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# Policy Discussion Paper

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CPS is a Ghanaian think tank advancing evidence-based solutions across economic growth, fiscal and monetary policy, trade, social protection, and jobs.

## What We Do

At CPS, we transform data into actionable insights that inform and influence public policy. Through rigorous research, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and strategic advocacy, we help bridge the gap between research and real world impact.

We convene policymakers, private sector leaders, civil society actors, and young people to co-create practical solutions that improve livelihoods and strengthen Ghana's economic resilience. Our mission is to ensure that public decisions are grounded in sound evidence and that policies deliver meaningful, measurable outcomes for all Ghanaians.

## Our Focus Areas

CPS's work is anchored in six core policy domains that underpin Ghana's long-term growth and social progress:

- Economic Growth & Development
- Monetary Policy
- Fiscal Policy
- Trade Policy
- Social Protection
- Jobs & Employment

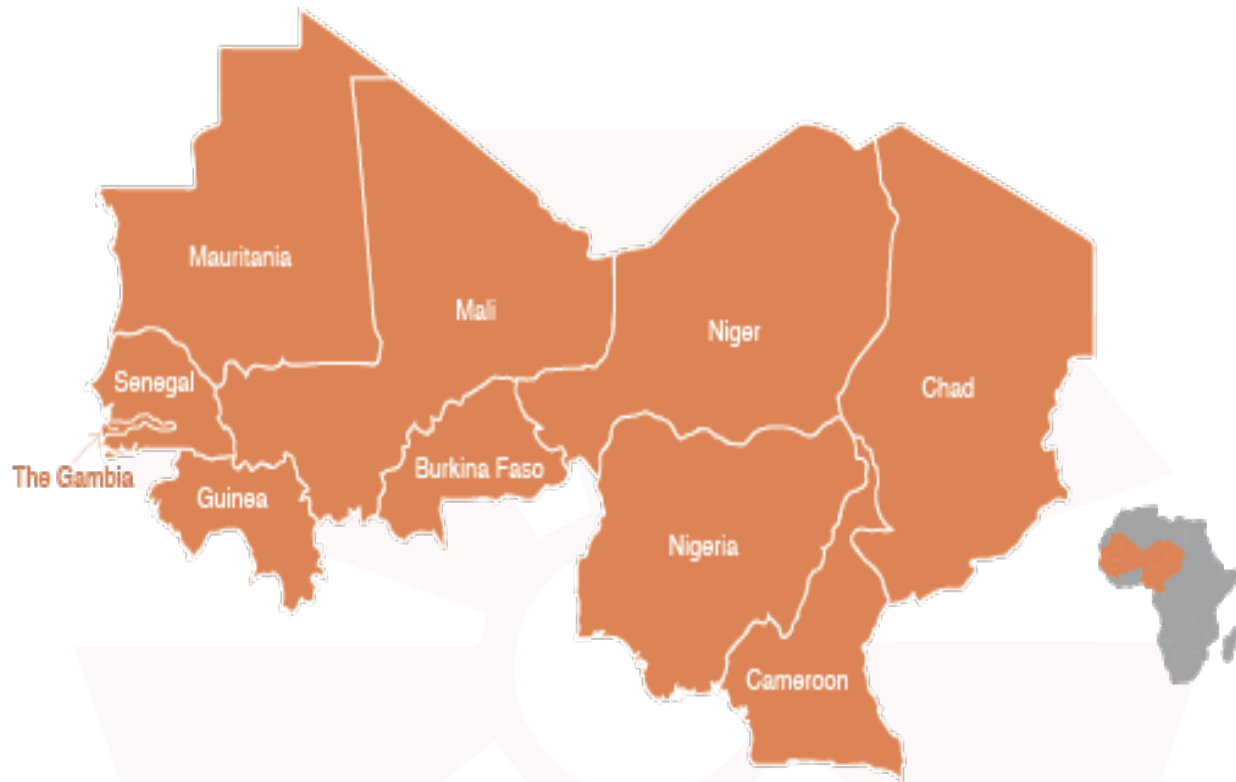
# FIGHTING TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

## DELIVERED BY

VLADIMIR ANTWI-DANSO (PHD)  
H.E. AMBASSADOR ROEY GILAD

# THREAT OF TERRORISM WITHIN THE SUB-REGION

BY Vladimir Antwi-Danso (PhD)



## Instability within the sub-region

The Sahel region of West Africa forms a major part of Africa's belt of instability. The Sahel has witnessed a significant rise in terrorist activities, with jihadist groups exploiting, unresolved historical grievances, weak governance, ungoverned spaces, and social vulnerabilities to advance a politico-religious cause. According to the Global Terrorism Index 2023, "The Sahel region in sub-Saharan Africa is now the epicentre of terrorism, with the Sahel accounting for more terrorism deaths in 2022 than both South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) combined. About 70% of all terrorist attacks between

2012 and 2019 in Africa occurred in the Sahel regions of West Africa"

The Sahel is usually defined as the region in West and Central Africa with the Sahara to its north and the savanna to its south. It includes parts of ten countries in its definition: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

The Sahel has become synonymous with instability, and the governments of at least, five Sahelian countries Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – struggle to control wide expanses of territory, characterised by large, remote areas and historical routes connecting sub-Saharan Africa to

the Maghreb. The problems of the Sahel have been exacerbated by the congregation of many terrorist groups in the area, making the area the most insecure in Africa.

targets, up to 800,000 jobs through infrastructure, agro-processing, digital services, and industrial parks. The Oil Palm Development Programme alone targets 250,000 jobs, while garment factories and agro-processing plants add thousands more. These interventions reflect a shift toward sector-driven employment, with outcomes contingent on execution discipline and sustained macroeconomic stability.

As Ghana navigates a complex fiscal and macroeconomic environment, CPS remains committed to providing objective, independent analysis of the national budget and its implications for inclusive growth. Through this review and future budget reviews, CPS aims to strengthen transparency, provide recommendations to inform sound policymaking, and promote public dialogue, especially among the youth. CPS will continue to ensure that national priorities are matched by credible plans and accountable delivery.

## **The Problem with Terrorism in the Sahel**

The Sahel has seen the most rapid growth in violent extremist activity of any region in Africa and the world, especially since 2012. The region is also a

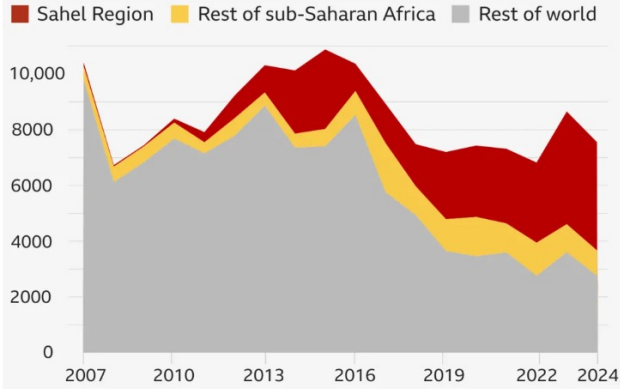
nexus of criminal networks and illicit trafficking and has experienced a rise in farmer-herder violence. The Sahel now accounts for 43% of global terrorism deaths (Global Terrorism Index-2022)

The United Nations Security Council (2020) report states, among others that, since July 2019, the West African sub-region has experienced a “devastating surge in terrorist attacks against military and civilian targets, with alarming humanitarian consequences” (UNSC, 2020). In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, deaths from terrorist attacks jumped five-fold from 2016 to more than 4,000 in 2019, with the geographic focus of attacks shifting eastwards from Mali to Burkina Faso, increasingly threatening West African coastal States (UNSC, 2020). In Burkina Faso, casualties surged from about 80 in 2016 to more than 1,800 in 2019, the number of displaced persons rose 10-fold to about 500,000, and an additional 25,000 sought refuge in other countries (UNSC, 2020).

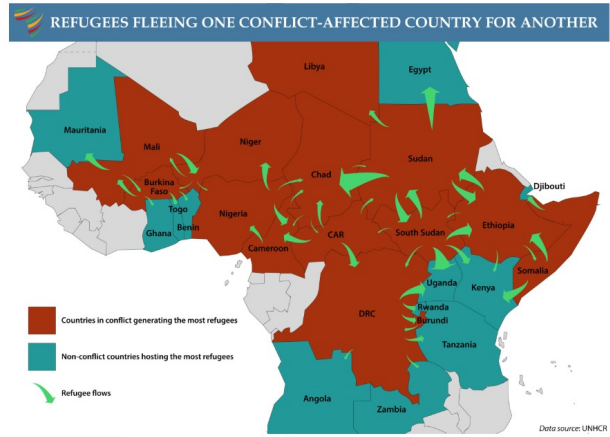
Addressing the UN Security Council July 24, 2023, Omar Alieu Touray, President of the Economic Community of West African States Commission, said that from 1 January to 30 June 2023, the Sahel region recorded 1,814 incidents of terrorist attacks, which resulted in 4,593 fatalities. By end of April 2023, half a million refugees were recorded in the region. The continued loss of territory to terrorists and armed groups has led to new waves of displacement. (SC15635/ 25, July 2023)

## Deaths Global Terrorism Index attributes to terrorism

The number in the Sahel exceeded the rest of the world combined in 2024



Source: Terrorism tracker / Institute for Economics & Peace calculations



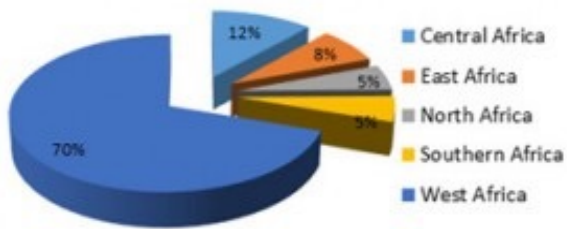
## Causes of Instability

So why is the Sahel region particularly vulnerable to terrorism?

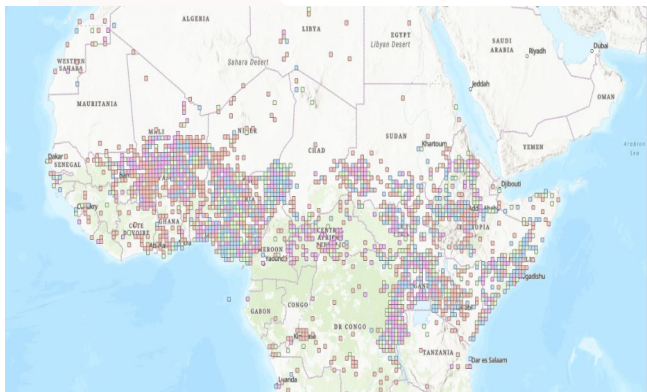
- Bad governance
- Ungoverned Spaces
- Failure of Intervention Strategies
- Unresolved Historical Differences
- Clash of Civilizations
- Lack of Human Security
- Ready availability of SALW
- Inertia in Regional Integration & Cooperation



Figure 1: Terrorists attacks by Region

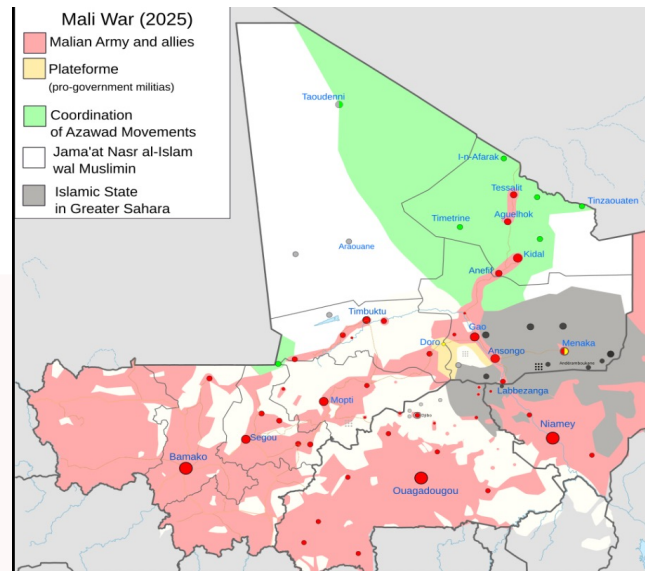


## The Geography of Armed Conflicts in Africa, 2024



## Analysis

- There are drivers of violent extremism that disaggregate levels of analysis and distinguish between “push factors,” i.e., structural conditions or “characteristics of the societal environment that are alleged to push vulnerable individuals onto the path to violence,” and “pull factors,” or individual motivations and group-level dynamics that underscore the importance of human agency in the process of radicalization
- The structural conditions that increase the risk of violent extremism are particularly prevalent in the Sahel.
- These include underlying economic conditions, most notably poverty, underdevelopment, and unemployment, and political drivers such as corruption, impunity, and poor governance.
- The Arab Spring and the fall of Muamar Qaddafi in Libya



## Analysis -2 - Ungoverned Spaces

- The distant relationship between state and populations in the Sahel region also fuels the crisis. The contrast between the northern portions of the Sahelian countries' economic potential and the lack of infrastructure feeds a sense of abandonment amongst its population, in which sense, Jihadism becomes part of political contestation.
- Divisions between masters and subjects, rulers and ruled, ancient and modern provide the base, upon which extremism thrives in the Sahel.
- Local communities in the Sahel see state representatives and security forces as strangers, trying to enrich themselves, as they serve foreign interests rather than as state agents responsible for providing services.
- A recent UNDP Report is eloquent on this saying: 'These latest developments in the widening

'belt' across the Sahel, West and Central African regions underscore the need to better understand the underlying socio-economic

drivers of this rise and pathways for redressing them

## Active Extremist Organizations in the Sahel

Organization	Description
Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM)	JNIM is a coalition of the following militant Islamist groups, founded in March of 2017 and led by the leader of Ansar Dine, Iyad Ag Ghaly:
Ansar Dine	Founded by Iyad Ag Ghaly, after he failed to become leader of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL), which pushed for secession in Mali in 2012. The group operates in the region around Kidal.
Macina Liberation Front (FLM)	Founded in 2015 by Amadou Koufa and operational in the Mopti region. The group is believed to include former members of Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).
Katiba Serma	Led by Abu Jalil al Fulani and operational in the Serma region between Gao and Mopti. The group is a semi-autonomous subgroup of FLM.
AQIM Sahara	Branch of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) led by Djamel Okacha (a.k.a. Yahya Abu al Hammam) (deceased). The group is active across Mali and the southwest corner of Niger.
Al Mourabitoun	Led by Hasan al Ansari (deceased) after co-founder Mokhtar Belmokhtar went into hiding or was killed. Al Mourabitoun was a merger between Belmokhtar's Those Who Sign in Blood and MUJAO. The group is most active in the region surrounding Gao.
Ansaroul Islam	Founded in 2016 by Malaam Ibrahim Dicko (deceased) and based in the Soum Province of Burkina Faso. The group expanded its operations further south of the country in 2018.

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)	Founded in May of 2015 by Abu Walid al Sahrawi, former member of the MUJAO faction that became al Mourabitoun. The group's activity stretches out from the shared borders of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.
Katiba Salaheddine	Founded by Sultan Quld Badi, former member of AQIM, and co-founder of MUJAO in 2011. Badi allied himself with ISGS's al Sahrawi, a colleague from his days with MUJAO, in 2016.
Unaffiliated	Active militant Islamist groups who either could not or have chosen not to claim responsibility for attacks.

## The Coup Epidemic in Africa

In the midst of the efforts to combat extremism and terrorism has appeared a coup epidemic in West Africa. A coup may be defined as a conspiratorially, illegal and overt attempt by the military - or by other civilian officials - to topple sitting leaders.

A study by two US researchers, Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne, has identified over 200 such attempts in Africa since the 1950s. About half of these have been successful.

In 2021, there were six coup attempts in Africa, four of them successful.

## Coups in West Africa

For the past few years, one military after another in West Africa has overthrown its democratically elected leaders without garnering too much attention abroad. First came Mali, then Chad, then

Mali again, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. The coup in Niger was different. It set off alarm bells in the region's remaining democratic regimes, particularly Senegal.

Military coups were a regular occurrence in parts of Africa in the decades after independence. Obviously, West Africa is noted to have had the most of coups in Africa, since independence.

And since 2012, and as already indicated, coups have occurred thrice in Mali and once each in Guinea and Burkina Faso, and recently also in Niger. In the wider African setting, Gabon has also seen a successful coup, while two attempts failed in West Africa – Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone respectively in 2023. But a successful one was recorded last week in Guinea Bissau

# Instability in West Africa: Two Main Culprits

- Governance Deficits
- Terrorism

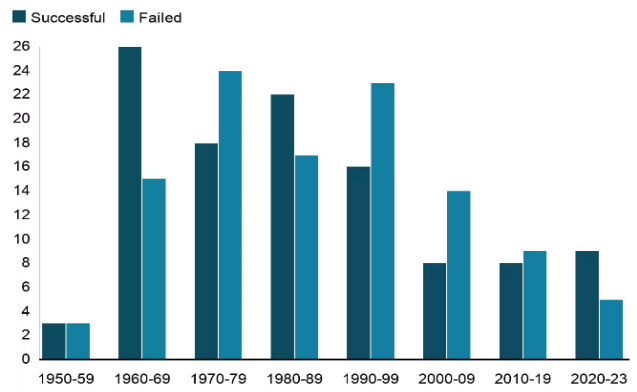


Terrorism has found place in West Africa



Governance or Democracy is Contractual and based on Constitutionalism and Institutionalism

## Military coups in Africa over the decades



Source: Research by Central Florida and Kentucky Universities



African Countries-Failed & Successful Coups

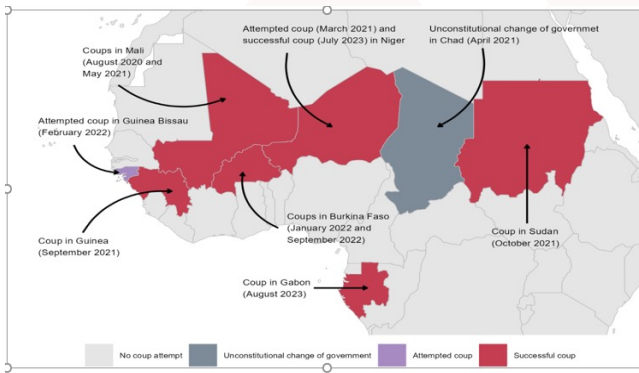


Burkina Faso's Capt Ibrahim Traoré (L) and Niger's Gen Abdourahamane Tiani (R) took power in coups, promising to combat insurgents

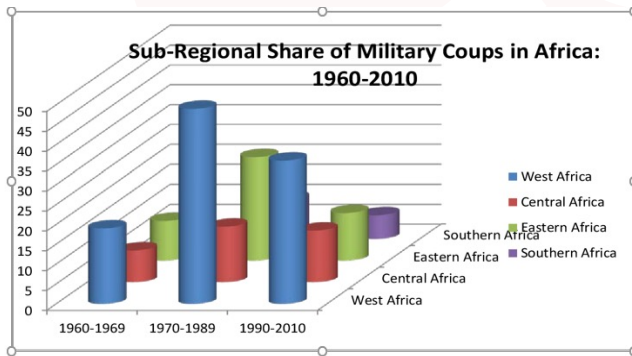
## West African Countries Currently Under Military Rule



African Countries that have Experienced Coups since 2020



Source: International IDEA



Source: Research by Central Florida and Kentucky Universities



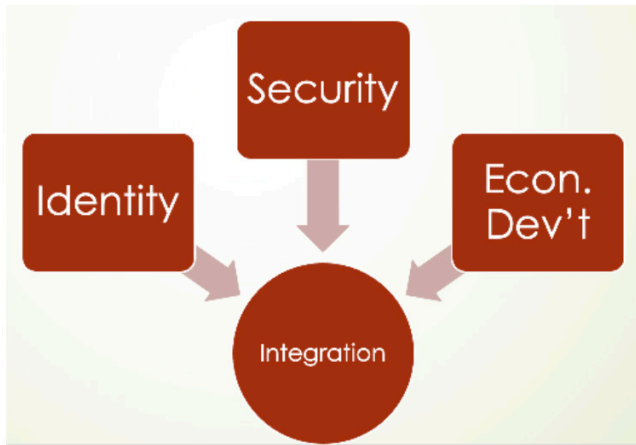
## ECOWAS as a Community

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was formed in 1975 by West African states to accelerate economic growth and development in the region. Its member states include Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Nigeria.

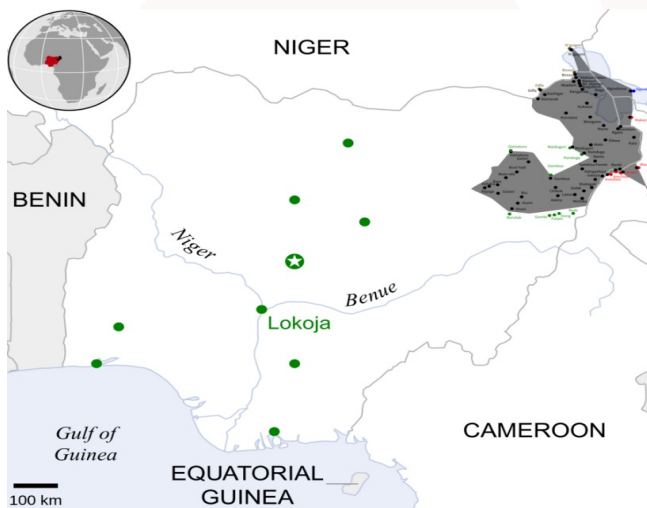


## Integration & Community Security

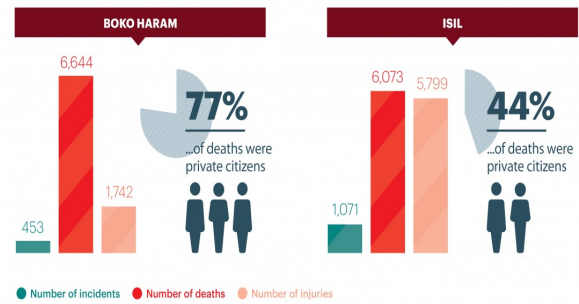
In academic and policy discourses, it has been firmly established that, the fate of integration is closely related to the dynamics of security and identity. (Regional Security Complex Theory-RSCT). Although security and identity are the primary obstacles to integration, integration has the potential to transform them. To understand and expect success of integration, one must study the triangle of security, identity, and socio-economic development



## Boko Haram's territorial control prior to the 2015 West African offensive



## Boko Haram & ISIS

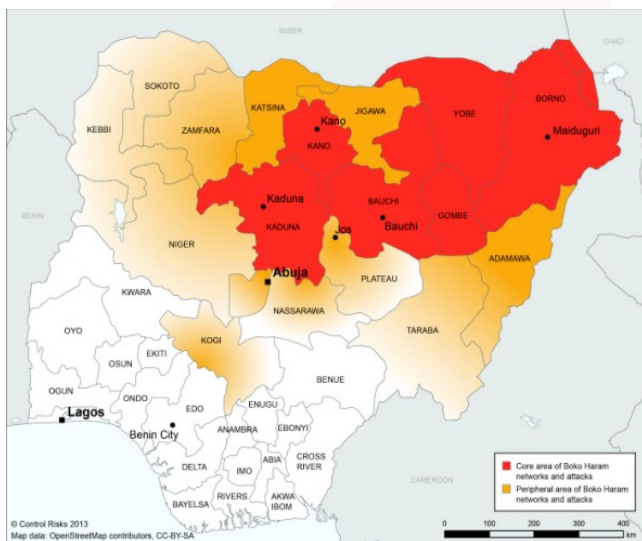


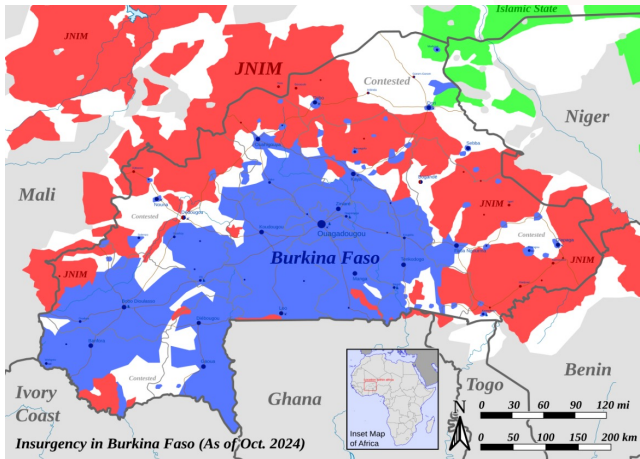
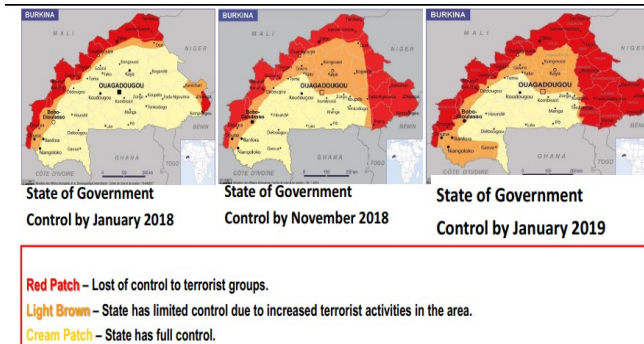
Just two terrorist groups, ISIS and Boko Haram, were in 2014 jointly responsible for 51% of all deaths from claimed terrorist attacks world-wide. Both groups predominately target private citizens.

## WANEP Warnings

The forays of current extremist attacks within the West African region show a southward spread which portends significant security implications for coastal areas, especially, Benin, Ghana, and Togo.

This is evident by the recent security deterioration in Burkina Faso which has led to a surge in the flow of migrants fleeing to neighbouring countries for safety reasons





## Former West Africa bloc chairman says Mali's coup was 'contagious' – Reuters 03-02-22



The former chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) said that the coup in Mali was "contagious" and had set a dangerous trend

that led to subsequent coups in the region.

Mali's August 2020 coup was followed by a second military coup in the West African nation last May, one in Guinea in September last year, a coup in Burkina Faso, and a failed coup in Guinea-Bissau. A successful one has just happened in Guinea-Bissau.

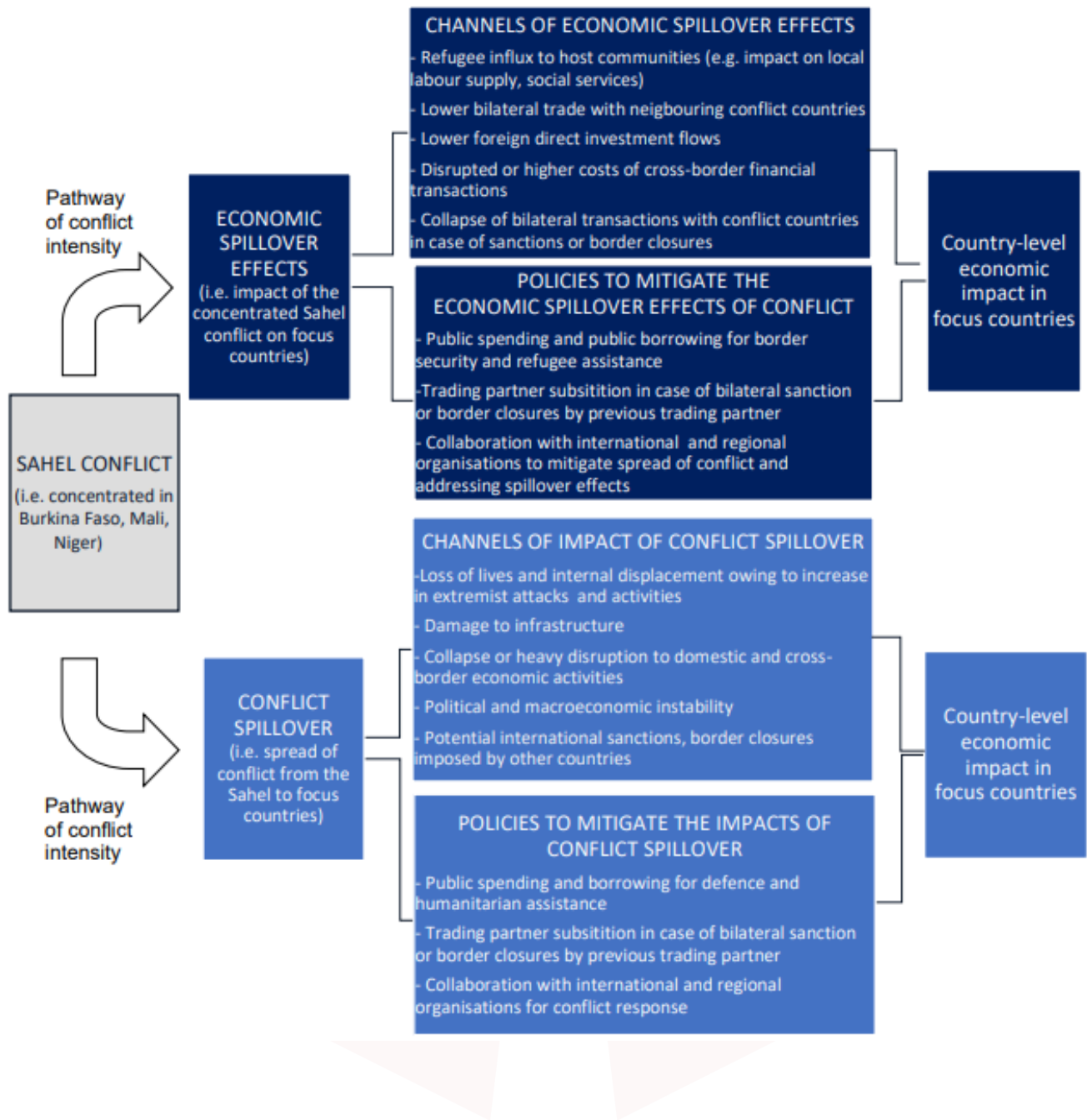
"Let us address this dangerous trend collectively and decisively before it devastates the entire region," said Nana Akufo-Addo at the opening of a summit of West African leaders in Ghana's capital Accra, to discuss the coup in Burkina Faso.

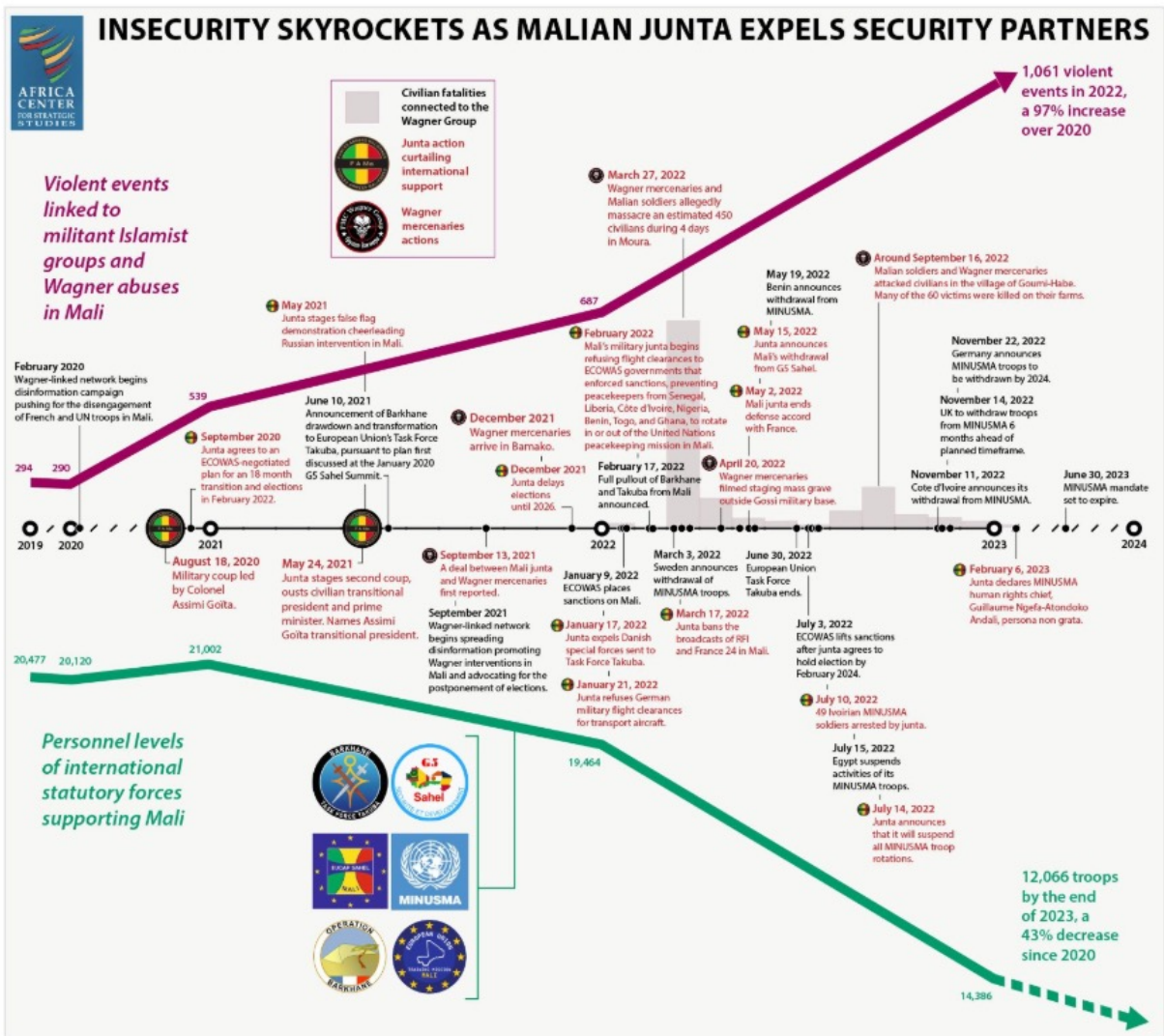
"This summit will focus on the emerging threats in our region that stem from the military's interference in Mali and its contagious influence in Guinea and Burkina Faso," he said.

## Effects

- Generally, coups d'etat in West African sub-region in the last few years have dealt a significant blow to counterterrorism and stabilization efforts in the Sahel.
- For instance intervention efforts have stalled – MINUSMA, French, and European contingents have all ended counter-terrorism operations
- Collective efforts are no longer feasible
- The cohesion of ECOWAS has been threatened by the formation of the AES
- The threat of a domino effect is speculated throughout West Africa

# Effects of Terrorism and Conflicts in West Africa





## Concluding Remarks

Let us note that, since the early 2000s, a combination of rebel groups, transnational organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS), and independent self-defense militias has challenged the legitimacy and stability of states in the Sahel region of Africa.

region, governments are increasingly confronted with new forms of political violence. The geography of these conflicts is often elusive, due to the large

number of actors involved, their shifting alliances and their transnational movements.

There is need for understanding the canvass, upon which the mosaic of terrorism in the Sahel is drawn, before looking for strategies for addressing the menace.

## The Way Forward

- The need to create better links between early warning and early response. (the problem here, however, is the Response Capabilities and/or Capacity of ECOWAS as a group or its constituent Member States)
- Intensify Intelligence gathering and sharing
- Effective Cooperation in Border Management
- Work rapidly towards the establishment of the Standby Force. No integration may be achieved without a Community Security
- Rethink responses to coups by employing more diplomatic efforts and practical assistance, while maintaining deterrent measures
- Re-conceptualize democracy and democratic practice – (Let it be stressed here that, Democracy is not an event, it is a process) and to remember always that, the Ballot does not and cannot stop the Bullet!
- Intensify the assurance of Human Security in all countries as an insurance for sub-regional peace and stability
- Intensify efforts at full integration ( a multiple-geometrical approach)



# Terrorist Groups in Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen



*Hamas*



*Hezbollah*



*Palestinian Islamic Jihad*



*Ansar Allah (Houthis)*

- State and Non-State Actors.
- (What to do when your enemy does not wear an army uniform ?)
- Don't judge your enemy by his intentions but by his abilities.
- Can deterrence work with terrorists?

**Reluctance of terrorists to go through disarmament process**



**When terror is leaning on a strong popular support**



**The need to isolate terror internationally:**

- Money laundering
- Supply of Weapons
- UNSCR 1701 and UNIFIL

**Israel challenges while fighting Terror:**

- Lack of Strategic depth
- The need to address few fronts simultaneously
- "Limited Oxygen"

**When Terror is using Human Shields**



**Israel strengths while fighting Terror:**

- Determination
- Experience
- Sophistication

**Terror is Terror is Terror  
 Hamas = Boko Haram**

