period 2006-2007 when the local real estate sector changed as a result of the inflow of drug money (Cold-Ravnkilde, 2012).

The UN Office for Drug and Crime indicate that in 2008 approximately 14% of Cocaine consumed in Europe (20 tonnes) amounting to U$1 billion passed through West Africa, and the 2010 figure is put at 18 tonnes corresponding to the monetary value of US$1.25 billion. This is far higher than Mali`s defence budget of 180 million dollars in the same period. This shows the depth of the smuggling network or at least its deeper and wider ramification in a region known for its poverty and mal-governance. Hence, though only a small portion of the cocaine passing through West Africa enters the Sahel, the effect on the local society and the security dynamics therein might be substantial. While there seems to be a reduction of the smuggling process in countries such as Mauritania (there has been significant decline in annual seizure since 2008) through the active pursuit of policy that fight trafficking, in Mali the smuggling seems to have been adapting to the political development in the country (Titi, 2014).

Drug smuggling affected the security of the region in a number of ways with some countries of the region being more vulnerable to its effect than others. For one, it disrupted the local economy through its injection of large amount of illicit capital. While this might constitute a significant opportunity for many of the young unemployed people of the Sahel, it also led to fierce local rivalries for the control of smuggling routes, corrupted state institutions and officials, and increased the financial resources available to terrorist groups. As studies on Mali indicate, local communities affected by successive droughts have left the cattle herding enterprise for the more lucrative drug smuggling enterprise as a coping strategy. Similarly, the onset of narco-trade triggered the emergence of irregular militias around and armed protection rackets around the smuggling nodes that at times generated rivalry among the 'Big Men' seeking to control these resources.

More worrying has been the passive and / or active collusion and complicity of local and national elites of some Sahelian countries. The previous dictator of Mauritania Ould Taya and the former President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré were alleged to be indirectly involved in the drug smuggling business. The later was reportedly responsible for delaying the investigation of a Boeing 727 that crashed in the desert of Mali. The plane reportedly off-loaded ten tonnes of cocaine before crashing in the desert on its return flight (Cold-Ravnkilde,

2013). While this appears to be a one off event, the general involvement of government officials in the smuggling process seems to be indisputable with the ultimate effect of weakening the state and the overall state of governance. At the local level, the majority of political and business elites have been integrated to the political economy of smuggling, a development that contributed to the de-legitimization of the state and its capacity for impartial administration (Titi, 2014). Finally, the opportunistic connection with violent extremist actors who benefit from the smuggling directly or indirectly undermine stabilization operations in the Sahel (Mathieu, 2014).

Violent Extremism

While some countries of the region are indeed victim of home grown radicalism, terrorism in the Sahel is largely the result of the confluence of local grievances and revivalist Islamic movements in Algeria and globally. The evolution of the three major terrorist organizations of the Sahel, namely Al-Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and Ansar Dine are pointers in this respect. AQIM was a direct outcome of the Algerian civil war. AQIM was previously known as the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC) that was formed in 1998 in Algeria, and subsequently expanded its sphere of operation across the border of Mali and Niger (Morten, 2015). For example, SGPC established a rear base in Mali in 1998 and fought with the Niger Armed Force and the US special force in 2003. Though it renounced its support for Al Qaeda in 2001, it re-affirmed it in 2003 and finally merged with it in 2007, forming the Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (Ibid.). It made its presence globally known when it took hostage of 23 Germans in 2003 that were released only after ransom was paid to that effect. According to Castelli, the group gets more than 90% of its income from ransom paid by governments of abducted people. Between 2008 and 2013, the group generated an estimated 65 million Euro from Ransom using Northern Mali as a sanctuary where hostages were taken while a negation on the ransom is going on (Laurent, 2014). The group arguably has been investing its proceed from ransom and kidnapping in drug smuggling. According to Raineri and Strazzari (2015) the intensification of the challenge AQIM faced from the Algerian Security forces forced the movement to provide the money acquired from Ransom for smugglers that depending on the situation give AQIM up to half of their profits usually paid in terms of weapon, ammunitions, and four wheel drive Vehicles. The fall of Gadhafi and the proliferation of weapon have further eased its access to weapon.

The level and timing of terrorist attacks by AQIM in the Sahel varies from country to country. In Mauritania, for instance, it staged a number of deadly attacks between 2005 and 2011, and was able to recruit a number of Mauritanians into its ranks (Ibrahim, 2014). Since then, however, Mauritania's military and political measures limited the space for AQIM within its borders. The security measures include the strengthening of the military, the enhancement of its capacity for countering terrorist and surveillance over religious preaching to make sure that radical ideologies were not disseminated (Ibid.). Accordingly, a number of suspected jihadists were arrested, others were forced to flee the country, and border control was strengthened. The political measures included allowing a moderate Muslim political party to compete for power while also arranging a televised debate between detained Jihadists and the moderate Muslims on the justifiability of using violence to

advance religious goals. Still, Mauritania is not completely free from attacks by violent extremist groups given the existence of large number of Mauritanian Jihadists in the AQIM, and the crises in Libya and Mali (Boukhars, 2016).

In Northern Mali, SGPC-AQIM started embedding itself as far back as 1998 by establishing operating bases, networks, and connections with locals through distribution of money, free medical services, and by providing free SIM cards and air times for the population (Morten, 2015). They also intermarried with people of low status thereby identifying with the large number of poor people. Gradually, it established ties with the Marabouts (religious preachers) and converted them to its version of Islam through which they furnished the ideological pre-conditions of radicalism (Ibid.). Thus AQIM exploited the relative absence and incapacity of the Malian state in northern Mali by providing state-like services and functions. However, AQIM has also undertaken violent acts including kidnappings and hostage taking of Europeans and even killed a senior Malian intelligence officer in retaliation for previous Malian armed force raids (Gebrie, 2016). Thus, AQIM's manners of engagement in Mali seem to be different from that of Mauritania, and terrorist attacks were not the primary means of engagement at least until 2009 when the Malian army began to establish bases in Northern Mali and undertook some attack against AQIM (Lacher, 2013).

As stated earlier, AQIM's attack in Niger occurred in 2003 when the SGPC was engaged in a battle with the Nigerien armed force and the US Special Forces. Until 2010, the group had reportedly outsourced the task of kidnapping Europeans to local criminal organizations thereby underscoring the connection between opportunistic criminal actors and globally-organized ideologically oriented organizations (International Crisis Group, 2013). However, since 2010 AQIM started taking direct action against the Nigerien military and other Western interests: in January 2010, for instance, it battled against the Nigerien army; in March it attacked a military barrack near the Malian border killing five soldiers; and in September a small group of AQIM members were apprehended for possessing explosives (Ibid.). Niger has also been affected by Boko Harm insurgency spilling over from Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. Though initially the country was a refuge for displaced populations, Niger gradually became embroiled in the conflict as Boko Haram expanded its attacks between 2013 and 2016. All these affected the Nigerien tourism industry as Western tourists reduced due to fears of abductions and hostage takings, a development that negatively affected the local economy and sustain impoverishment and insecurity (Ibid.). While the tourism sector was doing well in the early 2000s, since then there has been a decline in the number of Western Tourists while those who visit the country restricted their stay only to the capital.

The relatively stable Burkina Faso has also seen bouts of terrorist attacks recently facilitated by the linkage of local Islamist networks, previous regime security forces, and global terrorist networks. A number of attacks including in the capital Ouagadougou have been perpetrated in recent years. These include the January 2016 attack over a hotel in Ouagadougou that killed 30 people; the March 2017 attack on two police posts that killed three people; and the September 2016 attack that killed 12 soldiers. A series of raids by Burkina Faso's Counter-Terrorism Task Force (GFAT) in late 2017 led to the arrest of over 200 suspected violent extremists and the destruction of training camps and other support infrastructures (ECOWAS

ECOWARN Daily Highlight, 16 January 2018). While AQIM was behind the Hotel attack in Ouagadougou, a new home-grown terrorist group called Ansa rul Islam (defender of Islam) has been established by a radical Imam called Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a former member of the MUJAO before he was arrested in Mali. After his release he returned to his country and established a new movement (Ibid.). The alleged connection between the new movement and ex-soldiers of the presidential elite group underscore potential and actual linkages between violent extremist groups and state functionaries (Ibid.).

Another terrorist organization operating in the Sahel is the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), which splintered from the AQIM sometimes in 2011 (Bruce, 2015). The group controlled parts of Gao in Northern Mali and imposed its harsh version of Sharia rule in 2012 before it was driven out by the French forces. Since then the group has been most active throughout the region. In Mali the group has undertaken a number of attacks against the Malian armed force, socio-economic infrastructures, and the UN peace keeping mission (MINUSMA). In Niger, MUJAO was joined by another breakaway faction of AQIM called Al Moulathamine, to form the Al Mourabitoune.

The group undertook coordinated attacks against the Nigerien army base in Agadez and Uranium mine in Arlit. In March 2014, it claimed responsibility for the first terrorist attack in Bamako and several others in the country that has killed thirteen Malian soldiers as well as five UN workers (Ibid.). The most severe of the group`s terrorist attack was in Gao in 2017 that caused the death of 80 people. MINSUMA has already lost more than 70 peacekeepers making it the second deadliest peacekeeping operation after AMISOM. The problem in part is driven by the failure to control the entire Northern Mali from which terrorist attacks are planned. Other old Brigades of the MUJAO are also supposedly operating in the country. In addition to its terrorist attack, the group has been active in the kidnapping business where it kidnapped three Algerian diplomats and four Malians working for the International Committee of the Red Cross, and a French journalist at different times (Koepf, 2014).

The different terrorist groups in the Sahel are also reportedly involved in Post-Qaddafi Southern Libya which has become a sanctuary. Though not conclusively proven and the depth of interaction appears to be moderate, these groups are forming link with Boko Haram of Nigeria, terrorist networks in Libya, and possibly Al-Shabaab of Somalia through the provision of training, exchange of money and arms (Ibid.). Hence, what we are seeing is rather a resurgence of terrorist attack in recent years. Finally, one of the home-grown terrorist groups Ansar Din was formed by former Tuareg nationalists, with many of its members "double-hatted" as members of the High Council for the Azwad and renounced terrorism (Ibid.).

IV. THE EVOLUTION OF SECURITY COOPERATION AND RESPONSES TO SECURITY THREATS IN THE SAHEL

A number of bilateral, multilateral, regional and continental initiatives have been introduced with the objective of stabilizing the Sahel, though the impacts of these initiatives remain limited thus far. The key focus of this study is the MNJTF and the G-5, however we x-ray other prior initiatives such as The Algiers Process on Mali, CEMOC, the CEN-SAD, and the Nouakchott Process to contextualize experiences and lessons of security cooperation and response in the Sahel.

The CEMOC, UFL and CEN-SAD: victim of Algeria-Morocco rivalry?

The Joint Military Staff Committee (CEMOC) based in Tananrasset, Southern Algeria, was an Algerian initiative that sought to create joint military patrol and cross-border operation among Malian, Nigerien and Algerian security forces. After seven months CEMOC was supplemented with an intelligence service called the Fusion and Liaison Office (UFL) that was tasked with facilitating intelligence sharing among the eight countries of the Sahel and Sahara: Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Algeria, Nigeria, Libya, Chad and Burkina Faso. However, the two organs have not been operational due mainly to doubts and mistrust of former Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré commitment to military action against violent extremist groups. Mali under President Toure was alleged to be reluctant to take strong action against AQIM for fear of antagonizing his Tuareg allies (Laurent, 2014). Moreover, Mauritania suspected that senior government officials of Mali were complicit in the leakages of intelligence information to AQIM after its force suffered a series of armed attack along Mauritania-Mali borders.

Another initiative, mostly under the leadership of Libya and Morocco has been the effort to reactivation of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) which included most Sahelian States but not Algeria. Accordingly, a new agreement was signed in 2013 that also included a Peace and Security Council. However, there has been little movement or activities afterwards. Some of these earlier initiatives seem to be victim of Algeria-Morocco rivalry: both countries appear not to favour a strong regional arrangement that exclude them. Not unsurprisingly, both countries initiated a series of bilateral agreements with countries involved in the CEN-SAD and other regional security cooperation mechanisms. While Algerian led Fusion and Liaison Office (UFL) and Joint Military Coordination Committee deliberately excluded Morocco, Morocco strongly pushed for the strengthening of the community of Sahel-Saharan States that excluded Algeria from membership (Lacher, 2013). At the core of the two countries problem has been the issue of Western-Saharawi that claimed independence from Morocco.

The Nouakchott Process

The AU-led Nouakchott process was able to overcome the shortcomings of previous initiatives in its inclusiveness of a number of Sahelian states with similar security challenges. Conceived within the framework of operationalizing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahel-Sahara region, the process comprised 11 countries of West and North Africa including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Chad. In addition to these

member states, the process also involves the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Com-mittee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA), ECOWAS, the AU Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), the North African Regional Capacity (NARC) and the Fusion and Liaison Unit (UFL), as well as the UN (MINUSMA, the UN Office for West Africa - UNOWAS and the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Sahel region - OSES).

It was initiated at a meeting in Nouakchott, Mauritania on the 17th of March 2013 with the objective of promoting regional security cooperation, information sharing in the fight against terrorism, and the operationalization of the APSA in the Sahel-Saharan states (African Union PSC 449th Meeting). To this effect, in its first meeting held 2-4 September 2015, it is envisaged to undertake a number of activities ranging from sharing information, building capacity, establishing a secure communication system, encouraging countries to establish joint patrol and mixed units. Particularly, the member countries agreed to hold an annual meeting of the Ministers of Defense and Chief of Staff's and bi-monthly meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Service with the aim of sharing information and coordinating action against terrorist and criminals. The AU contributes to the Nouakchott process by, among others, promoting the implementation of the recommendations of the process; building confidence among member states to facilitate information sharing; undertaking technical assessments; and strengthening arrangements such as CEMOC and UFL that was made to include members which were not originally part of it (Damers, 2014). Moreover, a strategic Concept of Operation developed for the joint patrol and mixed units in September 2015 articulates that the role of the AU would also include granting legitimacy for any of the bilateral and multilateral arrangements made by member states of the Nouakchott process (Ibid.). The Concept of Operation sustained the previous overall focus on fighting terrorism and organized crime through better coordination of member states strategy, sharing of information and strengthening the capacity of the intelligence services of participating countries.

This notwithstanding, the process seems to have been stalled: AU reports of what it has done and achieved are available only for the 2014 and 2015 period. During the aforementioned periods, there were more than seven meetings of heads of Intelligence and Security Services which is indicative of the level of initial enthusiasm for the process. Moreover, at the Ministerial meeting in Niamey, Niger the member states agreed to establish a lean secretariat led by the AU Mission in Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL). Hence, the lack of such progress report in the last two years would indicate the loss of momentum. However, the process seems to be ongoing as exemplified, for instance, by the AU`s insistence for the countries that are part of the Nouakchott process to give support for and recognition to the G-5-Sahel Force (PSC, 733th meeting).

US counter-terrorism Initiatives

Following the 9/11 incident the US initiated the Pan-Sahel Initiatives that aims to build the capacity of security forces of Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania (Pham, 30 October, 2017). It was transformed into the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative that increased the number of participating countries (Ibid.). The US currently has approximately 800 military personnel engaged in supporting the security of the Sahel countries in their war on terror.

The Algiers Process

At the center of the crisis in the Sahel, though not the exclusive factor, is the crisis in Mali that has been a scene of French Counter-terrorism response, United Nation Integrated Multi-dimensional Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA), and a mediation process led by a 'College of Mediators'. These interventions are necessitated by the multifaceted crises in Mali following the rebellion of the Tuaregs and religious extremists, and the military coup in Bamako. Once the terrorists were ousted from many of the towns in the North, brokering peace with the secular forces and addressing the transition from a military regime to a civilian government became the major pre-occupation of the international community. The goal was to enable Malians to resolve the country's internal crisis by crafting durable solutions to its multifaceted crisis. The process started when a road map for peace was signed in Ouagadougou in 2013 between the government and two Northern Mali armed movements (the MNLA and the High Council for the Unity of Azwad) mediated by the former President of Burkina Faso (Blaise Campaore). The agreement stipulates a ceasefire to pave the way for democratic election and an inclusive peace process. In the meantime the terrorist were routed by the French Operation Serval.

In June 2014, another round of negotiation started to resolve the conflict between the Government of Mali and the northern armed movements that were not affiliated with terrorist groups. The talks were initiated and mediated by Algeria and co-mediators from the UN, AU, ECOWAS, EU, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Nigeria (Arthur and Marie-Joëlle, 2017). The talks centred on negotiation between the Malian Government and the Coordination of the Azawad Movement, a coalition of National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), MAA-coordination; and the Platform consisting of Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA-platform), Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance (CMFAPR), and the Coalition for the People of Azawad. After bouts of progress and regress, the parties finally signed what has come to be known as the Bamako Agreement in 2015. The agreement provides for a number of security, governance, development and truth and reconciliation measures which include the establishment of interim administration in the north; the operationalization of joint patrol; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants; security sector reform; development initiatives specifically targeting the north; and the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Committee (Ibid.).

However, the implementation of the agreement has been extremely slow and the implementation of some measures has proved to be a source of discontent leading some to doubt the sanctity of the agreement (Ibid.). The notable progress to date is the establishment of Interim Authorities, the installation of Governors in some part of the north, the appointment of the Carter Centre of Independent Observer; and the conclusion of the Conference of National Entente. The development provision and the security-related measures that have to do with the acceleration of the Joint Operation Centres, the DDR and SSR process of the agreement are yet to be implemented due to the deteriorating security situation. The slow progress of the implementation process on the one hand, and the deterioration in the security situation with terrorist attack expanding from the North to the Center on the other, put question marks

on the prospect for peace in Mali and the Sahel. Though some ascribe this state of affairs to the lack of political will and intransigence on the part of warring parties, especially as the status quo continues to benefit them, still other factors are at play, including the competing priorities of the parties, fragmentation of armed movements, continued activities of terrorist groups and criminal networks, and the lack of peace dividend (Ibid.).

V. THE MULTI-NATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE AGAINST BOKO HARAM (MNJTF)

Origin

The MNJTF was reactivated by member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin to fight Boko Haram (and other terrorist groups) given the regional dimension of the insurgency. The MNJTF was originally established in 1994 as an instrument for cross-border control of criminal activities in the Lake Chad Basin area (Daniel, 2017). The MNJTF mandate was expanded in 1998 to general cross-border security issues among Nigeria, Chad and Niger. The limited achievement of the force beyond some joint patrols on the one hand, and the increasing regionalization of the threat posed by Boko Haram on the other hand, necessitated a renewed effort at a regional response led to the reactivation of the MNJTF. Accordingly, the member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (Benin was added later) agreed to re-structure the force to combat the Boko Haram insurgency and ensure peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin (Babatunde, 2017). The AU Peace and Security Council formally authorized the force on January 29, 2015. Though the force was to be composed of the military, police and civilian component, much of the operations of the MNJTF has focused largely on the military component (Brubacher, Damman, and Day, 2017). Since its deployment, the force has worked to degrade Boko Haram, recover territories previously controlled by Boko Haram, and free civilians taken as hostages. While much of the progress in degrading the operational capabilities of Boko Haram, especially its capacity to seize and control territories has continued till date (early 2018) since its inception in 2016,

Boko haram has mutated and adapted its strategies, launching surprise attacks against vulnerable civilian targets such as churches, markets and other population centres.

Mandate

The mandate of the MNJTF includes creating safe and secure environment in the areas affected by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups to pave the way for the reduction of violence against civilians; facilitating stabilization programmes in the member states; and facilitating humanitarian operation and the provision of assistance to affected population (Assanvo, Abatan and Sawadogo, 2016). To realize these overall goals the mission may undertake military operations, conduct patrols, prevent the transfer of weapons and logistics to the group, search and free abductees, and undertake psychological operations to encourage defection from Boko Haram (Ibid.). The force is mandated to accomplish this within the framework of international humanitarian and human rights law including adherence to UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policies.

Strategies and Activities

The MNJTF aims at achieving its mandate in a sequential manner, the first priority being to dislodge Boko Haram from its strongholds. To this effect, a force composed of 8,500 troops that was later increased to 10,000 was divided and deployed across four sectors. Sector One is commanded from Cameroon; Sector Two is based in Chad; Sector Three is based in Nigeria; and Sector Four is commanded from South East Niger. The operational headquarter of the force, including its command and control, and the coordination of the activities of the troop contributing countries is based in Chad. The MNJTF is structured in a way that each force operates in and from its own territory (side of the border) with a provision for hot pursuits that is restricted to 25 kilometres across the border (Babatunde, 2017).

The political oversight and administrative support for the mission is divided between the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and Benin, and the African Union. The force is answerable to the Heads of States of the LCBC, often exercised through the Secretary of the Commission (Assanvo, Abatan and Sawadogo, 2016). The African Union provides support in the area of financial administration through which the fund pledged for the MNJTF is disbursed and technical assistance in the area of information communication technology, planning and logistics, and health services (Ibid.). In the first phase, it was planned that the MNJTF priority would be military operations targeted at neutralizing Boko Haram members, destroying their support infrastructures, including training camps and factories used to produce improvised explosive devices, and freeing hostages.

The second phase of its mandate involves the implementation of a stabilization programme that includes the restoration of state authority, and assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees to return to their home areas (PSC, 680th meeting). While the first phase has degraded Boko Haram`s capacity for conventional war, the group capacity for undertaking asymmetric attacks has not been degraded. Hence, whether the group is defeated as claimed by the force or whether it is adapting to its environment is open to question. Moreover, it would require a period of learning to shift from counter-insurgency into a counter-terrorism force.

Actors and their interest

Member states of the LCB plus Benin are the major actors of the MNJTF in that they are responsible for the financial and operational needs and costs for their troops. Their engagement in the Task Force is largely driven by the manifold effect of the deterioration of the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin and its attendant humanitarian and developmental consequences. The Boko Haram crisis has displaced over one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugee in Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger (Premium Times Online, 13 January 2017). While Nigeria seeks to dislodge the group from the areas it has controlled and thus preferring an offensive strategy, the initial focus of other member states was simply to contain the expansion of the group into their territory (SMB Intelligence, 2017). The establishment of the Task Force also seems to be preferred options since the arrangement grant the troop Contributing Countries greater control over the strategy and command of their respective forces while at the same time using external support to enhance operational capabilities and regime legitimacy (Brubacher, Damman and Day, 2017). Arguably the authorities in Chad and Cameroon have potentially been benefiting from the arrangement in strengthening regime legitimacy (Ibid.). More strategically, Chad also fears that Boko Haram might potentially cut its access to the sea through Cameroon and Nigeria.

External actors with a stake in the MNJTF include the European countries (especially France), the EU, the US and multilateral organizations such as the AU, ECOWAS and the UN. European countries mainly France, UK and Germany are primarily concerned with terrorism and migration, though France also has significant economic interests linked to the protection of its investment and supply of natural resources such as uranium, iron ore and gold across the Sahel. France has been supporting the military forces of Chad, Niger and Cameroon as part of its overall strategic interest in the Sahel that include privileged access to the resources of the region, the prevention of the region from becoming a safe haven for terrorist from which terror plot in Europe could be hatched, and reducing migration to Europe (Bruno, 2017). Britain, Germany and the EU also seem to be primarily motivated by the desire to tackle migration through the Mediterranean, while terrorism would also be another motivating factor. The AU and the UN, on the other hand, are interested in the arrangement as part of their mandate for ensuring the peace and security in Africa and globally. Driven by these interests various external actors have been providing financial and political support such as recognizing the legitimacy of the arrangement.

Coordination with ECOWAS and the AU

The MNJTF was established outside the normative framework of Peace Support Operations undertaken through the APSA, specifically the African Stand-by Force (ASF). While peace operations are an extension of enhancing a political settlement, the Task Force is exclusively a military cooperation with the goal of defeating an enemy: Boko Haram. Moreover, unlike AU peace support missions, the troops of the MNJTF primarily operate in their own country with some arrangement for cross-border operations. The troop contributing countries cover a large share of their operational expenses. More fundamentally, though it is authorized by the AU, the Task Force, has greater autonomy in choice of strategy and command and control, as opposed to mainstream peace support

operations such as AMISOM in Somalia. Hence, the relation between the AU and the MNJTF, as articulated in the first meeting of Defense ministers and Chiefs of defense of the member states of Nouakchott process, is mediated through a special Memorandum of Understanding that requires the AU to provide legitimacy for the process while helping in mobilizing resources, financial administration and the provision of logistic support. As such, external financial assistance to the MNJTF has been provided largely through the AU.

Though the arrangement could be viewed as a more flexible and adaptable responses to a fast evolving threat, some of the AU`s principle governing peace operations and political oversight might be compromised. Since the strategy and the command and control of the force is dominated by the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), there a risk that the TCCs might use the arrangement to advance their own political agenda while garnering legitimacy from the international community in the name of security (Brubacher, Dammen and Day, 2017). The process, for instance, has arguably enhanced the power and legitimacy of the government of Chad and Cameroon in the context of their internal political volatility (Ibid.). More fundamentally, the military nature of the MNJTF does not fit into the AU`s overall strategy for the Sahel that targeted governance, security and development measures as part of a broader comprehensive strategy (PSC, 449th meeting).

Similarly, though ECOWAS developed a strategy to fight terrorism that entails preventing terrorism, pursuing terrorists and post-combat reconstruction, the MNJTF has been established outside the ECOWAS framework. The various pronouncements of the MNJTF as well as those of the AU do not mention the ECOWAS as an actor in the process. The UN Security Council`s encouragement of ECOWAS and the Economic Community for Central African States to devise a common strategy against Boko Haram further is a pointer to this effect (Statement by the President of the Security Council, 13 May 2016).

VI. THE G-5 SAHEL AND ITS FORCE CONJOINTE G-5 SAHEL

Origin

The G-5 Sahel was initiated in 2015 to coordinate the security-development strategies and activities of its five member states, namely Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania. Through its initial conception, the development component was to include advancing economic integration and the introduction of a common airline called Air Sahel, much of the pronouncement and activities have focused on the military-security component. This suggests that the development element is only an aspiration (International Crisis Group, 2017). The two achievements in the security arena include the introduction of a military college in Mauritania and the formal announcement of the creation of its Joint Force, the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, in the beginning of 2017. The force has been operational in the Lipatako Gourma area bordering Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali since October 2017 (Ibid.). As of the last quarter of 2017, all member states but Mauritania mobilized the forces to be deployed and the force`s Command and Control Headquarters and sector headquarters have been refurbished and equipped with the appointment of staff by some member states (UN, 2017, S/2017/869). However, it is too early to assess the achievements and prospects of the G-5 force in stabilizing the Sahel.

Mandate

The mandates of the G-5 force include combating terrorism and transnational criminal networks; contributing to restoration of state authority and return of refugee and internally displaced persons; facilitating humanitarian operation; and contributing to developmental activities in the Sahel (PSC report, 7 July 2017).

Strategies and Activities

The 5000 strong joint force is to be operational in two phases; in the first phase, it will jointly patrol three sectors of the borders of the member states – the Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger border to be patrolled by three battalions, each comprising of 650 troops; and the border between Niger and Chad, to be patrolled by two battalions; and the border between Mali and Mauritania, similarly patrolled by two battalions. In phase two, the force would be capacitated to operate in the territory of any member state. Since October 2017, the G-5 force has been patrolling the Lipatko-Gourma area as its Central Sector of operation. Part of the operational strategy of the G-5 security force includes working alongside France's 4,000 Barkhane troops (deployed to Mali in 2013 in the aftermath of military push southwards by armed terrorist groups), and the UN's 12,000-strong MINUSMA peacekeeping operation in Mali (AFP, 15 January 2018). The command and control of the G-5 force will be exercised by the General Commander from its General Command Post in Mali, while the sectors will have their own Tactical Command Post. The activities of the force so far have largely been concerned with mobilizing troops, refurbishing headquarters, and appointing staff. As of October 2017, all member countries except Mauritania have mobilized their forces while Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have also deployed staff to the Force Headquarter (UN, 2017).

Actors and their interest

The five member states of the G-5 seems to be motivated to establish the G-5 arrangement as a response to their individual and collective security challenges in the region, especially terrorism and organized crime. The Concept of Operation establishing the G-5 Sahel articulates a rationale for the formation of the force to be the deteriorating security and socio-economic situation, and the adverse impact of terrorism on human security and in undermining states` ability to deliver social services. While the transnational nature of these threats seems to be the incentive behind such an arrangement, other extraneous considerations exist, especially the role of France in pushing for the formation of the G-5. To an extent, this is assumed to be linked to France's regional and international security strategy and national interests in the Sahel and Africa broadly; for instance, France also justifies the G-5 on the need for African countries to take charge and reduce pressure and dependence on France's military for security in the Sahel, however the exclusion of Algeria and Libya (that are also affected by terrorism in the Sahel) raises more questions than answers given its geographical proximity, military-security capabilities and political-diplomatic clout in the Sahel.

External actors with a stake in the G-5 include European Countries (led by France), the AU and the UN. France has been a key diplomatic and financial backer of the G-5 force leading some observers to doubt whether the force espouses a Western (European/France) agenda as opposed to a genuine African agenda. Other observers see it as yet another way regional leaders' seeks to enhance their domestic and international status (legitimacy) through the manipulation of external support. Either way, the dominance of France and its support for the operation of the force is factual and indisputable. In addition to the financial, equipment and intelligence support, France pushed hard for a blanket resolution in the Security Council, specifically to mandate the force to 'use every possible means' and to be financed from the UN assessed contribution. While backing the force, the US and the UK remained reticent to the idea of funding through the UN assessed contribution and thus the UN approved the force without authorising UN financing. The Security Council in its resolution 2359 (2017) demanded MINUSMA to provide support for the Force within the limit of its mandate. The US, UK, and a number of other EU member countries have pledged to provide support for the G-5 Force; as at the end of 2017, about 294 million Euros ($360 million) was pledged by Saudi Arabia (100 million Euros) and the rest by the EU and its member states (AFP, 15 January 2018).

Relation with ECOWAS and the AU

As the MNJTF is framed and operationalized outside of the APSA structure, the G-5 Sahel is even more detached from the AU and APSA structures. While the EU disbursed its fund to the MNJTF through the AU, for instance, it has channelled its contributions to the G-5 Force outside of the AU (Ibid.). Though the force got the approval of the AU and the UN Security Council, ECOWAS and Algeria continue to have reservations, albeit unstated, about the G-5. This is unconnected with the role of France, especially against the background of frosty relations between Algeria and France. There has been an allegation that ECOWAS unofficially support the more inclusive and legitimate Nouakchott Process that is sponsored by the AU, while Algeria has rendered its support for the G-5 force conditional on its integration

within the Nouakchott Process (International Crisis Group, 2017). Even the AU`s approval of the force pointed the need to consider a number of issues including participation of civilian and police components in the force; the specification of the relationship of mutual support between the G-5 Sahel force and others mainly France's Operation Barkhane and the UN's MINUSMA, operating in the region; and a mention of relevant AU Protocols establishing the PSC and APSA (PSC, 679th meeting). Many of the AU Statements on the Sahel and perspectives on appropriate solutions for the challenges of the Sahel region reveal that the AU indeed favour a comprehensive strategy (not just a military approach as contained in the G-5 Sahel) that will address the multiple challenges of the region (PSC, 314th meeting).

VII. CONCLUSION: THE MNJTF AND G-5 AND PROSPECT OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN THE SAHEL

Peace building experiences from Africa and elsewhere give us a number of lessons on how the MNJTF and the G-5 forces could pursue their mandate and thus the extent of success and failure. The pursuit of a military-focused solution for violent extremism would not address the deeper drivers of insecurity across the region. Moreover, military approaches often crowd out resources that would have been spent on other priorities, especially developmental and humanitarian needs. Extant reports including the HIPPO pointed out that peace building is a political process first and foremost, and military action needs to be deployed within a political framework with clear plan of actions and strategy for sustainable peace (UN High Level Panel on Peace Operations, 2015). It is also the case that contemporary stabilization requires multidimensional mission including simultaneous activities in the humanitarian, political, security and development arena. Partly due to its deviation from the APSA`s normative frameworks, the MNJTF did not adhere to this ideal: Boko Haram is a clear target that need to be eliminated not politically engaged. However, in so far as such forces have significant constituencies including those who allowed themselves to be blown up for its cause, political engagement at least with its support base might have been important.

Even with such limitations, the MNJTF has registered some significant successes: Boko Haram has been driven out of its strongholds and territories recovered; the capacity of Boko Haram to launch high-value audacious attacks has been neutralized; there has less internal

and cross-border displacement and many displaced persons and communities have returned since September 2016; agriculture, trade and other social services are gradually returning to normal; and the scourge of kidnapping and hostage taking by Boko Haram has been reduced. In short, the frequency and scale of Boko Haram attacks have been reduced to isolated soft targets, especially in outlying communities. This could be taken as evidence of the relevance and effectiveness of the MNJTF operations, including information sharing and coordinated patrols.

Still, some if not much of the success owes to political realignment in the region, especially the ascension of a new regime (President Buhari) to power in Nigeria in May 2015. This underscores the centrality of a 'nodal state' to the organization, planning, financing and effectiveness of regional security cooperation arrangements in Africa. Much of the improvements and successes recorded by the MNJTF thus far have taken place since May 2015. Before then, the political leadership in Nigeria under former President Goodluck Jonathan was perceived to be weak, lacking the requisite political will and less committed in the fight against Boko Haram. The onset of the Buhari regime triggered changes in the top leadership of Nigeria's armed forces, and pursued concerted regional action against Boko Haram. This included better operational planning and coordination; approval for cross-border military operations, including agreement for the armies of neighbouring countries to operate in Nigeria; the provision of resources and requisite equipment for the army; and the expansion of the Civilian Joint Task Force (a system of community-based militias and vigilante groups) that assist in intelligence gathering and defending the local communities (Fielding, 2016).

The Buhari regime also set up a committee that investigated contracts awarded by the Office of the National Security Advisor that indicted more than 300 companies and individuals for fraud and corruption in military procurements related to counter-Boko Haram operations, and initiated the recovery of several billions of Naira (Ibid.). Hence, the condition for the success of the MNJTF seems to be related to changes in the measures taken by the government of Nigeria. This also underscores the importance of leadership that is able and willing to take initiatives.

This notwithstanding, Boko Haram has been waging an asymmetric warfare including road block ambushes, suicide bombings and terror attacks on soft targets, some of which compromise the gains achieved by the MNJTF. Also, Boko Haram attacks against soft targets expanded into Cameroon and Niger since 2016. For instance, Boko Haram reportedly launched 246 attacks between April and June 2017, killing 225 civilians (UN, 2017). Hence, the extent the next stage of the struggle against violent extremism would be successful through the instrumentality of the MNJTF is open to debate. This is the more so given that the emergence of Boko Haram in the first place was a local reaction to the governance deficits, youth unemployment, the marginalization of young people, and police brutality in Nigeria (Babatunde, 2017). Without a robust programme of action to address these underlying structural issues, it is not impossible that Boko Haram or like-groups could re-emerge in the short- to medium-term (SMB Intelligence, 2017). In fact, some doubt if much of the gains achieved in 2015 and 2016 have been reversing in the face of perceived deterioration in cooperation among the member states of MNJTF, reported cases of corruptions, strained relation between the Civilian Joint Task Force and the

army, government`s failure to speedily institute governance in liberated areas, and the over stretching of the army (Ibid.). The international community including the UN Security Council urges that counter-insurgency measures need to be undertaken with due attention for humanitarian and human rights law (Statement by the president of the Security Council, 2018). This indicates concerns over the way the counter-insurgency has been undertaken, specifically reported cases of human rights abuses and violations by security forces.

To this extent experiences elsewhere can be informative; specifically the policies pursued by Mauritania after suffering a series of terrorist attacks between 2005 and 2011. More specifically, its permission of a moderate Muslim religious party, the debate undertaken between radicals and moderates transmitted on TV for the larger audiences and its surveillance of religious education might be a useful guide on what will work and what will not. Hence, the MNJTF need to explore such options in its second phase of operation related to implementation of stabilization programmes and the return of IDPs and refugees. The launch of a counter-terrorism Radio in the MNJTF`s headquarter is a welcome move in this regard (globalsentinelnews1 - August 16, 2017).

As to the G-5 force, two questions are pertinent; first is what lessons and best practices from the MNJTF that could be replicated by the G-5, and whether the G-5 could replicate the level of military success recorded by the MNJTF?

In relation to the first question, five key lessons could be drawn from the MNJTF experiment in regional security cooperation and collective arrangements:

1. The role of a Nodal state: the leadership of Nigeria in political and financial terms has been crucial to the relative effectiveness of the MNJTF. Nigeria was able to provide take-off financial contribution for the MNJTF, in addition to securing the requisite political-diplomatic support for the MNJTF, notwithstanding it is outside of the AU-APSA structures. Given the near-equal sizes and political, economic and military profiles of G-5 states, there is a lack of a regional 'big brother' in the mould of Nigeria, among its ranks currently. It may be that it forges a working relationship with Algeria at the minimum or accede to Algerian membership at the most, to drive the G-5 Sahel experiment.

2. Embedding civilian component: the centrality of the civilian JTF to the successes of the MNJTF cannot be overstated. Against the asymmetrical nature of Boko Haram insurgency, the CJTF provides critical human intelligence, provide security to local communities (hence free-up troops), assisted in identifying and tracking members of Boko Haram, and provided recognition to the efforts and contributions of local population in tackling Boko Haram. The G-5 is yet to clearly articulate a strategy for involving and leveraging the contributions of local communities.

3. Adapting to regional sensitivities: the MNJTF strategy of amassing troops along common borders and provision for coordinated joint operations, including cross-border incursions allayed fears of member countries, as well allowed each country to utilize its strategic advantage (e.g. knowledge of the terrain). The strategy also minimized costs, and avoided the challenges of force inter-operability. It is unclear the extent to which the agenda, institutional design and strategies employed by the G-5 reflect a conscious effort to utilize the comparative advantages of its member states.

4. Prioritizing targets: the MNJTF Concept of Operations prioritization of degrading Boko Haram, cutting of its supply lines, as well as aggressive community sensitization and mobilization aided its battle-field gains against Boko Haram between 2015 and 2016. This suggests that the G-5, based on accurate intelligence, will need to carefully identify its core target groups and prioritize ways and strategies for neutralizing them. Admittedly, the Sahel and operational geography of the G-5 is larger and more complex, relative to the MNJTF. For instance, there are over 13 violent extremist groups in the G-5 sphere of operation compared with a single group in that of the MJTF. Still, it is not impossible for the G-5 Sahel to prioritize it core target group(s) based on a set of criteria such as a careful mapping and continuous tracking of various violent extremist groups in the Sahel to follow the evolution and changes in the nature and level of threats posed by individual and collectives of violent extremist groups. The G-5 Sahel could identify primary target groups by looking at the violent extremist groups posing direct threat to constituted authority; level and scale of threat to legitimate economic production such as agriculture, trade and tourism; and groups and individuals with sophisticated military-security skills, experiences and equipment. Other criteria could also include the establishment of humanitarian safe zones (and the clearance of such areas); identification of supply lines for terrorist groups and strategies for cutting it off; and

5. Regional ownership: through Nigerian leadership, there was a clear sense that MNJTF countries undertook regional security cooperation in their own interests, rather than the prompting of a foreign power. In spite of being outside of the APSA structures, the MNJTF was backed politically by the ECOWAS and the AU. The G-5 Sahel on the other hand, though got endorsements from the AU and UN, but there remain doubts as to the ownership of the mechanism.

In relation to the prospect of the G-5 recording operational gains in the Sahel, this possibility will be determined by the ability of G-5 Sahel to navigate a number of challenges. First, while MNJTF is composed of states that have a fairly robust military and security forces, the same cannot be said about the G-5 forces. This includes the manpower, combat experience and history of involvement in multi-lateral security arrangement by the armies of Nigeria and Chad. The majority of G-5 Sahel armies do not have such experiences and manpower with the exception of Chad whose dual membership of the MJTF and G-5 Sahel raises concerns about its security forces being over-stretched. Worse still, the forces of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are relatively weak and suffer from internal problems such as poor morale, lack of battle readiness, limited experience in counter-terrorism operations, limited force mobility and lack of appropriate equipment (International Crisis Group, 2017). Though Mauritania boasts of a strong military on paper, it is not battled-tested, has minimal experience of multi-lateral security cooperation and arrangements, and has not been deployed outside the country for some years (Ibid.).

Second and more importantly, the nature of the security landscape where the G-5 force has to confront is fundamentally different from the MNJTF; for instance, the MNJTF has one identifiable insurgency group (Boko Haram), but the G-5 landscape contains more than 20 armed movements, thus rendering difficult the task

of differentiating groups with terrorist agenda from those that are inspired by local grievances (Ibid.). Moreover, the operational landscape of the G-5 is complicated by organized crime and the reported complicity of political elites in illicit trade, including drugs. At the minimum, this will test the political will of members of the G-5 Sahel, as well as make the task of weaning-away local communities from the clutches of armed groups, including terrorist groups. In addition, the G-5 area of operation has also been hosting MINUSMA and French troops, and the successes of both remain debatable till date. It is questionable if the G-5 Sahel joint force which is relatively less-capable and less-resourced than MINUSMA and French forces would be able to match or transcend the gains recorded by the subsisting forces.

Third, the G-5 force would also be operating in an environment characterized bitter contestations and tensions over the implementation of a (stalled) Peace Agreement and where there is a constant fusion and realignment of armed movements (makes it difficult to differentiate secular armed groups from terrorist elements) (Shurkin, Pezard, Zimmerman, 2017). Added to this is the complexity of terrorist elements and criminal networks that have strongly embedded in the local political-economy, a factor that limits the prospect of a military agenda without providing alternative livelihood options for local populations (PSC Report, 7th July 2017).

Fourth, to the extent it aspires for success, the G-5 force needs to establish close connection with the local communities, especially to gain invaluable information for differentiating terrorists from other elements of society. This would necessitate a strong civilian element liaising with the local community and advising the military. However, the challenge for the force will be how it will handle this requirement, especially in the context of criminal networks and activities that serve as sources of livelihood for local populations. For instance, armed/terrorist groups offer more than € 750 for viable intelligence that could be utilized against the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) or a French Operation 'Barkhane' convoy; € 1,500 for a landmine and more than € 30,000 for a valuable hostage. Yet in Mali and perhaps across other G-5 states, the minimum wage is less than € 50 a month (CRU, 2015). There are also issues as to why and how to approach the marginalization of local groups that could be sympathetic to terrorist groups without radicalizing them or punishing them.

Finally, many of the structural drivers of insecurity across the Sahel including climate change, poverty, governance problems, and corruption need to be tackled and that security and development measures need to be integrated. The prospect for this seems to be diminishing in the face of the G-5 Sahel shift in priority to security issues, along with donors focus on migration and terrorism issues (with security-military solutions). Though there are development programmes in the border areas of the Sahel countries (Burkina Faso`s emergency plan for the Sahel and Mali`s plan to secure Central Mali are good example), they seems to be isolated stopgap measures (ISS, 30 June 2017).

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About this study

The Sahel epitomizes a confluence of local, national and international security challenges and their individual and collective dynamics that continue to shape the security trajectories of the region. Some of the known security challenges in the Sahel include organized crime, drug smuggling, and terrorism, and underlying structural conditions such as climate change and economic vulnerabilities, and governance failure in responding to the needs of citizens. A compressive analysis of security threats at each level requires empirical substantiation that is beyond the remit of this paper. What is attempted here is the analysis and situation of security challenges in the Sahel in their structural context. More importantly, this paper reflects on the various security regimes and collective security arrangements by a variety of Sahelian and extra-Sahelian actors over time, in particular a comparison of the recent experiments by the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G-5 Sahel. It argues that the solution to the Sahel lies in the Sahel as indicated by identifiable lessons of what works or is likely to work in regional security cooperation experiments from the MNJTF.

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