LEARNING FROM U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM EXPERIENCE IN THE SAHEL: A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE SAHEL G5 ORGANIZATION

by

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September 2018

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The thesis aims to assess the United States’ antiterrorism strategy in the Sahel to help the Sahel G5 (SG5) organization succeed in its goal of eradicating terrorism. Analyzing the successes and failures of the strategy, including its governance, security, economic development, and educational aspects, confirms the necessity of a comprehensive approach to effectively face the terrorism threat in that region. This thesis addresses critical issues in the framework of the international community to enhance the SG5’s chances of success. Even though funding issues are a major concern, strategic cooperation with regional power Algeria will greatly enhance the SG5’s chances of success. Furthermore, this thesis recommends working toward improving professional security apparatuses and increasing economic development, education, and literacy rates, factors that could bolster resistance to terrorist groups’ recruitment.
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ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to assess the United States’ antiterrorism strategy in the Sahel to help the Sahel G5 (SG5) organization succeed in its goal of eradicating terrorism. Analyzing the successes and failures of the strategy, including its governance, security, economic development, and educational aspects, confirms the necessity of a comprehensive approach to effectively face the terrorism threat in that region. This thesis addresses critical issues in the framework of the international community to enhance the SG5’s chances of success. Even though funding issues are a major concern, strategic cooperation with regional power Algeria will greatly enhance the SG5’s chances of success. Furthermore, this thesis recommends working toward improving professional security apparatuses and increasing economic development, education, and literacy rates, factors that could bolster resistance to terrorist groups’ recruitment.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

4D              Defeat, Deny, Diminish, and Defend
AFRICOM         Africa Command
AIDS            Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AO              area of operation
AQMI            Al-Qaeda au Maghreb Islamic (Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb)
AU              African Union
BH              Boko Haram
CIA             Central Intelligence Agency
DPKO            Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRG             Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
ETIA            Echelon Tactique Inter Armes (Combined Tactical Group)
EU              European Union
FAMA            Forces Armees Maliennes (Malian Armed Forces)
FBI             Federal Bureau for Investigation
FC              Force Conjointe (Joint Force)
FIS             Front Islamic du Salut (Islamic Front of Salvation)
FLM             Front de Libération du Macina (Macina Liberation Front)
G5              Group of Five
GPS             Global Position System
GWOT            Global War on Terrorism
HQ              headquarters
IDP             internal displaced person
IED             improvised explosive device
IICEM           integrated initiatives for economic growth in Mali
ISGS            Islamic State in Greater Sahara
ISIS            Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCET            Joint Combined Exchange Training
JF              joint force
MINUSMA         United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MNJTF</td>
<td>Multinational Joint Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNLA</td>
<td>Mouvement National de Liberation de l’Azawad (National Movement for Liberation of Azawad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUJAO</td>
<td>Mouvement pour l’Unite et le Jihad en Afrique Occidentale (Movement for Unity and Jihad in Western Africa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-government organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPS</td>
<td>Naval Postgraduate School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAJE</td>
<td>Projet d’Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs (Support to Youth Entrepreneurs Project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIP</td>
<td>priority investment program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Pan Sahel Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCP</td>
<td>Regiment des Commandos Parachutists (Airborne Battalion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISE</td>
<td>resilience in the Sahel enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>special forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG5</td>
<td>Sahel Group of Five</td>
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<tr>
<td>SG5JF</td>
<td>Sahel Group of Five Joint Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG5PC</td>
<td>Sahel Group of Five Police Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSCP</td>
<td>Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSCTP</td>
<td>Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>US-SF</td>
<td>United States Special Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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I. INTRODUCTION

The intensity of how a group perceives its adversary and the strategies that it believes are required to redress the grievances against it, will affect the types of tactics and weaponry it will employ in the warfare against its stronger adversary.

—Dr. Joshua Sinai,\(^1\)
author and scholar on terrorism

The Sahel Group of Five (G5) is a regional organization created on February 17, 2014, by five Sahelian countries (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad).\(^2\) This organization aims to fight terrorism by means of both economic development and military/security policies.\(^3\) Even though these countries are some of the economically poorest in the world, they decided to put together their meager resources to face their most urgent threats.\(^4\) Having understood that it is a matter of the states’ survival, and individuals and communities’ freedom, the Sahel G5 countries started to collectively plan strong actions against the terrorism phenomenon. Additionally, each one of the countries faces internal political challenges as well as social instability. In order to achieve its goal, the Sahel G5 organization has created a Joint Force of 5,000 soldiers.\(^5\) On September 9, 2017, the Malian Head of State Ibrham Boubacar Keita, presiding over the organization at that time, inaugurated the Joint Force Headquarters in Sevare (Mali).\(^6\)

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3 Ibid., Title II, Art. 4 and 5.
6 Ibid.
In addition to the security response, the Sahel G5 organization launched the “Alliance pour le Sahel.” According to the French Foreign Affairs Department, that alliance gathers the Sahel G5 countries and four international partners (the European Union (EU), the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)), to finance more than 400 projects in the Sahel. Five sectors are targeted (Youth Employment, Education, and Training; Energy and Climate; Governance; Agriculture, Rurality, and Food; Decentralization and Basic Social Services), and the funds needed for the programs totals about 6.5 billion Euro. Importantly, the nonmilitary wing of the Sahel G5’s strategy comprehensively fits with the security measures, which is performed by the SG5 Joint Force. Indeed, as mentioned by Dr. Ashley N. Bybee, a research staff member in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses, “unemployment, illiteracy, poor governance, and other underlying conditions have structural roots that cannot be overcome with a military approach alone.” More interestingly, in the United States, the approach combining security and non-security measures seems to have been understood early among scholars. In 2004, Princeton N. Lyman and Stephen Morrison proposed that, “Rather than concentrate solely on shutting down existing al Qaeda cells, it [the United States] must also deal with the continent’s fundamental problems—economic distress, ethnic and religious fissures, fragile governance, weak democracy, and rampant human rights abuses—that create an environment in which terrorists thrive.” To sum up, the choice of building a counterterrorism strategy though the Joint Force and the Alliance for the Sahel seems sound since it represents a comprehensive approach, which relies not only on security measures but also on governance and economic policies. That strategy goes beyond the Sahel G5


8 Ibid.


countries’ engagement, and inspires the attention and support of the entire international community.

Since its creation, the Sahel G5 organization has faced many questions about its finances and operational readiness.11 Indeed, while it represents a real ray of hope for the Sahelian communities and governments, lack of funding and substantive operational capacity (military readiness and professionalism) of its troops provide huge challenges.12 Another concern raised by many other observers centers on how it will operate among the other international forces (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and Operation Barkhane) and the national armed forces.13 These issues reflect the International Crisis Group’s concerns.14 That non-governmental organization claimed: “[The Sahel G5 Joint Force] raises numerous unanswered questions


about its funding, operational capacity, the political cooperation between its five members, and its place in the Sahel—a region crowded by sometimes-competing military and diplomatic initiatives. “15 Nonetheless, the terrorist threat is a daily reality for the local populations as well as to the governments, so without being quickly addressed, terrorism can propagate and add to the disorder that characterizes the international environment in terms of security. “16 Then, in turn, terrorism will endanger weak countries. For that reason, preventing this infernal cycle remains paramount. In other words, it is necessary to disconnect and dismantle the network on which terrorism, as a global threat, relies and develops. Therefore, keeping ready to address the issues raised is very important and will facilitate the Sahel G5’s success.

A. THESIS RESEARCH QUESTION

Combating the terrorism phenomenon in the Sahel region requires a common engagement beyond the Sahel G5 organization, which is primarily a group of weak and poor countries. Any country or organization, working alone, cannot overcome the terrorism phenomenon. The case study of these five Sahelian countries engaged in a specific way of facing terrorism is particularly relevant. Therefore, the thesis aims to answer a specific two-fold question. Learning from the United States’ counterterrorism experience in the Sahel, what are the challenges for the individual states themselves and for those Sahel G5 states as a group in combating a transnational terrorist threat? In addition, what is the prognosis for their future success?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The explorations, which are conducted in response to the research question stated previously, holds its significance in the fact that a group of five weak countries made the decision to overcome the terrorism phenomenon. Considering the shaping dynamics

15 Ibid.
16 I assume that the current international relations trend does not help as it should to address the terrorist threat. The main actors do not have a common point of view on how to combat terrorism. The emblematic example is the case of ISIS, where Russia and Western countries have totally opposing ideas. Also, in the Sahel, while the local governments see some insurgent groups as terrorists, France (as the main actor) sees them as reliable partners.
(social, political, economic) of the Sahel region over the past two decades, the Sahel G5 countries’ standing up against terrorism seems innovative. Yet, beyond the political willingness their leaders shown, understanding the root causes and choosing the right approaches to deal with terrorism will play a key role in the success of their counterterrorism policy. Therefore, learning lessons from the successes and the failures of other countries’ prior efforts would be a good starting point.

C. METHODOLOGY

The thesis does not aim to compare the U.S. counterterrorism strategy with that of Sahel G5. Rather, the aim is to learn from the U.S. experience. For the purpose of understanding and combating the terrorism phenomenon in the Sahel region, it will be meaningful to learn from the United States’ Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), specifically in the Sahel region. Despite its diplomatic, informational, military, and economic power, the United States has suffered deeply from terrorist attacks. That has led this country to make and adapt counterterrorism policies continuously, and implement strategies not only in their homeland but very often far away from home, where the threats usually originate and develop.

Some of the United States’ most memorable achievements against terrorism are the short time frame it took to overthrow the Taliban regime in Kabul (Afghanistan) and its long range and successful hunt of Osama Bin Laden. First, on October 7, 2011, the United States launched the military operation “Enduring Freedom” in response to the 9/11 attacks and the refusal of Taliban’s regime to stop harboring Al-Qaeda and hand over its leader Osama Bin Laden. That complex and multidimensional operation, gathered intelligence services, conventional and special operations forces, as well as a variety of allies, including Afghan political and armed opponents. In less than two months, the coalition led by the United States defeated the Taliban, who have taken refuge either in the mountainous

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regions or in neighboring countries. Second, following up with its decision to neutralize Al-Qaeda’s leaders, the United States stepped up its search for Bin Laden. Almost ten years after the 9/11 attack, the United States found and killed the man who allegedly was behind that attack.\textsuperscript{19} Obviously, the events of 9/11 caused such physical and emotional harm to the United States that the world’s strongest power would never let the guilty go unpunished.\textsuperscript{20} Therefore, defeating the Taliban and hunting down Bin Laden were great achievements, as witnessed by President Barack Obama in his speech of May 1, 2011.\textsuperscript{21} Even though the achievements do not mean the United States’ GWOT is a full success, they represent evidence of a particular knowledge in combating terrorism.

Although the United States seemed to have neglected the African field in combating terrorism, specifically the Sahel region, the various counterterrorism and violent counter extremism programs the United States implemented later contributed to strengthening its experience. Indeed, Dr. Greg Mills has acknowledged American inattentiveness to Africa extends from 2004.\textsuperscript{22} He has argued: “as international attention in the war on terrorism continues to focus primarily on the Middle East, it is easy to forget that Al Qaeda’s most extreme terrorist attacks prior to September 11 were the August 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Dar Es Salaam and Nairobi.”\textsuperscript{23} Interestingly, in the following years the United States reinforced its security cooperation in Africa, a continent, which according to Paul D. Williams, is far ahead the rest of the world in terms of state failure, ethnic wars, revolutionary wars, adverse regime changes, genocides, and

\begin{footnotesize}


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

\end{footnotesize}
In sum, the African ungoverned areas represented a growing concern to the U.S. policy makers.

In response to the incubating threats or erupting crises, the United States has engaged in the Sahel, supporting the African countries. While some of these initiatives are mostly military oriented like the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), some others are more open to states’ comprehensive capability building, like the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). More globally, the U.S. African Command (AFRICOM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) include humanitarian and resilience building aspects in addition to some of the previously mentioned assignments.

Interestingly, each of the Sahel G5 countries is closely working with the United States either individually or as part of a collective program. That shows how significantly the United States is engaged in combating terrorism in the Sahel. Nevertheless, as Andre Le Sage remarks, the American policy makers have to conduct a meticulous assessment of the complexity of the Sahelian environment coupled with the evolving nature of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI) in order to make an appropriate decision. To sum up, the United States’ engagement in the Middle East, the programs implemented in the Sahel, and the assessment processes, have contributed to strengthen the understanding of the terrorism phenomenon.

The global war the United States plans and conducts draws many inputs from services involved in the physical fighting as well as from the ones in charge of analyzing the terrorism phenomenon. For example, the 9/11 Commission’s Report clearly


demonstrated that the terrorist organizations had reached critical capabilities while showing an incredible ability to attain both very sensitive and protected targets. In its report, the commission observed, “We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined and lethal.” Furthermore, the same commission, when investigating, asked some counterterrorism experts, if they were terrorist group leaders, where they would implant their bases. Many times, the answers given were West Africa (specifically, Mali and Nigeria). The United States’ dynamic of investigating events, hearing from experts, and updating data contributes to enlighten the policy makers in particular and to demystify the terrorism phenomenon in general.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of counterterrorism in general has generated many policy recommendations. Scholars may not agree on a single definition of terrorism, but they do believe that it is one of the most challenging threats of the 21st century. Even though terrorism is not the exclusive privilege of Muslim extremists, the case studied here explores Islamist terrorism in the Sahel. Addressing this threat, scholars have recommended many strategies, which sometimes conflict but hold the potential to complement one another. While some researchers think that terrorism should be preemptively addressed, some others emphasize direct actions in response to terrorist attacks. In any case, spotting and dealing with the terrorism drivers, as early as possible, could be a major step in the process of framing a global approach, which also should include effective measures in case

29 Ibid., Preface, xvi.
30 Ibid., 366.
terrorism breaks out.\textsuperscript{35} In other words, the preventive measures in peacetime seem as important as physical and intellectual measures taken in response to terrorist groups’ violent actions. Consequently, this literature review is categorized into four approaches. The governance approach, the security approach, the economic approach, and the educational approach come together and form a comprehensive strategy.\textsuperscript{36}

1. **Governance Approach**

   Many researchers mention the ineffectiveness of state governance as contributing to terrorist organizations’ birth and growth.\textsuperscript{37} According to Dr. Jessica Piombo, Sub-Saharan Africa’s lack of development and good governance is a source of conflicts and insecurity.\textsuperscript{38} In the same vein, the safe havens used by terrorist organizations reflect either the failure of a state’s governance or its collusion with the terrorist groups.\textsuperscript{39} Edward Newman, a British scholar, asserts, “State failure or poor governance may be greater threats, as terrorist organizations exploit the absence of order and regulation, even without the support of governments.”\textsuperscript{40} Giving shelter to terrorist organizations in remote areas or in cities, or being unable to control its own territory while terrorist groups dwell there, contributes to creating and maintaining safe havens for them. For example, Lyman and Morrison point out the case of the Sudanese government that, according to them, had given shelter and protection to Osama Bin Laden from 1991 to 1996.\textsuperscript{41} Furthermore, citing the case of Nigeria, Lyman and Morrison mention that the rising crimes and increasing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Ronald Crelinsten, “Perspectives on Counterterrorism: From Stovepipes to a Comprehensive Approach,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (February 2014): 2, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180128/332-2270-6-PBFull.pdf.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
instability made the extremist leader’s message more credible to local people. These authors add that the political leaders from the north, not happy about losing influence because of the democratization and the new government’s anticorruption measures, shifted their position in manipulating the local populations. They installed Islamic law (Shari’a) in response to the rampant crimes. People accepted and appreciated it because of the unjust and ineffective governance they had been experiencing. To sum up the scholars, ineffective governance, which included official connections with terrorist organizations, lack of justice, lack of human rights, or lack of democracy, could significantly contribute to the birth or rise of terrorism.

2. Security Approach

According to some well-known scholars, even though military and security measures are insufficient in combating terrorism, they play a key role in the comprehensive approach necessary to win the war on terrorism. According to Sanaa Khan and Mieke Eoyang, “Jointly, over 15,000 airstrikes have been conducted in Iraq and Syria. Over 30,000 ISIS targets have been damaged or destroyed, including oil infrastructure, combat positions, and tanks,” and that did not solve the terrorism problem there, as it was supposed to do. They think that the security measures should be only part of a more comprehensive approach.

According to Charles Rault, a scholar who has studied the French counterterrorism approach, the security approach should include security cooperation aspects as well as military operation and intelligence aspects. To Rault, the security cooperation itself might

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42 Ibid., 79.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
rely on both training and intelligence sharing with partners and allies. Sharing the same perspective, Simon J. Powelson, an American officer, who closely participated in Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) training in combating terrorism, thinks that the security cooperation should be as long lasting as possible since definitively defeating terrorism might be a very long-range engagement. In his Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) thesis, Powelson declares that “episodic engagement by itself does not build real or lasting capability and capacity.” After having investigated the reasons why the Malian Armed Forces, the U.S. Special Operations Forces (US-SOF) trainees, were defeated by the terrorist groups, Powelson came up with the conclusion that “enduring engagement is of enduring value; episodic engagement, on its own, is not.” The same idea flows from some others’ analyses, like that of Le Sage, who advocates for “a long-term commitment to modernizing law enforcement, civilian intelligence and border security agencies.”

To some researchers, military campaigns targeting combat units as well as infrastructure (specifically, training centers, and logistic and communication means) represent the most effective way to defeat terrorism. Joseph Guido advocates for offensive and coercing military operations against terrorist bases. Based on his own field experiences in the Sahel region and his study of U.S. counterterrorism experience, Guido concludes that, “Denying terrorists’ sanctuary has become a pillar of U.S. defense strategy since the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks.”

49 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., Abstract.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
In terms of security and intelligence measures, another thought flows from the American 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, which describes a 4D strategy (Defeat, Deny, Diminish and Defend).\textsuperscript{57} The Defeat section mentions: “The best way to defeat terrorism is to isolate and localize its activities and then destroy it through intensive, sustained action.”\textsuperscript{58} The same document gives credit to intelligence as a key factor in that strategy.\textsuperscript{59} Talking about the need of identifying, locating, and destroying terrorists and terrorist organizations, the 2003 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism paraphrases an adage that says, “Know your enemy [as] one of the most acceptable maxims in warfare.”\textsuperscript{60} The strategy envisages strengthening intelligence capabilities at the sates, federal and international levels.\textsuperscript{61} Then, it foresees a major step, which is to “use every tool available to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy their [terrorist organizations’] capacity to conduct acts of terror.”\textsuperscript{62} Following up, the strategy specifies, “The final element of the Defeat goal is an aggressive, offensive strategy to eliminate capabilities that allow terrorists to exist and operate.”\textsuperscript{63} The strategy further states that terrorists’ “sanctuaries; leadership; command, control, and communications; material support; and finances should be targeted.”\textsuperscript{64}

Many scholars for many reasons have criticized the effectiveness of the security approach to fighting terrorism.\textsuperscript{65} The analysts’ opinions about the security approach vary from accepting it as just a part of a comprehensive strategy to totally rejecting it.\textsuperscript{66} To

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
Daniel Byman, a senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings and Professor and Senior Associate Dean at Georgetown University, even though the military option can garner positive results, it should be carefully used.67 According to him, “Targeted killings are also an appropriate use of military force, though they should be used sparingly.”68 Moreover, Byman, asserts, “Limited military strikes usually fail and often backfire.”69 Therefore, another concern about military operations is the anti-Western feeling they create.70 In turn, that anger strengthens the terrorists’ propaganda and could even compromise the other positive efforts made in combating the phenomenon.71

3. Economic Approach

Some scholars, like David Sterman, argue that poverty and low economic resilience play a fundamental role in the rise of terrorism.72 Simon Cottee, trying to explain “What motivates terrorists,” came up with the conclusion that the economic alternative offered by terrorist groups is so attractive—contrasting with the inefficiency of the state policy—that in certain regions desperate people do not resist terrorists’ offers.73 Lael Brainard and Derek Chollet suggest that extreme poverty feeds conflicts.74 According to Brainard and

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68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
Chollet’s study, the lack of essential needs in addition to insecurity’s pressure makes people more vulnerable to terrorists’ appeal.\textsuperscript{75} The same conditions contribute in turning local people against the authorities they blame for being unable to provide basic needs or to protect them.

The snaky issue of which one (poverty or conflict) feeds the other is discussed by James A. Piazza, who concludes that the question would always remain as a matter of debate among scholars.\textsuperscript{76} Danielle Beswick and Paul Jackson analyze the link between security and development through academic theory, field research, and policy developments and find that security and development reinforce each other.\textsuperscript{77} In their conclusion, Beswick and Jackson stress that unemployment is an important driver to terrorism.\textsuperscript{78} According to them, after getting their diplomas, many young people stay in the streets doing nothing, without any employment opportunity.\textsuperscript{79} Hence, living miserably and lacking credible alternatives from the government, they become prime targets for terrorist recruiters and are likely to answer positively.\textsuperscript{80}

Supporting the view that youth unemployment plays a key role in the terrorism issue, Clint Watts, an antiterrorism expert and former Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), observes, “The educated recruit … cannot find gainful employment locally (high unemployment) nor campaign for greater economic and social access (lower political rights). Surrounded by other underemployed recruits (high youth population) and

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
former foreign fighters, the recruit sees jihad as not just a potential option but also his only purpose.”⁸¹ Clint’s assertion shows how risky it is to the unemployed youth living in poor and terrorism-influenced environments.⁸² More interestingly, a study by Raoul Caruso and Eveline Gavrilova on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shown that “there is a positive association between the growth rate of youth unemployment and Palestinian brutality; there is a positive association between the growth rate of unemployment and the number of incidents.”⁸³ Corroborating all of the preceding findings, Gertrude Adwoa Offeibe Ansaaku, an African antiterrorism expert, declares, “Without jobs, violent extremist organizations can be an attractive source of income, and countries that fail to create employment opportunities for young people witness more incidents perpetrated by these groups.”⁸⁴

4. Educational Approach

According to some scholars, the lack of education is an important contributor to terrorism’s growth.⁸⁵ To Claude Berrebi, the reason why in certain areas (countries), people are attracted by terrorism has something to do with their lack of education, and that can be a religious extremism driver since less educated people tend to respond to the terrorists’ propaganda positively.⁸⁶ Sharing the same point of view, Lesly Anne Warner, a foreign affairs analyst with solid expertise on African countries, argues that: “Drivers of violent extremism in the region are not sole-source; they include youth frustration over insufficient

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⁸² Ibid.


⁸⁶ Ibid.
educational or vocational opportunities.” In the same vein, Amritha Venkatraman stresses that terrorists’ propaganda is always built on a tendentious interpretation of the Quran, the Muslims’ Holy Scriptures.

Donald Holbrook argues that, lacking sufficient contextual knowledge and skills, some religious leaders, even some simple believers, fall into a rigorist interpretation of the Islamic scriptures, which justifies the “duty to kill” non-Muslims or non-believers.89 Supporting Holbrook’s point of view, Qasim Rashid thinks that the terrorists’ biased interpretation of the Holy Scriptures is either guided by the clear willingness to manipulate people or flows from a proselytizing sincere heart, but very limited knowledge.90 That way of wrongly interpreting the Quran is denounced by Shawki Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, who declares, “They take the Quranic verses and the Prophet’s words out of context and imbue them with savage meanings.” According to Alan Travis, a Britain Home Affairs editor, who accessed the restricted 2008 United Kingdom’s MI5 briefing report on radicalization, “Far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism … lack religious literacy and could be regarded as religious novices.”92 John L. Esposito, who participated in the studies on radicalization, terrorism, and global suicide


bombings in Europe that found low educational level is an important factor in the radicalization of European Muslim youth, confirms that assertion.93

E. POTENTIAL EXPLANATION

In fighting terrorism, the countries of G5 Sahel face myriad problems; some are structural while the most visible are functional. The dream of building an embedded, safe, and developed space is hampered by several structural challenges. One can cite the ethnic disparity, the fate of minorities, the social segmentation of Sahelian societies, the structure of the central power as well as those of local powers, the countries’ dimensions, the climate affecting populations’ resilience, etc. Another range of challenges is related to the weakness of the system implemented by the central powers as well as the local powers. In fact, the chosen ways to deal with the insecurity and the poverty have proved very inefficient. The last one, but not the least, is the functioning of the international system and other world organizations, which seem to stifle weak states, thus narrowing their chance of emergence. Nevertheless, the suggested challenges, instead of discouraging Sahelian governments, should be taken as a springboard to reach the goals.

To effectively deal with the terrorism phenomenon in the Sahel, a comprehensive strategy that includes governance measures, security measures, economic measures, and educational measures should be implemented. These four approaches tied to each other, sometimes overlapping one another, must be taken as the four pillars of a single strategy to successfully overcome terrorism in the Sahel G5’s space. While the governance approach enhances the rule of law, and faces the ungoverned spaces and local communities’ inclusion issue, the security approach combines a range of intelligence and military actions against terrorist targets. The educational approach seeks to increase the schooling rate and reduce illiteracy whereas the economic approach aims to fight poverty and unemployment in addition to enhancing local communities’ resilience. In sum, identifying and dealing with terrorism drivers, and physically combating it by coercive

actions, should be parts of a comprehensive strategy that holds the potential to entirely address the problematic nature of terrorism.\textsuperscript{94}

\textbf{F. HYPOTHESIS}

Learning from U.S. military engagement in Africa since 2002 while thinking of the best way of making the Sahel G5 organization successful, one can hypothesize that if the Sahel G5 organization raises its local populations’ education level in addition to offering economic opportunities, it will reduce the terrorism phenomenon. Enhancing governance and making security forces more professional (well trained and adequately equipped) will contribute to a long lasting peace and development in the Sahel G5’s space.

Following this first thesis chapter, which has presented the literature review, the second chapter assesses the effectiveness of the United States’ counterterrorism experience in the Sahel, in terms of both successes and failures. The third chapter investigates the Sahel G5 organization’s concept of combating terrorism, which also relies on governance and security measures as well as economic and educational measures. After mentioning the main terrorist groups operating in the Sahel G5’s space, the last chapter discusses the SG5’s prognosis for success.

II. SAHEL: U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM ASSESSMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous chapter, the United States of America has earned substantial experience through operations, training, and studies related to counterterrorism. It has exerted great efforts in combating terrorism in its homeland as well as abroad in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.

According to the Stimson Study Group on Counterterrorism Spending, from 2002 to 2017, the United States spent $2.8 trillion on counterterrorism. That indicates a yearly average of almost $190 billion, which is higher than the 2017 combined defense expenditures of Russia, India, and South Korea. The United States engagement to fight terrorism has led it to invest significantly in preventing as well as combating the phenomenon. As part of this effort, the country has increased its security cooperation all over the world. That engagement has allowed the United States to capitalize on very broad experience and to strengthen its counterterrorism strategy.

Building upon the United States’ resolution to fight terrorism, the 9/11 attacks hardened a war-oriented mindset among American leaders, who started paying much more attention to Africa. President George W. Bush’s speech following the attack was clear


99 Ibid.

in terms of determination: “I’ve directed the full resources for our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.” Following up with its resolution of eradicating terrorism, the United States did pay more and more attention to the growing ungoverned spaces in Africa. Subsequently, the United States deployed a significant number of troops in Africa. Practically, worldwide deployment of U.S. Special Operations rose from 1% in 2006 in Africa to 10% in 2014.

Despite the controversial aspect of U.S. counterterrorism, African leaders have opened up to it. Indeed, the American counterterrorism ideology implemented through a brutal and offensive strategy was widely criticized. The most virulent critiques came from non-governmental organizations (NGO) that pointed to the United States’ human rights violations and the civilian casualties. According to Human Rights Watch, “The United States has refused to recognize the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to any of the Afghan war or al-Qaeda detainees held at Guantánamo or elsewhere, including captured members of the Taliban armed forces, although it has insisted that it treats them...

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humanely.”\textsuperscript{108} Despite this controversy, investing hope in U.S. expertise and its commitment to eradicate terrorism everywhere in the world, most African leaders saw the United States’ support as at least a short-term solution to the pressing threats. These threats target poverty, low level of education, ineffective governance, and military weakness.\textsuperscript{109} Interestingly, the American counterterrorism package considers all of the aforementioned factors.\textsuperscript{110} Seemingly, African leaders did not acknowledge NGOs’ criticism of the United States because of the urgency of the threats they face. Currently, the United States has implemented many antiterrorism programs in Africa, introducing a set of educational, economic, governance and security measures.\textsuperscript{111}

This chapter aims to assess the United States’ counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel region through the prism of economic, educational, governance, and security measures. Therefore, the ways the United States responded to the drivers are investigated as well as how it addressed the physical consequences. For that purpose, the thesis focuses on the impact of three main initiatives: The Pan Sahel Initiative, the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership, and the African Command. In sum, this chapter capitalizes on data from U.S. government official documents and reports, as well as independent studies and scholars’ analyses.

B. GOVERNANCE MEASURES

Knowing that ineffective governance can be a driver of violent extremism and terrorism, the United States pays close attention to its partners’ governance.\textsuperscript{112} In the Sahel countries, despite the commitment of political leaders to democratic rule, many weaknesses


\textsuperscript{111}Ibid.

have shown up and contributed to unhappiness and revolts.\textsuperscript{113} Indeed, as long as people suffer from injustice, the tendency to defy the authorities hatches and grows.\textsuperscript{114} At a certain level, this condition transforms into an active confrontation, which leads opponents to embrace radical ways of solving their problems.\textsuperscript{115} More dangerously, the feeling of injustice among youth can drive them to join criminal and terrorist organizations.\textsuperscript{116} According to the USAID, “Countries that have ineffective government institutions, rampant corruption and weak rule of law have a 30\% to 45\% higher risk of civil war and higher risk of extreme criminal violence than other developing countries.”\textsuperscript{117} This section assesses the United States’ achievements in terms of governance support in the Sahel countries, in direct or indirect responses to the terrorism threat.

Knowing that each of the Sahel G5 countries has a history of ineffective democracy characterized by human rights violations, unfair elections, corruption, unequal distribution of growth’s fruits, and minority issues, the United States has encouraged and supported for effective governance as well as greater social justice.\textsuperscript{118} Effective governance is essential to social cohesion since it lessens the trend of protests, and allows the full participation of everybody into public life.\textsuperscript{119} Willing to contribute to that objective, USAID launched an ambitious program from 2016 to 2021, with a budget of $13 million, which includes the Sahel G5 countries.\textsuperscript{120} Providing tools to counter violent extremism, the program aims to strengthen the civil societies, allowing them to play their role in democratic debates, in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
addition to the other goals. In Mali, USAID implemented a wide program focused on human rights and rule of law as key factors of social justice in any democracy. According to USAID, whenever a country works to consolidate its democracy and governance, the country advances its citizens’ freedom, dignity, and development. The USAID Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) program covering 2015–2016 and funded with $750,000 was conducted with Freedom House and the American Bar Association.

USAID has contributed to strengthening the other Sahel G5 countries’ governance in many ways. In Niger, USAID has focused on some key sectors involving the government, the extractive industry, the National Assembly, communities, and the civil society. The program has contributed to capacity building in favor of the National Assembly and civil society in terms of overseeing government activities. In Chad, USAID is closely involved in building peaceful communication and interaction among the components of society, providing trainings and workshops to prepare both the administrators and the local populations to stand against violent extremism and terrorism. Also, USAID encourages the rule of law while promoting the emergence of a strong civil society. More precisely, its work focuses on youth and on weak and marginalized populations, encourages peace messages, legal moneymaking opportunities, and good governance. USAID’s aim has always been to create a collaborative framework including all of the society’s components. Targeting vulnerable communities

121 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
in northern Mali, USAID, through the Peace, Democracy, and Governance Office, funded $21.9 million to address violent extremism.\textsuperscript{129} The program trained traditional, religious, and elected leaders across ethnic communities in 200 villages in conflict resolution, while more than 20 inter-ethnic women’s peace committees facilitated intercommunity dialogue and provided psychological support, and more than 100 women and youth worked as local conflict mediators.\textsuperscript{130} In addition, engaging at-risk youth ages 15 to 29, the program supported the creation of 100 inter-ethnic sports clubs.\textsuperscript{131} According to USAID, “The community level conflict mediation groups successfully mediated 31 conflicts in the targeted areas.”\textsuperscript{132} Finally, USAID’s programs have contributed to drying up the violent extremists’ and terrorist organization’s sources of recruitment.

C. SECURITY MEASURES

In terms of security measures in fighting terrorism in the Sahel G5, the United States implemented a variety of strategies from intelligence sharing to physical engagements.\textsuperscript{133} By not taking the lead on the ground as a reflection of its official stance, the United States implemented a spectrum of strategies, composed of training and equipping local forces in addition to “coaching” sometimes in real operations.\textsuperscript{134} Acknowledging the U.S. engagement in the Sahel G5 area, however, one can legitimately question why terrorist groups are proliferating? What is the outcome of two decades of U.S. engagement? Why could the Sahelian governments not capitalize on the U.S. aid? This section assesses how the United States implemented strategies in fighting terrorism in


\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.


the Sahel G5 area. It will consider the PSI achievements as well as those of TSCTP and AFRICOM.

Aiming to build Sahelian security forces’ capacities, the United States has launched different antiterrorism programs with training and equipment. To enhance capabilities, the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) brought both U.S. and African combat units for common trainings while the Flintlock exercises annually gather African troops. In addition, under TSCTP’s umbrella, individual countries have benefited from training and equipment. For example in Mali, the US-SOF trained the ETIAs (Echelon Tactiques Inter Armes) and the 33rd Regiment des Commando Parachutistes (Airborne Battalion or RCP). Powelson recognizes that, for unknown reasons, the trained units have not been equipped as promised by the United States. Yet, from 2005 to 2012, the units were deployed for combating terrorist groups in the desert. Unfortunately, the U.S. trainees could not durably face their enemies mostly due to logistical issues. Also, the 1,000 men (ETIA plus RCP), who were fighting terrorism in an area bigger than the size of Texas would have had difficulty succeeding, while the enemy benefited from local complicities.

In sum, PSI did not reach its goals.

The United States has implemented a progressive strategy, from PSI to TSCTP and AFRICOM, to help Sahelian countries take control of their ungoverned areas as well as the porous borders (potential safe havens for the returning fighters from Afghanistan or the jihadist from Algeria). Launched in 2002, the PSI aimed to help Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad to protect their borders. Based upon military-to-military cooperation, PSI helped in the sharing of intelligence and in small combat unit training, as well as allowing

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137 Ibid. 43–44.

138 Ibid.

better cooperation among the countries.\textsuperscript{140} PSI trained light infantry units in Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Chad, focusing on elementary skills (marksmanship, planning, communications, GPS, and patrolling).\textsuperscript{141} Nonetheless, today the reality is that AQMI and its affiliated groups have defeated Malian security forces. In addition, the northern part of Mauritania and Burkina Faso and Niger, in addition to southern Chad, are still suffering from a much bigger terrorist threat than in 2002. After the PSI was judged successful by American policy makers, the TSCTP was established in 2005 with a broader scope and much more funding.\textsuperscript{142} Interestingly, USAID was deeply involved in addition to the Department of Defense, but the Department of State also became involved during the TSCTP.\textsuperscript{143} The TSCTP implementation shows a strategic shifting in terms of approach since USAID, a nonmilitary agency, received the largest portion of the budget.\textsuperscript{144} The funding allowed the United States to train and equip more combat units, specifically light infantry units, like ETIAs in Mali.\textsuperscript{145} In 2008, the United States established AFRICOM with many more responsibilities.\textsuperscript{146} Specifically, it included humanitarian operations in addition to its normal geographical combat command tasks.\textsuperscript{147} In sum, the U.S. support to Sahelian countries was not only military oriented but also state capacity building in terms of development and regional cooperation.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{145} ETIA Echelon Tactic Inter Armes is a small and light infantry unit of about 140 soldiers. Four of them were created with the support of the United States from 2006 to 2008.


\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
The concept of training and equipping infantry units was appreciated by the African partners, but many factors jeopardized, if not destroyed, the United States security measures in fighting terrorism is the Sahel. First, the width of the Sahelian desert, in addition to the enduring sanctuaries of terrorist groups, represented some important challenges that eroded the U.S. engagement outcomes. In terms of logistical support, most of the Sahel G5 countries are unable to effectively support a long-term operation. Another factor, which accelerated the situation’s worsening crisis, was the collapse of the Libyan government in 2011. Indeed, the huge quantity of weapons stored in Libya landed in the hands of rebel groups and terrorist organizations. In sum, even though the U.S. efforts to build effective defense tools in the Sahel G5 brought hope, its speed has not allowed local forces to mature while the threats were developing and propagating even faster. In addition, the inability of the Sahel G5 leaders to keep the trained units together contributed to destroying their operational capacity. Finally, the United States seems to have relied much too heavily on its Sahelian partners without taking into account the rapid change in the security situation and the slow adaptability of their political and military leadership.

D. ECONOMIC MEASURES

In fighting terrorism, economic measures mostly aim to strengthen communities’ resilience to hinder terrorists’ recruitment. Indeed, the conducive conditions are

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important to address as President Obama mentioned in 2005: “Ideologies are not defeated with guns, they’re defeated by better ideas—a more attractive and compelling vision…. Poverty does not cause terrorism. But as we’ve seen across … Africa, when people, especially young people, are impoverished and hopeless and feel humiliated by injustice and corruption, that can fuel resentments that terrorists exploit.”\textsuperscript{151} The president then emphasized the role of viable development, which creates opportunity and self-esteem for youth.\textsuperscript{152} Interestingly, the U.S. policy makers understood early the importance of economic development and political measures to combat terrorism.\textsuperscript{153} Consequently, the nonmilitary aspects of the U.S.–Sahel countries’ cooperation are coming to the forefront. Therefore, the economic support of Sahelian countries dealing with terrorism was implemented as part of a comprehensive approach as mentioned in the 2003 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) National Strategy for Combating Terrorism.\textsuperscript{154}

This section talks about the United States’ achievements in terms of economic support benefiting Sahelian countries that face terrorism threats. Each one of the Sahel G5 countries has been part of the three initiatives mentioned previously in addition to its own bilateral cooperation with the United States. Therefore, the section considers the main economic policies implemented by the United States through its agencies in the Sahel.

The United States researched and found that unemployment and poverty are some terrorism drivers in the Sahel and subsequently invested funds to address these conditions.\textsuperscript{155} Indeed, for the TSCTP, USAID ordered two studies in 2005 to find how development assistance could be most effective in terms of sustainable peace and stability


\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.


in Africa (north and west). According to Earl Gast, the first study aggregated and supplemented the real situation, while the second one focused on how to address the findings. Interestingly, the former found that the unmet needs, in terms of economic conditions, are an important driver of violent extremism, including terrorism. More precisely, it discovered that people, mostly young men and women, who suffer from poor economic conditions, tend to slide into violent extremism. That tendency is explained by the fact that terrorist organizations offer economic answers (jobs, food, medical care, and other services like socio-economical guarantees) to these people. Lianne Kennedy Boudali from the Combating Terrorism Center notes that the money allocated to TSCP is roughly $100 million per year, while International Crisis Group specified that an important part of this funding is development oriented.

After having established that being more resilient to hunger and creating more job opportunities can reduce the terrorist groups’ influence in many areas, the United States Government concocted various plans to address these causes. For example, USAID helped “the Nigerien government and local actors create new economic conditions

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157 Ibid.


opportunities in favor of youth for it can resist to extremist, and contribute to the country’s stability.”

Also, the USAID program Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) facilitated access to credit and more economic openings for local populations, in addition to aiding natural resource and soil management and animal husbandry. Also, USAID participates in improving the “competitiveness and inclusiveness of three pro-poor value chains: cowpea, small ruminants and poultry, while strengthening the organizational capacities of farmer groups.” In its 2016 Report, USAID mentions that RISE has benefited almost 2 million persons in Niger and Burkina Faso. The report claims, “As a result of investments to expand economic opportunities, nearly 250,000 farmers are now applying new technologies and management practices, well over 1,000 small and medium sized enterprises have accessed $6.3 million in loans, and more than 1,300 savings groups have accumulated $772,000 in capital for investment.” The RISE program is implemented in Mali as it has been in Niger. In terms of economic development, the United States’ policy in fighting terrorism in the Sahel has contributed to making youth more resistant to terrorist groups’ appeal. Therefore, it is assumed that without the USAID’s achievements in building resilience among vulnerable populations, both the gap left by the governments and the terrorist groups’ pressure would push many people to join terrorist organizations.

Another economic response to terrorism threats the United States has implemented in the Sahel has focused on professional training, youth entrepreneurship, and agriculture productivity. In Mali, the PAJE-Nieta, a local NGO, USAID Out-of-school Youth Project sponsored trained 10,951 rural youth from 2010 to 2015, and made them either

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163 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
self-employers or more competitive for jobs. According to USAID, “8,077 youth launched a microenterprise as self-employed, 82% of trained youth who received kits were still self-employed up to 24 months after the close of the youth development cycle, 70% of youth who launched microenterprises between 2011 and 2013 were still operating their businesses as of November 2015.” In the same vein, the following graphic (Figure 1) shows the change in terms of agricultural production under the Integrated Initiatives for Economic Growth in Mali (IICEM), a USAID funded program, from 2009 to 2012. The 2011–2012 decrease resulted from the country’s major security and political crises. On March 22, 2012, the democratically elected president was overthrown by a military coup d’état. Subsequently, two third of the country was invaded by terrorist and separatist groups. Despite new elections in 2013 that brought an elected president, the government still does not control an important part of the country, where populations continue to lack many services compared to the other regions. As revealed by USAID in the following graphic, its program Integrated Initiatives for Economic Growth in Mali has fueled significant increases in agricultural production for the small farmers. Obviously, to a farmer, having an agricultural production increase means a great change in terms of financial wellness. Even though other programs not part of TSCTP have contributed to these achievements in addition to the country’s own efforts, one can assume that the transition from PSI, which was an almost pure military activity, to TSCP represents a great improvement in terms of a comprehensive approach in fighting terrorism.


169 Ibid.


171 Ibid.


To sum up, the United States’ assistance toward Sahel G5 countries did contribute to better development conditions. In 2014, the United States spent almost $280 million (see Figure 2) to support Sahelian countries mostly in the domain of agriculture and food security. The following graphic highlights these efforts. Also, the 2012 U.S. Sahel Joint Planning Cell aimed to reduce poverty and hunger among economically weak groups by 20% and to increase income from livestock breeding by 50%. Although it is difficult to declare that American programs directly contributed to fighting terrorism, it is

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177 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
observable that people and communities that benefited from the USAID programs had their lives positively changed.\textsuperscript{180}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{USAID: Sahel.\textsuperscript{181}}
\end{figure}

\textbf{E. EDUCATION MEASURES}

Since many scholars and U.S. agencies have established the link between lack of education and violent extremism, including terrorism in Africa, the United States implemented programs to encourage African countries to face the problem. In addition, the African Union (AU) during its meeting at Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on January 27, 2018,

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highlighted the place of education in combating terrorism.\textsuperscript{182} Knowing that Africa holds one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, the African Union aimed to improve the schooling rate as well as educating the religious leaders so they can play a positive role in fighting radicalization.\textsuperscript{183} Therefore, the United States’ efforts to address the education issues in the Sahel met the communities’ and governments’ expectations.

The Sahel G5 countries’ low level of literacy as well as their weak schooling rate contrasts with their high fertility rate.\textsuperscript{184} This birth performance reveals a strong challenge to these poor countries and must be addressed in terms of education to reduce the potential youth exposure to terrorist appeals. For example, Niger has the highest birth rate in the world while 70\% of its population is illiterate and almost half of the female primary school students do not reach the sixth grade.\textsuperscript{185} If nothing is done to manage the growing population’s needs, especially the youth, through education, the chance exists that they will boost terrorist groups.

This section assesses the U.S. achievements in terms of developing education and literacy in the Sahel G5 countries. This assessment does not focus on a precise time period since the aim is to find out how USAID and its connected agencies have improved the literacy level, and then how that contribution has helped to enlighten people who might be exposed to terrorism propaganda. In other words, the section enumerates only the current


achievements in each country in terms of USAID’s impact on the national education system.

USAID developed an education strategy for 2011–2015 that aimed to improve the education level throughout the world.\textsuperscript{186} This strategy, the third goal of which was to “increase equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015,” recognized the link among education, economic growth, and democratic governance.\textsuperscript{187} That conviction drove USAID to implement many programs in favor of Sahel G5 countries.

In Mali, USAID helped to achieve some spectacular results.\textsuperscript{188} These results include training teachers in more than 2,000 schools, reinforcing the school administration method by helping establish more than 500 parent-teacher associations and almost ten local NGOs, and reaching about 4,000 out-of-school jobless youth, males as well as females.\textsuperscript{189} Impressively, the impact was concrete and very interesting. According to USAID, “The proportion of illiterate youth tested participating in USAID’s Youth Project dropped from 79% (male: 85%; female: 71%) at baseline to 48% (male: 59%; female: 36%) at midline, while the proportion of semi-literate youth rose from 21% (male: 15%; female: 29%) to 52% (male: 41%; female: 64%) in that same timeframe.”\textsuperscript{190} More interestingly, USAID has launched a project, Equitable Access to Education for Children in Areas of Insecurity, covering 2015 to 2017 with a budget of $4.9 million, targeting areas of insecurity where schools were closed due to terrorist threats (Segou, Mopti, Timbuktu, Taoudenni, Gao, Menaka, and Kidal regions).\textsuperscript{191} The project aimed to achieve the following results: facilitating access of 100,000 girls and boys in the most conflict-affected communities,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{189} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{190} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{191} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
identify and train 2,000 teachers to implement an accelerated learning curriculum and psychosocial response, enrollment of 15,000 children in the accelerated learning program.\textsuperscript{192} In addition, the project aimed to increase the capacities of the education system at all levels, which would help to plan and implement an education contingency plan in case of emergency.\textsuperscript{193} In 2013, through the civil society, a contingency plan was implemented in the north of Mali when the government workers withdrew due to a terrorist group invasion.

Even though the increase in both school enrollment and literacy rates in Mali coincides with the United States’ firm engagement in these domains, it is important to know that the Malian government itself has developed its own national policy for education in addition to getting support from other non-American partners (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, World Bank (WB), African Union, and European Union).\textsuperscript{194} Table 1 reveals the significant changes in terms of schooling rate from 2000/2001 to 2013/2014, which has increased by more than ten points.\textsuperscript{195} The government recognized the great contribution from foreign partners, including the United States, even though it does not specify the amount of money contributed by each one of the partners. Tellingly, considering the data given by USAID in the previous paragraph, it is clear that it has lifted the Malian schooling rate as well as the literacy rate, as shown in Figure 3.\textsuperscript{196} The graphic demonstrates the increase in the literacy rate among Malian populations according to their ages.\textsuperscript{197} Since most of the U.S. programs against terrorism in Africa started after 2000, coinciding with

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid.
the very notable changes shown in Figure 3, one can argue the undeniable role played by these programs in the increase of both schooling and literacy rates.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Years</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>National Schooling Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>59.9%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>72.1%</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Government of Niger signed a ten-year partnership with USAID in 2013, which started in 2014 to address the 70% illiteracy rate. In Niger, the USAID education program focused on increasing the schooling rate as well as lowering illiteracy. It has also helped in enhancing education quality in addition to encouraging civil society to accept oversight of the school domain. USAID contributes to building good communication

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201 Ibid.
among school actors in Niger. The change observed in schooling rate in Niger from 2012 to 2016 is a positive sign. According to the Niger government’s data, as shown in Table 2, a constant evolution can be seen in terms of schooling, among both male and female students.

Table 2. Niger’s schooling rate evolution 2012–2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Annual Growth Rate’s Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>255,423</td>
<td>271,444</td>
<td>279,785</td>
<td>301,883</td>
<td>289,774</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>219,743</td>
<td>266,224</td>
<td>230,422</td>
<td>252,157</td>
<td>242,046</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>475,166</td>
<td>497,668</td>
<td>510,207</td>
<td>554,040</td>
<td>531,820</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the description of the USAID education strategy and achievements in Niger and Mali is quite like what it has done in the other Sahel G5 countries (Chad, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso). In addition, its education strategy is tied to many other strategies for the same goal: to contribute to youth employment, increase economic resilience, contribute to social cohesion, or participate into the decision-making process. For example, the Republic of Mauritania “is contending with high youth unemployment (48.9% for men and 40.7% for women), high poverty (42%) and a relative lack of formal education.”

To sum up, although it is difficult to measure the United States programs’ impact within the education and literacy domain in the Sahel G5 countries, it is possible to argue that all these supports have contributed to erode the terrorists’ ability to recruit. The

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202 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
programs forcibly prepared people to understand the hidden and dangerous face of the terrorist propaganda. The programs provided to people the means of resisting obscurantists’ appeals and make people ready to connect with knowledge. Therefore, they can be part of a passive or active resistance network, standing against the terrorism phenomenon in the Sahel.

F. CONCLUSION

The U.S. counterterrorism experience in the Sahel G5 countries provides many lessons in terms of a strategy to defeat terrorism. The understanding that terrorism could not be won without a global approach supported it. That approach included strategies dealing with root-causes of the terrorism threat as well as its consequences. In the light of the four-pronged U.S. strategic approach (education, economic development, governance and security), the possible defeat of the terrorist organization in the Sahel is questionable even though the United States’ approach has achieved some appreciable results. Obviously, as proven by the satisfactory rise of schooling and literacy rates in the Sahel G5 countries, the educational measures deserve credit, as does the economic data. Nevertheless, while it is impossible to quantify the governance measures’ impact, the security measures have proven to be a clear failure. Despite the fact that PSI was designed to prevent or eliminate terrorists’ sanctuaries in the Sahel Sahara region, most of the Sahelian countries have become sanctuaries to terrorist groups. Furthermore, a larger U.S. engagement against terrorism in the Sahel G5 area, through TSCTP and AFRICOM, is insufficient as witnessed by the spreading of terrorist groups and the gravity of the threats they continue to impose on the populations. The U.S. trained units were unable to stand against terrorist groups, as demonstrated in Mali in 2012. New terrorist groups are proliferating and endangering peace, security, and economic development in Sahel G5’s space. More and more light weapons are circulating out of states’ control. Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, and other armed

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groups spread and defy the governments. Therefore, despite the nearly 20-year U.S. counterterrorism engagements in the Sahel, the Sahel G5 leaders have failed to stem the spread of terrorism in their countries.²⁰⁹ In conclusion, the Sahel G5’s space is less safe than 20 years ago. Ultimately, the United States counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel can be qualified as unsuccessful since from the early 2000 to 2018 the security situation has worsened. That failure does not count for only the United States but also for its Sahelian partners that appear unable to capitalize on the support.

III. THE SAHEL G5 CONCEPT

A. INTRODUCTION

The Sahel G5 organization has drawn the attention of many scholars because of the originality of its concept, which recommends allying security and development to overcome terrorism in the Sahel region.\(^\text{210}\) That approach has fascinated many specialists, who have welcomed it since it represents a clearly stated political vision from a specific region that shares the same historical and cultural similarities and deals with the same challenges.\(^\text{211}\) While this original concept appeared as a potentially adequate response to actual terrorism threats, lack of development, including illiteracy and low education levels, together with an ineffective security apparatus, the concept has yet to address all the main issues.\(^\text{212}\) Additionally, some researchers are doubtful about the Sahel G5’s ability to achieve its goals because of its lack of funding and the low level of its defense institutions that need not only equipment but also more time to professionalize. Meanwhile, the threats are exponentially growing.\(^\text{213}\)

The SG5 countries were ready to contribute financially to the organization’s needs; however, they did call for funding from international partners since it was clear that, alone,


\(^{212}\) Ibid.


they would not be able to support the cost over a long period.\textsuperscript{214} Therefore, they established a very close cooperation with the European Union (EU) countries and other international organizations.\textsuperscript{215} The EU has always taken the lead, diplomatically as well as in fundraising, in favor of the SG5.\textsuperscript{216} In July 2017, aware of the economic weakness of the new organization, France and Germany launched the “Alliance pour le Sahel” (Sahel Alliance).\textsuperscript{217} That alliance aims to mobilize donors in favor of the SG5.\textsuperscript{218} The Sahel Alliance’s domain of action is education and training, agriculture, governance and justice, and climate deregulation issues.\textsuperscript{219} Besides the Sahel Alliance, the EU supports the SG5 in specific areas, including political dialogue, development and humanitarian support, and security.\textsuperscript{220} The SG5 leaders conceived the “Strategie pour le Development et la Securite des Pays du G5 Sahel” (Sahel G5 Countries’ Development and Security Strategy).\textsuperscript{221} The strategy highlights the context, states a vision, and explains the course of action.\textsuperscript{222} In sum, both the EU and the Sahel Alliance contribute to the SG5 strategy’s achievement.

Implementing its member countries’ development and security strategies, the SG5 organization has conceived the “Progamme d’Investismement Prioritaire” (Priority Investment Program) to immediately address the most urgent needs of security and


\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{222} Ibid.
To that end, the meeting gathering SG5 participants with international donors held in July 2014 in Niamey (Niger) decided upon an ambitious Priority Investment Program (PIP), estimated around $14.8 billion. This program aimed to boost development, governance, security, and economic resilience in addition to tackle the infrastructure issue. The PIP’s first phase (2018–2020) should allow a better road network, a better access to education, stronger security forces and desire for economic growth.

For the purpose of this thesis, assessment of the achievements of the SG5 in its brief four-year existence seems to be less interesting than studying its concept, strategy, and course of actions. Nevertheless, questioning its concept and looking at the chances of success is helpful. Therefore, this chapter explains the SG5’s organization and functioning. Then, the chapter examines the Sahelian organization strategy in terms of security and defense, governance, infrastructure, and resilience as described in its Convention of Creation.

Finally, the chapter attempts to identify the organization’s chances of success. The four areas mentioned earlier mirror the quaternary structure of education, economic development, governance, and security, by which this thesis is structured.

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225 Ibid.


B. THE SG5 ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING

The SG5 can be described as a regional security architecture that relies on the capacity building of its members (states and communities) for collectively conquering terrorism.\textsuperscript{228}

The purpose of the G5 Sahel is: (i) to guarantee conditions of development and security in the member countries; (ii) to provide a strategic framework for intervention to improve the living conditions of the population; (iii) to combine development and security, supported by democracy and good governance, in a framework of mutually beneficial regional and international cooperation and (iv) to promote inclusive and sustainable regional development.\textsuperscript{229}

To implement its policy, the Sahel G5 organization is structured into five organs: the Heads of State’s Conference, the Ministers’ Council, the Permanent Secretariat, the Defense and Security Committee, and the National Coordinating Committees.\textsuperscript{230} Established in Nouakchott (Mauritania), the Headquarters gathers official representatives of each country. The Heads of States’ Conference is the supreme governing body.\textsuperscript{231} That structure sets the organization’s strategic and political orientations and ordinarily meets once a year.\textsuperscript{232} Ordinarily meeting twice a year, the Ministers’ Council, composed of the five ministers in charge of development, is the statutory organ for implementing the organization’s political vision.\textsuperscript{233} Even though each one of the structures plays an important role in the organization’s functional system, the Permanent Secretariat that coordinates the four domains of expertise (Defense and Security, Governance, Infrastructures, Resilience)


\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., Art. 6.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., Art. 7.

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., Art. 8.
is the organization’s linchpin. A group of counselors (Legal Advisor, Programming and Evaluation, Communication and Public Affairs, Administrative and Financial Affairs) strengthens the Headquarters’ frame. Under the Ministers’ Council authority, the Permanent Secretariat is in charge of administrative, logistical, and financial matters. The Defense and Security Committee is composed of the five General Chiefs of Staff, who are assisted by experts for the purpose of managing and supervising the security and defense issues. The National Coordinating Committees are miniaturized replicas of the Permanent Secretariat in each country. Under the control of the Minister in Charge of Development, they group experts working on specific thematic issues in the frame of the Sahel G5 policy at the national levels. The graphic in Figure 4 shows the organizational structure.

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234 Ibid., Art. 10, 11, 12.
237 Ibid. Art 14.
C. THE SAHEL G5’S STRATEGY

The Sahel G5 Convention of Creation’s fifth article specifies the organization’s lines of strategy: “Strengthening peace and security in the G5 Sahel area; developing transport, hydraulic, energy and telecommunication infrastructures; creating better governance conditions; strengthening populations’ resilience capacity, ensuring sustainable food security, human development and pastoralism.”239 Although the education aspect has not been given a specific strategy, it is included in the governance and the resilience and human development strategies. In February 2018, the Sahel G5 organization

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launched its PIP’s first phase (2018–2020). Table 3 summarizes 60 projects estimated at $7,232.47 million with less than third funded in February 2018. Afterwards, aiming to help operationalizing the Sahel Joint Force, some partners like France and Germany together contributed $21.7 million while some others have pledged (Saudi Arabia $100 million, the United Arab Emirates $30 million, and the United States $60 million). The whole Sahel G5 PIP portfolio is composed of six Defense and Security projects, five Governance projects, 45 Infrastructures projects, and four Resilience and Human Development projects.

Table 3. G5 Sahel PIP portfolio (February 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projects’ orientation</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Cost $ million</th>
<th>Funding available $ million</th>
<th>Missing (gap) $ million</th>
<th>Percentage of gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defense and Security</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>544.53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>544.53</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>104.27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>104.27</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructures</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6,426.88</td>
<td>2,262.71</td>
<td>4,164.17</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and Human Development</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>162.78</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>162.78</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7,238.47</td>
<td>2,262.71</td>
<td>4,975.76</td>
<td>68.74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


241 Ibid.


244 Created by the author according to Sahel G5’s website information.
1. **Security and Defense**

The Sahel G5 Security and Defense strategy has focused on a set of six projects to respond to the urgent needs of security and development, and make the organization more dynamic since peace and security represent the communities’ highest expectations.\(^{245}\) In the frame of the PIP, the creation of both the Sahelian Center for Threat Analysis and Early Warning, and the War College and Police Academy will contribute to the security forces’ capacity building.\(^{246}\) The Defense and Security Strategy aims to reinforce the public and civil security in addition to enhance the intelligence sharing.\(^{247}\) A coherent implementation of that strategy will contribute to the achievement of the Sahel G5’s vision of building a safe and developed region in which states are democratically ruled and citizens are educated. Yet, the achievement of that strategy requires both the Sahel G5 Joint Force (SG5JF) and the Sahel G5 Police component (SG5PC) to reach full operational capacity. In addition to its mission of advising the JF commander, the Sahel G5 Police Component will be composed of investigative units in the security apparatus and the criminal justice system.\(^{248}\) The Security and Defense projects are estimated at €470 million.\(^{249}\)

Tackling the terrorism phenomenon and the other transnational threats, the Sahel G5 organization created its military Joint Force on July 2, 2017, while the process of its


\(^{246}\) Ibid.

\(^{247}\) Ibid.


Police Component creation is not yet completed. The Sahel JC was declared ready and launched on July 2, 2018, to patrol the countries’ borders, ungoverned areas, and havens for many terrorist groups. That force of 5,000 men has been assigned the mission of fighting terrorism, organized trans-border crimes, and human trafficking in an area bigger than 5,000 square kilometers, inhabited by more than 70 million people. Even though the JF supports the National Defense Forces, its focused Area of Operation (AO) composed of three sectors (almost 6,000 kilometers by 100 kilometers) seems too much to master by the JF. Each sector stretches 50 kilometers over each side of the border; thus, it covers all of the borderlines separating two or three neighboring countries. The Western Sector is the AO of two battalions (Mali and Mauritania), the Central Sector is the AO of three battalions (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger) while the Eastern Sector is the AO of two battalions (Niger and Chad).

In case of legal issues, to fulfill the need for investigation, the Sahel G5 organization has reinforced the battalions with small police or gendarmerie.

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254 Concept d’Operation du G5 Sahel.
units on the ground. Table 4 presents the JF’s details while Figure 5 shows the battalions’ AO.255

Table 4. The Joint Force details table.256

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Mauritania</th>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Burkina Faso</th>
<th>Niger</th>
<th>Chad</th>
<th>HQ &amp; log</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2. Governance

The Sahel G5 organization has indicated the governance challenge as a key issue, which should be addressed through an effective judiciary system and the rule of law, a good decentralization, and the fighting of radicalization and violent extremism. Mamadou Samake, the Sahel G5’s expert in charge of governance, has mentioned disregard for the constitution (changing the number of presidential mandates, coups d’Etat), women and youth, and minorities’ participation in decision-making processes, the unachieved decentralization processes, in addition to corruption as major challenges to

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quickly overcome. In response to the previously mentioned issues, the organization wants to consolidate the electoral processes in the five countries by strengthening the rule of law and encouraging states to effectively implement decentralization. The expert also added the importance of standing against radicalization by enhancing education and literacy. The organization highly recommended to train and to equip the law enforcers (police, judges) as a springboard for good governance. Consequently, that process will contribute to the professionalization of the judiciary system as well as to allow more people to feel themselves as part of the state. Obviously, that feeling could contribute to greater political stability and social wellness.

Besides the measures mentioned earlier, the Sahel G5 organization has determined a set of prioritized actions to promote good governance. The Sahel G5 has recommended the creation of a biometric electoral file for elections’ transparency and preventing conflict and post-electoral disputes in addition to enhance states officials’ capacity in terms of providing citizen needs. The Sahel G5 has also encouraged the creation of more positive social communication in terms of political and religious dialogue among all components of society.

Thoroughly addressing the governance issues, the organization planned five projects, estimated together at €90 million. First, human rights promotion and protection

259 Ibid.
260 Ibid.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
shows up as an important factor to peace and social cohesion in the Sahel region. The Sahel G5 plans to organize informational sessions in addition to facilitating access to justice for all the citizens, as well as strengthening the parliamentary oversight of the executive branch’s activities. Secondly, peace consolidation and conflict prevention are necessary for sustainable development. The organization aims to reinforce the culture of peace among communities, especially youth. It also foresees a setting of traditional mechanisms of conflict mediation through local leaders’ councils (chiefs of villages or tribes, civil society actors, NGOs), who are continuously in touch with locals. Thirdly, the G5S sees youth empowerment in the areas affected by conflicts and high migration zones as a condition of social stability and economic development. The project dedicated for that sector aims to facilitate jobs and loans to youth so they can be economically independent and more resistant to terrorist groups’ appeals. While the fourth project is dedicated to the conception of a comprehensive strategy addressing the youth among the five countries, its implementation represents a whole project. The youth face myriad difficulties including, but not limited to, illiteracy, rapid population growth, unemployment, poverty, climate change effects, AIDS, alcoholism and drug abuse, and lack of education. The organization has recognized youth deserve more attention from leaders since they represent the strategy’s spearhead. Hence, the organization wants to address the aforementioned challenges by facilitating access to education and health care, offering more jobs, and promoting positive communication focused on sensitizing youth about the role they should play for the success of the organization. In sum, the five projects will contribute to make governance more effective in the Sahel G5 space.

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268 Ibid., 3.
269 Ibid.
270 Ibid.
271 Ibid.
3. Infrastructure

According to the Sahel G5 organization’s strategy for development and security, both will depend on the infrastructure’s quality and quantity in terms of roads, energy, hydraulics, and telecommunications. In its PIP, the Sahel G5 has listed 45 projects estimated at €5,547.2 million. The aim of these projects is to connect people and cities, and to facilitate business in the Sahel G5 space. The major activity will be the building of a railroad (6000 kilometers) connecting all the other countries to Mauritania, the only country that has access to the ocean. Also, the setting up of a Sahelian Airways Company, in addition to the digging of wells across the desert as well as developing in the remote areas, are part of the organization’s most urgent needs. Table 5 gives the projects’ details and indicates a gap of 65% of the funding needed.

Table 5. The infrastructure program details (February 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Cost (Euro Million)</th>
<th>Funding Available</th>
<th>Missing (Gap)</th>
<th>Percentage of gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Railroad</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


275 Ibid.


278 Ibid.

4. Resilience and Human Development

According to the Sahel G5 experts, their space is a harsh, agro-sylvo-pastoral zone where populations are exposed to multiple vulnerabilities, including climatic and ecological issues leading to food and nutritional shortage, ecosystem and livestock destruction, and unemployment. The organization aims to enhance the five countries’ populations’ resilience, specifically those who live across the borders and suffer deeply from climate change effects. In response to that situation, the organization has established a set of measures, including the support of resilient pastoralism by immunizing livestock, protecting agricultural lands, securing borders, enhancing rural populations’ harvests, and mitigating conflicts among breeders. In addition, valuating natural resources, helping rural populations and people with low incomes to loan access, facilitating the access to education and health care are part of the organization course of action. The Resilience and Human Development projects represent a cost of €140.5 million.

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281 Ibid. 26–27.
282 Ibid.
IV. THE MAIN TERRORIST GROUPS AND THE SAHEL G5 ORGANIZATION’S CHANCES OF SUCCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

After having explored the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel and discussed the Sahel G5 organization’s concept of addressing terrorism threats, the identification of the main terrorist groups operating in the Sahel will help to assess the SG5’s chances of success in combating and destroying them. Indeed, the SG5’s leaders can learn from existing knowledge to strengthen their strategy and defeat the terrorist organizations in the Sahel. Therefore, understanding the main groups’ dynamics and their environment can contribute to mastering the terrorism issue in the Sahel.

B. THE MAIN TERRORISTS GROUPS OPERATING IN THE SAHEL

This section describes the Sahel region. Then it explains the conditions that contributed or facilitated the rise of terrorism in the Sahel. Finally, it points out the main terrorist groups according to their origins and their areas of operation.

1. The Sahel: A Complex Security Environment

The African region called Sahel, which extends from Mauritania and Senegal (Atlantic coast) to Sudan and Djibouti (Pacific coast), has suffered from many kinds of societal and security conflicts.\textsuperscript{285} The Sahel is composed of 11 countries, but only five of them, located in its central and western part, constitute the Sahel G5 covering more than 5 million square kilometers, as represented in Figure 6.\textsuperscript{286} That region, mostly a harsh desert,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{285} International Crisis Group, “Map of Sahel” accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.google.com/search?q=the+sahel+g5&rlz=1C1CHXU_enUS737US737&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=S_InFrZ7TC6XsM%253A%252CDVlJMvevSF_6mM%252C%28%2C%28usg=__OQxZezNJdeUYf-952_4gJltHIZk%3D&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEdw796yRvvcaAhUWFzQIHdPfDlQ_h0wFHoECAoQCw#imgrc=jpRkK5jv0laj1M
\item \textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
has been host to many security conflicts: forays, separatist rebellions, Islamist terrorism, human trafficking, and many other transnational crimes.\(^{287}\)

![Map of the Sahel region. Source: International Crisis Group.\(^{288}\)](image)

While analyzing the security issues in Sahel, it appears that the region encompasses all the ingredients of a regional security complex as described by Barry Buzan.\(^{289}\) Each of the Sahel G5 states faces the same security issues: Islamist terrorism, human trafficking, separatism, and smuggling. Moreover, these states accumulate almost as high a level of


\(^{288}\) Source: International Crisis Group, “Map of Sahel,” accessed July 10, 2018, https://www.google.com/search?q=the+sahel+g5&rlz=1C1CHXU_enUS737US737&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=S_InFrZ7TC6xMS%253A%252CDVlJMvevSF_6mM%252C%2522_4gJlhHIZk%3D&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj796yRrvecAhUWFzQIjHdpFQoQ_h0wFHoECAoQCw#imgres\r

economic instability as social unrest.\textsuperscript{290} In terms of International Relations, that similarity among the Sahel G5 states allows a regional level of analysis, and deserves to be transversally understood since transnational terrorism is their main challenge. Therefore, the Sahel G5 area represents a regional security complex run by many terrorist groups that cross borders and destroy national and international efforts to develop the countries. The complexity of that situation has justified the Sahel G5 organization’s creation, which in turn has contributed to strengthen cooperation between neighboring countries.

2. The Rise of Islamic Terrorism in the Sahel

The Algerian political instability has contributed to the birth of a violent form of extremism that polluted the Sahel.\textsuperscript{291} The 1991 military incursion to stop elections in Algeria was seen as a coup d’état by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), a religious political party likely to win these elections.\textsuperscript{292} That military intervention sparked a societal conflict, which led to what is called the Algerian civil war, lasting ten years and killing more than 100,000 people.\textsuperscript{293} During the present decade, the Algerian military regime has conducted antiterrorism operations and has defeated the terrorist groups.\textsuperscript{294} These groups retreated southward into the Sahara and Sahel, where they installed in ungoverned areas in


Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. Therefore, it is clear that the Algerian civil war has indirectly influenced the terrorist groups’ proliferating in the Sahel.

Even though most of the terrorist groups first came from Algeria, the inability of Sahelian governments to secure their borders and to meet their populations’ needs has facilitated the terrorist groups’ implantation. Lawrence Line asserts, “Most Sahelian countries are lightly governed outside their capitals, giving potential access to terrorist groups in outlying areas.” Taking advantage of these opportunities, the terrorist groups stayed and established deep relationships with locals, even providing social services as well as security to the populations living in these areas while recruiting and training the youth. In addition, they started applying Sharia, the Islamic Law, which is very restrictive. That combination of facts strengthened the terrorist hold upon local populations, among which some persons were promoted as team leaders, managers, or terrorist leaders’ representatives in the villages or tribes. More importantly, as they are foreigners marrying local women, as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is doing in Iraq and Syria, the terrorist militants build very close relationships and blood alliances with local populations. In sum, the terrorist groups fleeing Algerian security forces have taken advantage of the ungoverned areas in northern Mali, northern and western Niger, and northern Mauritania to get ready before spreading over Burkina Faso and Chad.

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3. The Main Terrorist Groups Operating in the Sahel

The main terrorist groups threatening the Sahel G5 countries are composed of AQMI and its derivative groups, and Boko Haram. The map in Figure 7 gives an overview of the terrorist group’s activities.\(^{300}\) It appears that AQMI and its affiliated groups (MUJAO, Ansar Dine) occupy the largest territory northward while Boko Haram is operating on the Niger-Chad border.\(^{301}\)


\(^{301}\) Ibid.
Figure 7. Map of the main terrorist groups operating in the Sahel.\textsuperscript{302}

\textbf{a. \textit{Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb}}

Born from the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 2007, AQMI is the most important group in terms of area of operation (territory shown in Figure

AQMI’s area of operation goes from Mauritania to Chad. That terrorist group is active in Mali as well as in Niger and Burkina Faso. The following map shows AQMI activity density across the Sahel G5 countries. In addition, most of its founders, including Yahya Abu Hammam, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, and Abdelmalek Droukdel, have earned a very long experience of battlefields in Algeria as well as in Afghanistan and Middle East. AQMI’s various expertise allows it to plan and conduct complex operations such as the kidnapping of hotel residents, suicide bombings, car bombings, or remotely triggering Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

The group was involved in taking hostages in Bamako (Radisson Blue Hotel, 2015) as well as Ouagadougou (2017 and 2018) and Abidjan (2017). As the most experienced terrorist group in the Sahel, AQMI represents a gigantic challenge to Sahelian defense institutions, which are weak in terms of training and equipment. Even though AQMI itself is seen as the most important group, mostly because of its international wingspan and its expertise in manipulating IEDs, its strategy is generally based on the dynamic of its local subsidiaries, which have taken different names depending on the country where they operate.


306 Ibid.


b. Ansar Dine

In Mali, Ansar Dine, an AQMI affiliate group, is mostly composed of Tuareg people operating in the northern part of that country and suspected of having connections with laic separatist groups. Ansar Dine has revealed itself as a major actor in northern Mali; when mutualizing with the National Movement of the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), it defeated Malian army in 2012. Subsequently, through its strategy to overtake all of northern Mali, the terrorists defeated MNLA; the latter’s leaders fled, having taken refuge in neighboring countries. Ansar Dine continued to attack Malian forces, making hostages among military as well as civilians. In addition, the group has organized

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the destruction of Timbuktu’s mausoleums and manuscript collections, which as historical and cultural monuments were classified by UNESCO’s World Heritage program.\textsuperscript{313} Deeply tied to AQMI and led by Iyad Ag Aghaly, Ansar Dine has created many cells that have developed and spread over central Malian regions and northern Burkina Faso.

c. \textit{The Macina Liberation Front}

The Mali’s central region is the operation area of the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), an Ansar Dine affiliate terrorist group that has indoctrinated militants from the Fulani people and sparked a dangerous intercommunity conflict in addition to Islamist terrorism.\textsuperscript{314} Jacob Zenn, an Associate Fellow of African and Eurasian Affairs, speculates that the FLM combatants number about 4,000.\textsuperscript{315} Amadou Koufa, the FLM’s leader created its own group in 2013 after the French military operation helped Malian defense forces to stop the southward offensive of terrorist groups (AQMI, Ansar Dine).\textsuperscript{316} Since most of its combatants were from the Fulani ethnic group, which originated from Mali central region, Koufa did think of regenerating the former Fulani Empire of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{317} From 2013 to 2018, his group has been responsible for the kidnappings of many military members and government workers, the burning of villages and food stores in Dogon and of Bambara ethnic group’s villages. In response to that, locals armed themselves and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[316] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
constituted communalist militias attacking Fulani villages, even those who have had nothing to do with Koufa’s group.\textsuperscript{318} As result, Koufa’s group has agitated the dormant and long lasting conflict that traditionally opposed farmers and pastoralists. Consequently, Mali’s central region became a very instable zone, where government workers have fled the rural areas, and populations suffer from terrorist intimidations and attacks.\textsuperscript{319} According to the map in Figure 9, 2017, has been the most deadly year in Mali in terms of terrorist death tolls. More than 100 persons were killed in the month of August alone.\textsuperscript{320}


\textsuperscript{319} Ibid.

d. Ansaroul Islam

In late 2016, wanting to replicate Koufa’s dream of reviving Macina’s ancient empire in his country, Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a radical Fulani preacher from Burkina Faso, created Ansaroul Islam.\textsuperscript{322} According to Héni Nsibia and Caleb Weiss, Ansaroul Islam was involved in almost 80 deadly attacks in Burkina Faso, targeting security forces and

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure9.png}
\caption{Map of armed groups’ attacks and corresponding death toll in Mali 2014–2017.\textsuperscript{321}}
\end{figure}


government civilian workers and mayors as well as their supposed local collaborators.\textsuperscript{323} To many researchers, this new group, initially based at the Mali-Burkina border, took advantage of the Malian instability to develop.\textsuperscript{324} In its way of gathering Fulani young people and arming them, Ansaroul Islam contributes to the destabilization of Burkina Faso, in addition to worsening the existing cleavage between Fulani (nomadic people) and other rural communities (sedentary).

\textbf{e. The Islamic State in Greater Sahara}

Formed through the fusion of different terrorist groups, the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) operates in the area known as the zone of the three borders (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger).\textsuperscript{325} According to Jason Warner, in 2015 some terrorist groups, including the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Al-Mourabitoun, operating in northern Mali merged under the leadership of Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui’s, formed the ISGS.\textsuperscript{326} This group is the one that carried out a deadly ambush against U.S. soldiers in Niger on October 3, 2017.\textsuperscript{327}

\textbf{f. Boko Haram}

Although Niger and Chad still suffer from AQMI’s incursion, Boko Haram (BH) represents the main terrorist group impacting these countries’ security. BH is a Nigerian-

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{326}] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
born terrorist group that has prospered in southern Niger and Chad. Created by Mohamed Yussuf in 2009, today BH is led by Abubakar Chekau, and has extended its area of operation to Cameroon as well as to Niger and Chad.\textsuperscript{328} Operating in the Lake Chad region, the group continuously attacks and kidnaps locals, even children and women, in addition to conducting suicide and car bombings. Chad and Niger are part of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) formed in 2014 to fight BH.\textsuperscript{329} According to Mark Wilson, the horrific violence from BH has produced more than 20,000 dead, while more than two thousand have moved as internally displaced persons (IDP) or refugees.\textsuperscript{330} The graphic in Figure 10 indicates the evolution of BH attacks through 2016 and 2017.\textsuperscript{331} Wilson also mentioned that from 2016 to 2017, Niger and Chad have suffered from twenty five and five attacks from BH, respectively.\textsuperscript{332}


\textsuperscript{331} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
C. THE SAHEL G5 ORGANIZATION’S CHANCES OF SUCCESS

Evaluating the Sahel G5’s chances of success needs to take into account some key factors including the funding issue in addition to having a look at what the organization is actually doing, and how it is doing that. That analysis is viewed through the four pillars of the antiterrorism strategy—governance, security, economy, and education—as the thesis was developed through these variables. Even though this thesis does not aim to compare the U.S. counterterrorism strategy to the SG5 strategy, putting aside what the United states has done and what the SG5 is planning to do (or is doing) in terms of counterterrorism will help to identify what needs to be done and what needs to be avoided for SG5 policy makers.

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1. **Funding Issue**

Despite the real political willingness that led to the SG5’s creation, the organization suffers from the funding shortfall, which is a real threat to its future. The funding question is a key factor to the Sahel G5’s success since the five countries, part some of the poorest in the world, depend on international assistance and cannot financially support that organization alone. In February 2018, only 35% of the SG5’s infrastructure global budget was available.\(^{334}\) The PIP portfolio indicates $7,238.47 as its global cost.\(^{335}\) From Table 6 it appears that, if the SG5 countries have to support the PIP by themselves, each country would have to provide $2,522.9 million. That seems impossible considering their economic weakness. According to a comparison of their 2017 budgets, the PIP represents 57.38% of the five countries’ budgets together. The PIP would cost almost three quarters of some countries’ annual budgets (Mali and Burkina Faso) while Niger would have to contribute more than 80% of its own 2017 budget, and Chad (210.85%) and Mauritania (195.46%) would be very far behind. Therefore, the SG5’s overall success seems jeopardized by the lack of funding. One can assume that the Sahel G5 organization is going to fail if the international community does nothing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>2017 Budget</th>
<th>PIP Cost</th>
<th>PIP Cost per Country</th>
<th>PIP Percentage of National Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CFA billion</td>
<td>$ million</td>
<td>In $ million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>2,013.578</td>
<td>3,480.69</td>
<td>7,238.47</td>
<td>2,522.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>692.206</td>
<td>1,196.55</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,522.90</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CFA billion</td>
<td>$ million</td>
<td>In $ million</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>1,809.000</td>
<td>3,127.05</td>
<td>2,522.90</td>
<td>80.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2,036.000</td>
<td>3,519.45</td>
<td>2,522.90</td>
<td>71.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>746.693</td>
<td>1,290.74</td>
<td>2,522.90</td>
<td>195.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,297.477</td>
<td>12,614.48</td>
<td>12,614.50</td>
<td>57.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Precisely, the JF funding issue reveals how difficult it is for SG5 countries to even deal with the security threats. The JF’s first-year functioning budget was estimated at $523 million.\(^{337}\) The JF was expected to reach its full operational capacity in 2018 after mobilizing its necessary funding the year before (2017). Tellingly, Trading Economics has revealed that, in 2017 fiscal years, except Chad (+1.7%); all the other Sahel G5 countries have had a budget deficit (Mauritania −0.6%, Mali −3.3%, Niger −5.7%, Burkina Faso −5.5%).\(^{338}\) For the same year, the World Bank has reported that the five countries have lent $882 million from financial partners (Mauritania $44 million, Mali $117 million, Niger $121 million, Burkina Faso $226 million, and Chad $214 million).\(^{339}\) Legitimately, the question is how five countries that have their budgets in deficit, are struggling to meet their populations’ minimum needs, and are continuously borrowing money on the international market can each annually gather more than $500 million. Therefore, one can argue that if

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the JF has to wait for its own countries’ funding, the chances are slim that the JF will ever be operational.

2. Governance Aspect

From this thesis, as mentioned by many scholars, it appears that the governance aspect plays an important role in fighting terrorism. In general, scholars, among them Richard Downie, agree that people should respect the democratic principles and the rule of law. Finally, it is a matter of building an effective democracy. Together, these measures (democracy, justice, anticorruption, providing basic needs) will contribute to the SG5 populations’ satisfaction and will make them more resistant to terrorist propaganda.

For fighting terrorism in the Sahel, the United States implemented many programs to strengthen the Sahelian countries’ governance. Conducted through USAID, the programs have contributed to facilitate the population’s access to justice in the Sahelian countries as well as strengthening the civil societies, so they can actively play their role of oversight in government activities. Some of the programs have engaged people in communicating positively, avoiding aggressive speeches, and cultivating peace and the domestic security spirit. Obviously, these programs did contribute to reduce violence as well as to mitigate terrorists’ influence on the youth in the Sahel region.

Even though the Sahel G5 countries have not made great achievements in terms of governance at the regional level, each country has implemented its own strategy. In February 2018, the organization’s PIP portfolio mentioned zero funding mobilized in favor of the governance projects whose cost was estimated at $104.27 million. As ambitious as the SG5’s projects are, without necessary funding, the projects are doomed to failure. Nonetheless, the organization advancing new good ideas, like implementing a G5 parliament tasked with oversight of the organization’s activities. The recurring funding issue seems to hamper the Sahel G5’s governance strategy. After all, knowing that

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341 Ibid.
terrorism always takes advantage of underlying conditions such as unhappiness and dissatisfaction among citizens, one can assume that enhancing governance is necessary to make the Sahel G5 successful.

3. Security Aspect

Even though some scholars prioritize security measures in fighting terrorism, they mostly categorize it as part of a comprehensive strategy. These measures aim to destroy the terrorist groups’ military capabilities. The security measures target their troops as well as their infrastructures. Although using military forces in response to terrorist attacks cannot be sufficient to definitively defeat terrorism, it is necessary to immediately address their actions as well as to preemptively destroy their military capacities when identified.

The United States’ engagement in the Sahel through PSI, TSCTP, and AFRICOM aimed to prepare the Sahelian forces to confront the terrorist groups using military means. The U.S. programs have included training as well as equipment. According to Stephen Ellis, the 2004 PSI was funded for $7.75 million, which represents “small change in Washington, but a substantial amount for such poor countries.” For about two decades, the U.S. experts have been training Sahelian forces to get them ready so they can defeat terrorist groups.

In terms of security measures, the creation and the deployment of the JF represent the most visible achievements by the Sahel G5 organization. The JF Headquarters was installed in Mali and the countries together mobilized the 5,000 soldiers as planned. Even though the JF patrols the borders, it lacks sufficient means to be fully operational. In February 2018, the SG5 PIP portfolio dedicated to Security and Defense projects mentioned a gap of 100% in terms of funding needed. Despite great commitments from international partners to support the Sahel G5 JF, the money is still unavailable. The cost

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of Security and Defense projects was estimated at $544.53 million. Shared among the five countries, each one would have to pay $104.6 million. Therefore, the Security and Defense projects would weigh on their 2017 budgets as follows: Chad represents 8.74%, Mauritania 8.10%, Niger 3.35%, Mali 3.01%, and Burkina Faso 2.95%. These percentages seem low, but considering the countries’ priorities in terms of socio-economic needs, allowing these amounts to SG5 Defense and Security projects would create greater economic tensions domestically.

The SG5’s efforts to implement its security and defense approach are encouraging and deserve a wider support. Despite the fact that the international partners did not send money as they promised, the SG5 has launched military operations in addition to activating its Headquarters on September 9, 2017, in Sevare (Mali). In November 2017, the first operation baptized “HAWBI” took place in the zone called the three-borders’ zone (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso), where the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara had a sanctuary. That operation was judged successful since the JF attacked and dispersed the terrorist group’s elements. Furthermore, two other military operations were launched in January 2018 and June 2018. Launching three limited and sporadic military operations, however, cannot represent a real and sustainable success, even though it should be encouraged. The real need is to take and durably stay on the ground. Definitively controlling this zone requires much more logistical support that the JF does not have yet.

4. Economic Aspect

In general, scholars agree that poor economic and living conditions are a contributing factor to terrorism. Scholars also have mentioned unemployment as potential driver. Indeed, lacking jobs and living in squalor could change one’s mind and make him espouse radical or violent ideologies. In addition, terrorist propaganda including job offers and business funding could attract young and at-risk men in search of better living conditions.

344 See Table 3.
conditions. Since the lack of economic opportunities is a driver in certain regions of the Sahel, the solution to provide such opportunities could not be other than jobs’ creation and better prospects for the youth. According to Gertrude Adwoa Ofiebea Ansaaku, “Measures such as job creation … can stem the growth of terror outfits before they become a threat…. Bridging the development gaps within countries would help diffuse the anger and frustration of youth living in deprived regions.”

In its strategy of addressing terrorism in the Sahel region, the United States has directed many economic oriented programs. Tackling the economic conditions, the U.S. programs have contributed to enhance populations’ resilience in addition to support the governments’ policies in terms of economic development. Under the USAID’s umbrella, the U.S. sponsored programs funded some local NGOs as well as international NGOs. Intervening in the conflict zones, these programs have reached people who deeply bear the consequence of terrorist attacks as well as the absence of government services. Doing so, the United States’ programs have contributed to make people more resistant to the terrorists’ appeal.

In terms of economic measures, the Sahel G5 has plans concerning infrastructure, as well as resilience and human development. For the infrastructure projects (45 in total) estimated at $6,426.88 million, the SG5 has gathered 35% of the cost and has started building 2,977 kilometers of road (Mali 2,460 kilometers in Mali, 483 kilometers in Burkina Faso, and 34 kilometers in Niger). By contrast, the resilience and human development projects still wait for funding.

5. Educational Aspect

According to many scholars, terrorists might take advantage of people’s lack of education and illiteracy to lure them. Indeed, uneducated or illiterate people might easily adhere to terrorist propaganda. In addition, even some extremist preachers lack sufficient


understanding of the Muslim Holy Scriptures. Still other propagandists use their manipulative skills to drive less educated people to embrace terrorism. Therefore, misinterpreting the Quran can lead to violent extremism.

The United States has contributed to raise both schooling and literacy rates in the Sahelian countries through many programs. As measures against terrorism, the programs were implemented in conflict zones as well as in secure zones. The programs encouraged more children to go to school and strengthened teachers’ skills. They also helped in organizing associations for parents of schoolchildren. In particular, USAID sponsored programs have helped even previously failing students to return to school.

The Sahel G5 organization does not have specific lines of projects dedicated to education. However, the willingness to tackle the issues related to the lack of education regularly comes up in the meetings. Both governance and resilience projects signal the necessity to strengthen the education system. They even stress the imams’ education, so they can understand the Quranic verses and promote peaceful messages.
V. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study of counterterrorism in the Sahel in light of both the United States’ experience and the comments of scholars and analysts has revealed the necessity to combine different measures to address the terrorism threat. These measures go beyond the quaternary frame upon which the whole thesis was built. For sure, the thesis’ four pillars (governance, security, economic development, and education) have allowed a methodological and concise view of the issue. Yet, a larger scope is necessary to address the terrorism threat in the Sahel region. Therefore, the scope of the topic and its correlation with some International Relations’ aspects involving the neighboring countries’ willingness as well as other geopolitical interests should be important to the SG5 policy makers.

1. Funding Aspect

In response to the funding issue, the Sahel G5 countries must be able to convince critical partners to thoroughly endorse and sustainably contribute to securing and developing the Sahel region. Surprisingly, the United States and the United Nations seem less engaged in terms of financially supporting the JF. According to Michelle Nichols, the United States has been wary about paying more money since it aims to reduce the its U.N.-related costs, as the United States is the first contributor (28.5%) of the Peace Keeping budget.348 Tellingly, the Sahel region’s security issue should be globally perceived. The Niger President, Mahamadou Issouf has warned that, “The Sahel is a dam that must not break.”349 In that area, terrorist groups take advantage of the states’ weaknesses and the populations’ poverty, to dangerously develop. In addition to maintaining local communities under their grips, terrorists massively abuse human rights and endanger

international security.\textsuperscript{350} As such, the international community should follow the example of France and the European Union (with a contribution of more than $115.17 million), which represent the biggest contributors of the Sahel G5 organization.\textsuperscript{351}

Given that the Sahel G5 countries alone are unable to fund their JF, the only sustainable way for making the Sahel JF effective and successful is to fund it from the U.N. Department of Peace keeping Operations (DPKO). It would be a low cost investment since the battalions would be deployed in their own countries. Obviously, instead of paying for battalions coming from abroad with their logistics, it will be cheaper to support the local troops that also have the advantage of mastering the field in addition to being more capable of understanding the local social dynamics. That option seems potentially and logically far more beneficial than engaging foreign peacekeepers who probably would do best to avoid confrontation with terrorist groups. Nonetheless, the risks inherent to engaging less professionalized military will always remain. But, a less professionalized military does not mean unprofessional military at all. Finally, missioning local troops (training and equipping, and supporting them) to fight terrorist groups in their own countries will be the most efficient option.

2. **Algerian Factor**

Algeria is a regional power essential in fighting terrorism in the Sahel region for many reasons. First, in the 1990s the country had deeply suffered from terrorism. The positive outcome is that the country has developed a very effective antiterrorism strategy that allowed it to defeat terrorist groups and completely control its borders today. The decade-long bloody Algerian war ended up providing valuable antiterrorism experience, while the remaining terrorist combatants have dispersed in the Sahel. Second, as regional power, the Algerian voice bears weight with all the neighboring countries as well as with the armed groups. Actually, the role Algeria has played in the Malian crisis resolution


witnesses its central role in the region. Although the Malian peace agreement started in Burkina Faso in 2012, since 2013 it has quickly fallen under Algerian leadership as to recognize this country’s essential role in the Sahel region. Therefore, the SG5 leaders should not only learn from Algerian experience, but also find the best way to convince this country to endorse and support the SG5 organization.

3. Governance Aspect

The access to justice should be guaranteed and people should be treated equally before the law. In other words, people must not escape from their liability because of their social position, their financial conditions, or their political connections. Some scholars have also mentioned the necessity of meeting populations’ basic needs like the access to health care. Another thought is that, at the government level, corruption and connections with terrorist organizations are signs of poor governance, since it compromises citizens’ security and affects the states’ credibility.

4. Security and Defense Aspect

Training and equipping the militaries are essential to the Sahel G5 organization’s success. The training should focus on enhancing proper military skills as well as respect for human rights and the conventions of war. Some of the militaries have been accused of extrajudicial execution, illegal arrests, and connection with criminal networks. In addition to firmly punishing those behaviors, the military chain of command should address the problems’ root causes, which might be the lack of training at the countries’ national levels as well as at the SG5 regional level. Then, effectively equipping the militaries will not only make them more confident, but it will enable them to efficiently use their skills against terrorist groups. Therefore, both training and equipping the soldiers will make them not only stronger on the battlefield, but also more respectful of the countries’ laws and the conventions of the war. Consequently, these actions will make local populations adhere to the organization’s goals and offer encouragement to international partners, who do not want to be associated with abusive militaries.

A better coordination with the different security actors in the Sahel is necessary for SG5 success. The SG5 JF is stepping into an area already taken account of by national
defense forces or international forces. Since the 2012–2013 terrorist invasion in Mali, France has sent troops to rescue its former colony. France still keeps a significant force of 4,000 soldiers operating across the whole Sahel, targeting terrorist groups’ leaders, striking their bases from the air, and supporting local militaries. For the same reason, the international community holds a peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) to support the Malian government and protect civilians suffering from terrorist groups’ actions. Other superpowers like the United States are present through their Special Forces and drones’ base. In addition, each of the five Sahel countries tries to secure its own borders through its national forces. Therefore, working with all the partners and clearly defining each one’s task and area of responsibility is necessary. Failing to convince these partners will certainly reduce the SG5 JF’s chances of success.

Another challenge to deal with is the lack of confidence and coordination among the different forces operating in the Sahel. The international troops do not report to the host country leaders, nor do they request any form of authorization to conduct military operations because of their specific mandates. This lack of coordination flows from a state of spirit that is a source of frustration and discouragement. For sure, only a few officials will openly recognize it, but the reality is that, in general, their Western colleagues see African officers as unskilled, unprofessional, and not reliable enough. On the other hand, the African officers sometimes see the Western officers as arrogant. The same perception comes up even between two African officers if one works for an international mission. The one who comes under a peacekeeping mission considers himself as more skilled than the one who works at the national level, just because of the peacekeeping mission’s better working conditions. Both African officers and their Western comrades could be right, because everything they state is about verifiable facts. Different backgrounds obviously lead to different competencies. Not understanding that not everything is about Western standards could lead to arrogance and frustration. Furthermore, a working environment in which different military components interact to reach the same goal should be free of suspicions and arrogance. The organizations’ leaders should facilitate collaborative conditions allowing the different military components to work together effectively. Each component should be clearly assigned tasks according to its capacities. That dynamic
should make the French BARKHANE force, the United Nations Integrated Mission for Stabilization in Mali (MINUSMA) military component, and the U.S. Special Forces fully share intelligence with the SG5 JF. Moreover, coordinating and conducting operations together will enhance the chances of success in favor of all the stakeholders.

5. Economic Development Aspect

Sometimes, the trend for young men and women to join terrorist organizations has nothing to do with a real religious conviction. It is a simple economic calculation, an economic opportunity, which has nothing to do with morality or adhering to a political ideology. Tellingly, taking actions to reduce unemployment rates would certainly reduce the tendency for young men and women to embrace terrorism. People want to live with dignity, honestly deserving what they receive. The SG5 organization should provide more jobs to youth, especially in conflict areas, where terrorist groups’ appeal is stronger. Creating more job opportunities in these marginalized regions will enhance populations’ resilience.

6. Educational Aspect

The educational aspect looms large in fighting terrorism. The SG5 should invest in building schools and literacy centers as well as training teachers. These training programs must include French schoolteachers as well as Medersa and Quranic teachers. Supportive programs benefiting vulnerable communities should be rooted in mitigating the terrorist influence. For example, poor families can be provided with food for each child attending school.

B. CONCLUSION

The Sahel G5 is a young and very ambitious organization. Because of both its originality and the actual threats it aims to address, the Sahel G5 has been welcomed not only by the Sahelian communities but also by the entire international community. This organization, however, crucially lacks the means to match its ambitions. The strategy it has concocted targets the same issues as previously mentioned while assessing the U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel.
Implementing its Defense and Security measures, the Sahel G5 organization wants to train and equip its JF to make it more professional and prepared to militarily defeat the terrorist groups that run the Sahel. The economic measures come under the organization’s infrastructure strategy as well as its resilience and human development strategy for mitigating poverty and lack of development. Though it focuses less directly on education, the governance measures meet the U.S. strategy. Education, however, does appear to some degree in the governance strategy as well as in the resilience and human development strategy. Ultimately, the Sahel G5 organization’s strategy of combating terrorism by allying security and development deserves the support of the whole world. The doubt raised by some scholars deserves a deeper analysis to make the Sahel G5 organization more successful, even though the organization will never be able to fund, in the short term, its ambitious projects on its own.

As some analysts think that the insecurity in the Sahel “is a spillover of Algerian terrorism,” including Algeria in the solution might help to eradicate that insecurity. Including Algeria does not necessarily mean opening up to Algeria’s inclusion in the Sahel G5 organization. On the contrary, that would disturb the Sahel G5 system’s coherence. A regional power among that small group of five weak countries would create de facto a dominating effect. Therefore, Algeria can help from outside in terms of intelligence sharing and military training and supply. As a regional power that has proved its effectiveness in fighting terrorism, Algeria’s close cooperation is essential to the Sahel countries’ security and stability.

To make the Sahel G5 organization trustworthy in the eyes of Algeria, the organization leaders need to show that they are not France’s instrument in the Algerian backyard. As a regional power, Algeria does not accept a foreign power operating in a region that local forces supposedly secure under Algerian leadership. In other words, endorsing the SG5 JF means Algeria would be recognizing its own failure to secure territories (Mali, Mauritania, Niger) that The North Africa Post calls “Algerian

Therefore, the Sahel G5 should engage diplomatic actions towards Algeria to convincing it that both the SG5 and Algeria face the same threat and France is just a friendly country.

As the study has revealed that terrorism’s root causes are strongly interconnected, the Sahel G5 organization should comprehensively address them. Bad governance, lack of education or illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and lack of development represent issues the organization needs to fix. Therefore, any strategy endorsing education and literacy could positively contribute to enlighten people and make them resistant to terrorists’ appeals. To be complete, professionalizing the security apparatuses through a deep security sector reform, including training and equipping the military, represents crucial action. The political willingness that has made the Sahel G5 organization’s creation possible should be evolving even more strongly, comprehensively addressing the multiple challenges (funding issues and doubts) and making itself trustworthy (at both national and international levels). Then it will defeat terrorism in the Sahel. That seems to be the only way the Sahel G5 will fill the hope of local communities in addition to significantly contributing to make the world safer, free of terrorism.

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353 Ibid.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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