ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY

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THE SECURITY PARADIGM AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL REGION: THE SAHEL G5 AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

M.A. Thesis by

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THE SECURITY PARADIGM AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL REGION: THE SAHEL G5 AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

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by

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January, 2019

ANKARA

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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OZET

MASSAOUD HAMANI

GÜVENLİK PARADİGMASI VE SAHEL BÖLGESİNDE KALKINMA ZORLUKLARI: SAHEL G5 VE SAYI
TERÖRİZMASI STRATEJİSİ

Yüksek Lisans / ULUSLARARSI İLİŞKİLER

Tez Danışmanı: DR. ÖĞR.ÜYESİ M.HÜSEYİN MERCAN

Sahel bölgesi son otuz yılda şiddet ile eş anlamlıdır. Nitekim, yoksulluk, çatışma, hızlı nüfus artışı, radikal aşırılıkçılık, gıda güvensizliği, iklim değişikliği, insan kaçakçılığı, göç ve yoksul yönetişim, "çatışma koridoru" olarak adlandırılan bölgeyi görmüştür. şiddetli aşırılıkçılık yanı sıra ilgili saldırıları. Küresel Terörizm Endeksi sıralamasına göre, Mali, Nijer ve Çad ile komşu Libya ve Nijerya, terörden etkilenen ilk 30 ülke arasında yer alıyor. Bu araştırma çatışmanın nedenlerini, etkisini, katılan aktörleri ve bölgesel devletlerden gelen yanıtın niteliğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, Sahel bölgesinin neden çatışmaya yatkın olduğunu ve G5S'nin barış getirmesini nasıl zorlaştırdığını açıklamak için topraksız alan teorisini kullanmaktadır. Araştırma, Sahel bölgesinin Nijer ve Mali konularına vurgu yaparak örnek olay incelemeleri ile sınırlı. Veri toplamaya nitel bir yaklaşım benimser ve mevcut literatürün titiz tematik analizine dayanır. Belgelerdeki bilgileri inceledikten sonra, devam eden krize son vermede yardımcı olabilecek bazı önerilen politikaların yanı sıra birkaç bulgu bulduk.

SUMMARY

MASSAOUD HAMANI

THE SECURITY PARADIGM AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE SAHEL REGION: THE SAHEL G5 AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGY

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The Sahel region has become synonymous with violence over the last three decades. Indeed, poverty, conflict, rapid population growth, radical extremism, food insecurity, climate change, human trafficking, migration, and poor governance have seen the region referred to as 'the corridor of conflict.' Of concern has been the rapid increase in terror-related attacks as well as violent extremism. According to the Global Terrorism Index ranking, Mali, Niger, and Chad, as well as the neighbouring Libya and Nigeria, are among the top 30 countries affected by terrorism. This research seeks to examine the causes of the conflict, its impact, actors involved and the nature of the response from the regional states. The study uses the theory of ungoverned space to explain why the Sahel region is prone to conflict and how such space has made it difficult for the G5S to bring peace. The research is limited to the Sahel region's conflict with a specific emphasis on Niger and Mali as case studies. It adopts a qualitative approach to data collection and relied on rigorous thematic analysis of existing literature. After examining the information in the documents, we have come up with several findings as well as some recommended policies that may be useful in ending the ongoing crisis.

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2019, January   **Mahamane Hamani MASSAOUD**

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MAP OF AFRICA SHOWING THE SAHEL REGION

ABSTRACT

The Sahel region has become synonymous with violence over the last three decades. Indeed, poverty, conflict, rapid population growth, radical extremism, food insecurity, climate change, human trafficking, migration, and poor governance have seen the region referred to as 'the corridor of conflict.' Of concern has been the rapid increase in terror-related attacks as well as violent extremism. According to the Global Terrorism Index ranking, Mali, Niger, and Chad, as well as the neighbouring Libya and Nigeria, are among the top 30 countries affected by terrorism. This research seeks to examine the causes of the conflict, its impact, actors involved and the nature of the response from the regional states. The study uses the theory of ungoverned space to explain why the Sahel region is prone to conflict and how such space has made it difficult for the G5S to bring peace. The research is limited to the Sahel region's conflict with a specific emphasis on Niger and Mali as case studies. It adopts a qualitative approach to data collection and relied on rigorous thematic analysis of existing literature. After examining the information in the documents, we have come up with several findings as well as some recommended policies that may be useful in ending the ongoing crisis.

Key Words: Sahel, Ungoverned Space, Terrorism, Conflict, Niger, Mali

INTRODUCTION

Countries in the Sahel region have been for decades characterized by fragile states. Poverty, conflict, rapid population growth, radical extremism, food insecurity, climate change, human trafficking, migration, and poor governance have seen the region referred to as 'the corridor of conflict.' Of concern has been the rapid increase in terror-related attacks as well as violent extremism. According to the Global Terrorism Index ranking, Mali, Niger, and Chad, as well as the neighbouring Libya and Nigeria, are among the top 30 countries affected by terrorism (Institute of Economics and Peace, 2014). This has led to a huge loss of life and property as well as migration across the region in search for safety. In addition to the already bad socio-economic, political and security situation in the Sahel, the Arab Spring further worsened the security situation. The collapse of the Libyan government (2011) and Mali (2012) became a critical turning point in evaluating and understanding the situation in the Sahara -Sahel region. Melly (2016) adds that the situation in the Sahel is not on as a result of local factors but also characteristics of the international environment.

This research, therefore, seeks to examine the state of the conflict (origin and impact) that has characterized the region over the last decade and the response by regional countries to end the crisis. The main research question of this thesis is "what is the state of the ongoing conflict in the Sahel, and what is the impact of the 'G5s' strategy?" There are two components of the research question that will guide the rest of the research. These are, to assess the causes and effects of the armed conflict in the Sahel, and to examine the effectiveness of the 'G5s' strategy in promoting peace and stability in the region.

There are three important linkages in this research's approach to understanding the Sahel conflict. In the first linkage, the researcher seeks to assess the causes and effects of the conflict from a regional dimension. In the second linkage, the researcher seeks to explain how national dynamics have aided the conflict and in turn how the state is affected by the conflict. Niger and Mali have been chosen as a case study in order to generalize the effectively present the second

linkage. The third linkage includes an in-depth analysis of the united response by the countries in the Sahel region (G5s). By looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the response, the research will be able to explain the protracted nature of the conflict and why it is taking too long to solve.

The thesis provides an overview of how the actors, narratives of the causes, a manifestation of insecurity and armed conflict in the Sahel region are interconnected. Using the theory of ungoverned territories it aims at investigating the causes and impacts of various events in the Sahel.

Background of the study

Volatile local, regional and international aspects have led to the emergence of a security situation in the Sahel region that is threatening an individual, national and international security. The Greater Maghreb conflict, as well as the uprisings in Libya and Mali that have characterized the Arab geopolitical spheres, have directly and indirectly led to a complex relationship between security and political dynamics in the Sahel and North Africa regions (Mattelaer, 2015: 45 -55). The two regions have provided a fertile ground for different groups with local and global grievances to converge and establish movements that have become a threat to security in many dimensions (Cooke & Sanderson, 2016: 3 -12).

The political vacuum in some of the states in the Sahel combined with the permeable and vast boundaries have made the territory ideal for the operations of armed groups. In addition, the resentments and grievances towards the national governments by members of local ethnic groups in the Sahel such as the Arab tribes, Tuareg, Moors, Songhai, Peul, and Fulani communities in Burkina Faso Niger and Mali, has increased their vulnerability to join some of the armed groups in the region.

Allegations of marginalization and oppression of some local groups by the central government have given extremist groups a narrative to win the hearts and minds of the local populations. By presenting themselves as defenders of the oppressed seeking to liberate them from the suffering inflicted to them by the state, leaders of the armed groups have been able to gain the trust of the local population thus making their operation in the region easier.

According to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service-Academic Outreach (2016) leaders of the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) are using strategies such as marriage and building kinship affiliations with the local population to strengthen their trust. This way they have also been able to affect local political and security dynamics. The defragmented relationship between central and local authorities among some of the countries in the Sahel has weakened the capacity of local authorities and terrorist groups are using this as an advantage to undermine the latter, seize more territory and enforce their ideology. Lacher & Steinberg (2015) further argue that the inability by government authorities to provide basic services such as protection, water, sanitation, and healthcare as well as the conflict and de-escalating tension among the local communities due to competition over natural resources is providing armed groups with sufficient recruits to achieve their goals.

Years of marginalizing certain ethnic groups from political and economic sectors of the government have led to a steady growth of informal and black-market sectors that include trade in illegal and contraband goods such as drugs, arms, and human trafficking. Extremists groups have benefited from this sector not only to access arms but also raise finances necessary for their operations. This further widens the recruitment base, meaning the armed groups are not only recruiting locals as fighters but also those involved in the illegal trade which may involve women and children.

The crisis has forced local, state and international authorities to respond to the Sahel conflict. However, concerns have been raised that the response' strategies have been more discriminatory and repressive particularly towards the hinterlands populations. This has been blamed for further escalation of the conflict as the local population's support for the extremist and armed groups have increased significantly turning the region especially the border areas such as such as the Liptako-Gourma border between, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, the Lake Chad Basin, northern Mali and the countries located in the periphery (Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2017). As the conflict in the region intensified and national security agencies, as well as officials, withdrew from their stations in the rural areas, armed groups and extremists moved in to take control of such areas and fill the power vacuum that was created.

The conflict together with other factors such as climate change has made the Sahel region among the most vulnerable in the world. Poverty levels are up 78% in countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mali and according to the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), the number of poor people in Mali and Niger will increase over the next 20 years. The country with the second highest infant mortality rate in the world is Niger while 39% of children within the school going bracket in Mali are out of school. Between 2018 and 2050 Sahel region is expected to experience its population of 90 million to rise up to 220 million in 2050 *(see table below)*. 2.5 million people mainly pastoral and agropastoral communities are facing severe water and pasture shortages in 2018. In addition, 24 million people need an urgent humanitarian response, 4.5 million malnutrition children are at risk of death if no urgent measures are taken, 5 million people have been displaced as refugees. The United Nations estimates that approximately US$2.7 billion will be needed in 2018 to meet the needs created by the conflict.

Table: Population of Sahel member countries between 2017 and 2050

Country	Population mid-2017	Population mid-2030	Population mid-2050
Burkina Faso	12.6	28.9	48.4
Chad	14.9	22.2	36.8
Mali	18.9	27.5	44.8
Mauritania	4.4	6.1	9.0
Niger	20.6	33.5	69.5

Source: "2017 World Population Data Sheet," Population Reference Bureau, available online at http://www.prb.org/Publications/Datasheets/2017/2017-world-population-data-sheet.aspx

By examining the various causes, effects, and response by regional states to the conflict. The research will try to create a link between the conflict, its protracted nature, and existence of ungoverned space in the territory.

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions;

➢ What are the primary causes of insecurity in the Sahel Region?

➢ What is the nature/ types of insecurities experienced in the region?

➢ Who are the main actors?

➢ What response are governments adopting to curb the crisis?

➢ Why have these responses not succeeded and what can be done?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to provide an in-depth analysis of the causes of conflict in the Sahel, the actors involved, the impact and responses to ending the crisis. By taking Niger and Mali as the case study, the research seeks to present the micro -causes, impacts, actors and responses involved in the conflict at the national level. Based on the findings of the study, a new approach to the crisis will be proposed for policymakers and academics to examine.

Problem Statement

Most countries in the developing world experiencing conflict have found themselves trapped in a self-sustaining and deep-rooted situation that is proving resistant to a swift resolution of their conflicts (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 2005: 4). It has also been established that conflicts today are not static but keep changing with time to take up different forms and actors. Certain factors are responsible for affecting the intensity and nature of the conflict but often such factors always remain hidden and less visible throughout the conflict period. The flare-up new dynamics and drives to the conflict and in many cases, the emphasis is made on the new drives and dynamics instead of the primary causes.

The Sahel region is facing unique security challenges that need to be analyzed through a multidimensional approach. There are particularly two important levels of interactions, one is that states in the region, aware of the challenges of the growing insecurities, are coming up with a regional approach to counter the threats of security. One such approach is the Sahel Five (G5s) a framework established by Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger to fight terrorism in the Sahel.

The second level is at the community level, where transnational terrorist groups have infiltrated local communities across the countries in the Sahel creating a complex web of armed groups that are causing insecurity in the region. The conflict has thus caused huge loss of life, property and human dignity. Since it intensified in 2011 following attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria as well as the political uprising in Mali and Libya, there seems to be little progress in ending the violence. In order to understand the protracted nature of the conflict, we have to look at the reasons for the inst ability and connect it with other external factors that seem to propel the violence such as the failing counterterrorism strategies, increased marginalization, poverty,

famine, and drought. The importance of finding a sustainable solution in the Sahel region will go a long way in bringing relief to the people of Sahel who are facing several challenges.

More generally, this study strives to reflect on a serious problem of conflict that is affecting many developing countries. It, therefore, aims at conceptualizing the issue of key reasons why certain regions in the continent are trapped in a cycle of violence. The research will begin with an overview of Sahel region, examine the scope of violence, how it has evolved and its impact, the actors and forms of insecurities perpetuated in the region, and the responses. It will then focus on governance and security in the Sahel, looking at the case of Niger and Mali. Finally, because of the devastating consequences and the prolonged period of war, the research will seek to give some recommendations on how peace may be achieved, but to do that existing effort such as the G5s will be examined so as to understand what they did are not succeeding.

Methodology

This thesis is a case study of the Sahel region's conflict with a specific emphasis on Niger and Mali. It adopts a qualitative approach to data collection and relied on rigorous thematic analysis of existing literature. Academic articles, reports from government and non -governmental organizations, newspaper and online media articles, documents from international organizations such as the United Nations, UNDP, African Union, and G5S as well as radio and television manuscripts have been used. Given the vast geography and magnitude of people affected by this conflict, the severe nature of the violence, as well as financial and technical challenges, made it difficult to collect primary data. However, the secondary sources relied on were vetted strictly before use to ensure that they are not only from reputable institutions but also verifiable and consistent. The author, therefore, conducted an in-depth document analysis to establish the causes of the conflict (the narratives), the actors involved, the impact of the conflict on the region and the world and how the governments are responding to the situation.

After examining the information in the documents, the research has come up with several findings as well as some recommended policies that may be useful in ending the ongoing crisis.

The significance of the Study

The Sahel region is an important case study for development and security in Africa and the world. Indeed, the contribution of Sahel in understanding the complex challenges countries at the bottom of the global economic hierarchy face in pursuing development and governance cannot be underestimated. It sheds light on critical questions such as to the origin of security challenges and how government responses may catalyze the crisis further. It also gives a glimpse of how poverty and inequality lead to conflict and how the conflict further worsens the situation making some of the countries to be trapped in a dangerous cycle of poverty, conflict, and underdevelopment.

The study will, therefore, add a valuable contribution to the general literature on conflict and development as well as how the international environment and events can have far-reaching spillover effects on other countries. Sahel region has seen international efforts from different actors such as the French government through Operation Barkhane, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and regional efforts by the G5s (Institute for Security Studies, July 2017). However, the situation in the region has continued to deteriorate perhaps due to an overemphasis on counter-terrorism strategies. This research will, therefore, look at other possible approaches in its recommendations.

Furthermore, the conflict in the Sahel has not attracted a lot of scholars in Turkey with a few comprehensive studies available globally apart from periodic reports from local, international and donor organizations. A quick search of Sahel Conflict on the Turkish Higher education thesis center (YÖK Tez Merkezi) database shows no such topic has been done before and of

the conflict-related thesis similar to this particular topic. Moreover, much of the existing studies on Sahel focus on the historical and anthropological factors of the region.

Delimitations

The study will be limited to examining the primary causes, nature, and actors of insecurity in the Sahel region, and the responses. The decision to choose this topic has been informed by the desire to investigate how the underlying causes, nature, actors and response to the conflict are interconnected and what impact they have had at the national and international level. The desire to come up with policy recommendations to the Sahel Conflict is also a strong motivation. Although many African countries have experienced intra and interstate conflicts, the nature and magnitude of the Sahel conflict are on a higher scale. Therefore, by examining Mali and Niger as sample cases of the study will enable us to avoid the challenges of that would occur in studying the whole region. it as a case study, we will be able to learn valuable lessons of causes of war among other African Countries.

Defining the Sahel Region

The term Sahel (*in Arabic means shoreline*) is used to refer to the region stretching from Sudan to Mauritania on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. It covers parts of southern Mauritania, southern Algeria, central Mali, Senegal, northern Nigeria, central Chad, and northern Burkina Faso. The region populated by about 150 million people scattered across this immense eco-climatic zone (OCHA, 2016). Historically, the regions' inhabitants and tradesmen have freely moved across the permeable boundaries to reach the ancient city of Timbuktu in Northern Mali. The region first dominated global media in the 1980s when a severe drought affecting over 50 million people in the region killed more than 100, 000 people and left over one million others surviving on food aid until today. However, the region is back in the global limelight this time

as a result of a dangerous cross-border violence that is affecting the majority of the countries in the Sahel.

The Sahel region has also attracted the attention of policymakers and international researchers for reasons ranging from environmental changes that have led to famine, drought, and decertification. Closely related is the issue of poverty which has been on the rise partly due to poor climatic conditions that are affecting the primary economic activities in the region such as agriculture and pastoralism. Majority of the countries in the Sahel are at the bottom of the global Human Development Index ranking by the United Nations. As the table below shows, inequality, poverty, violence and high levels of illiteracy characterize the region.

Table Human Development Index ranking of Countries in the Sahel

Country	HDI rank, out of 188 (2016)	Multidimensional Poverty Index	Education (expected years of schooling)	Employment to population ration (% ages 15 and older)
Chad	186	0.545	7.3	67.6
Burkina Faso	185	0.508	7.7	81.1
Niger	187	0.584	5.4	62.9
Mauritania	157	0.291	8.5	32.5
Mali	175	0.456	8.4	60.6

Source: Human Development Report, 2017," United Nations Development Programme,

available online at http://hdr.undp.org/en/2017-report

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH METHOD, THEORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Research methodology refers to the manner in which the author collects, analyze, interpret and present his/her findings. In this research, the author adopted a qualitative approach. The relevance of this methodology to this research is that approaches used in qualitative research examine on the 'what,'' why' or 'how' of a situation rather than the 'how much' or the 'how many' questions. The author does not intend to quantify the scale of the conflict in the Sahel but rather examine what has led to the conflict, why the conflict is taking place in the first place, how is the conflict affecting the region and international security, who are the actors, how are the regional governments responding to the crisis and what are the challenges in bringing an end to the conflict. Using this approach, the researcher is not only able to broaden the scope of understanding the crisis, but it also gives room for the researcher to identify underlying factors that may undermine solving the problem. Once the conflict is well understood from a multidimensional approach, recommendations will be suggested for policymaker and involved parties to consider in their quest for a peaceful and stable Sahel.

1.1 Research Design

Research design includes everything that deals with data collection, analysis, and measurement. In qualitative methodology, data interpretation and collection are done in a non -numerical and descriptive way. It is best applicable when investigating social aspects of humans such as how they live, interact with each other, work or react to certain things. Researchers mostly use descriptive design in explanatory and preliminary studies to enable them to collect, summarise, interpret and present information in order to achieve their research objective (Yadav and Jain, 2007).

The researcher opted to use descriptive approach because of its advantages that allow evaluation of different forms of variables simultaneously while giving room to examine the extent to which these various variables collectively lead to the conflict in the Sahel. For example, how ungoverned spaces enable armed groups to emerge and operate, how regional countries are making efforts to curb the crisis and why they are failing, how militia groups are organized based, how the ungoverned spaces emerge with regard to marginalization, fewer resources, and climate change.

According to Shank (2002:5), qualitative research is defined as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning". The author by systematic means "planned, ordered and public", following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. By empirical, he means that this type of inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. Inquiry into meaning says researchers try to understand how others make sense of their experience. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them".

a) *Operationalization of the Theory*

The theory adopted for this study is one that has significance lessons and application on the Sahel conflict. On the one hand, it associates the increasing cases of armed conflicts to the growing number of ungoverned spaces, particularly in developing countries. This is based on the assumption that the absence of state authority, be it in terms of inadequate security personnel, failure to provide essential and basic services such as health, education and food security or in case of systematic marginalization of certain communities or territories, allows

armed group to infiltrate such regions through propaganda, force or manipulation and establish parallel structures.

It is these parallel structures that then offer these armed group the legitimacy and space to operate from. Therefore, to end or at least reduce instances of armed groups operating in one's country, there is a need to ensure that ungoverned spaces are minimized. The assumption is that state presence in all territories within its jurisdiction will not only provide the inhabitants of such areas the needed security and basic need but also displace all forms of armed non -state actors by giving them no room to operate, recruit or generate revenue from.

1.2 *The Hypotheses*

An important question of how countries in the Sahel region can end the conflict that has characterized the territory for decades now needs to be addressed. This thesis argues that first, the governments need to take control and enforce their authority in the ungoverned territories. This way any existing or potential armed group will either be forced to dissolve or leave the territory. The state is the legal authority within its area of jurisdiction according to international law and therefore any other entity has no right to illegally operate within its boundary. However, most developing countries lack the capacity, resources and sometimes intent to enforce its authority across its boundaries. The little resources available are many at times allocated in areas they ruling party enjoys significant support and marginalizes opposition and territories of insignificant political and economic value. This explains why armed and radical groups would easily pick regions with vast ungoverned spaces and weak economies which have little capacity to effectively govern their territories such as the Sahel.

Despite the challenges developing countries face in administering state authorities within their boundaries, there is room for successful these states to independently or collectively deal with

the problem of ungoverned spaces without provoking further violence as it has been witnessed in the Sahel. This informs the hypothesis of this research as follows;

H1: *By enforcing adequate state authority in ungoverned spaces is likely to reduce, significantly, the activities of armed groups within a state's territory*. The figure below shows the relationship between the operations of armed groups in ungoverned space and the level of state authority.

Model of Pacifying Ungoverned Spaces.
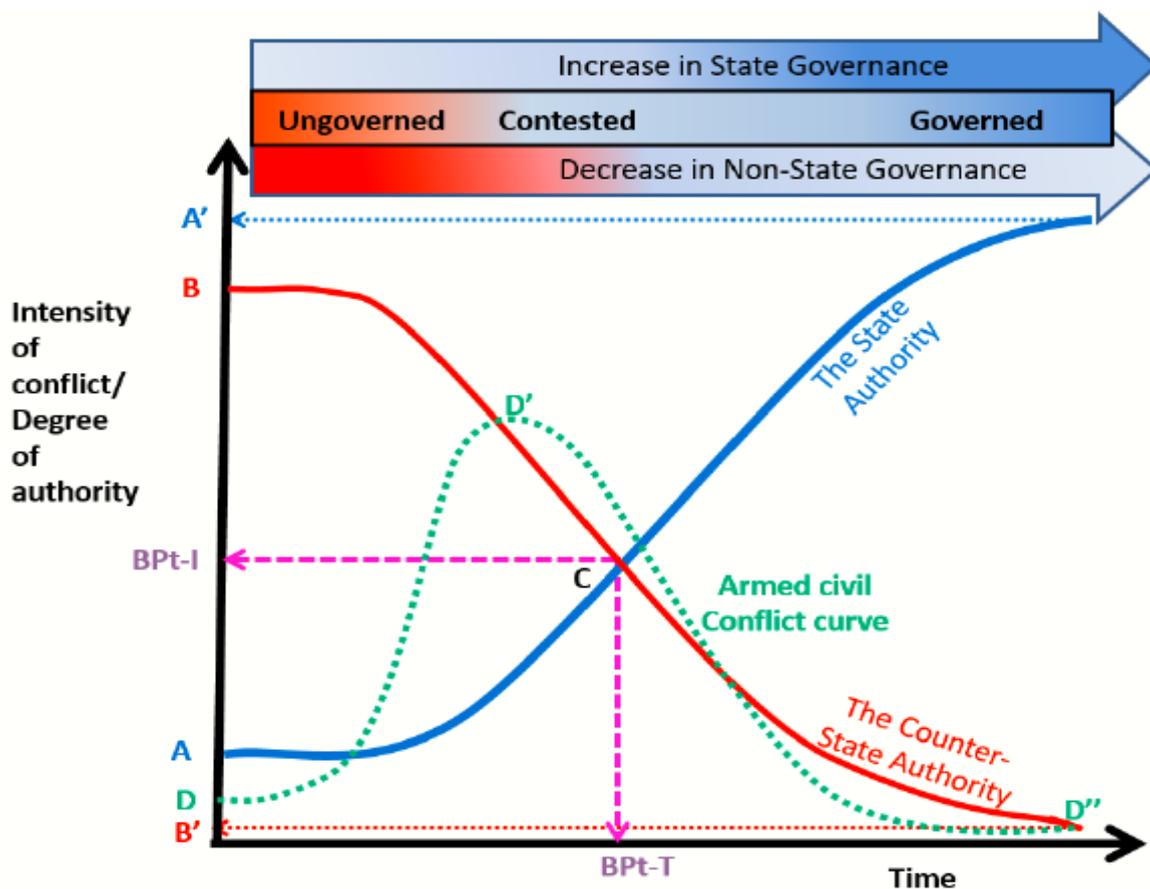
From the above figure, line BCB (the red curve) represents the authority of armed groups in ungoverned spaces, the authority of the state is represented by curve ACA (the blue curve) and point C represents the breaking point. The conflict intensity is represented where BPt-I (Breaking Point Intensity), BPt-T (Breaking Point Time) and the DD'D' curve intercept.

At point B, the authority of the armed group on the ungoverned space is at its highest and it has full control of the territory. Despite the full control of the armed group on the territory at point B, the state has a monopoly over the legality of the territory even if the armed group has established a parallel structure. Point A represents the origin and reserved legal authority of the state. This simply means that the authority of the state cannot be zero irrespective of the circumstance of the ungoverned space. The curve indicates the period when the state embarks on trying to liberate the territory, thus turning it into a contested zone. The curves will be shaped depending on the outcome of the contest between the armed group and the state over the control of the ungoverned territory. In the event the state's use of force enables it to take back control of whole or some of the contested territory, the curves will intersect at the BPt-I, BPt-T (meaning the breaking point).

As the authority of the armed group diminish and the state takes more control of the territory, there will be a point where the authority of both the state and armed group are equal. This is represented at point C. the trend will continue from point A to C and then to A (the blue curve) if the countermeasures employed by the state are succeeding in pushing out the armed group from its territory and recapturing of the ungoverned space. In this scenario, the authority of the armed group will decline from B to C and then B (the red curve) which is the point where the armed group loses all its authority.

The state strategies that can ensure full recapture of the ungoverned territory need not to only rely on the use of force, but necessary adjustments must be adopted at the various stages of the contest to gain the full trust of the local population. For example, at the earlier stages of state efforts to recapture the territories, the use of military force is legitimate, this stage is represented on the figure by curve D to D' visible between the state's authority curve (A to C) and the armed group curve (B to C). When the conflict enters the second stage represented between D and D just slightly above C indicating that the state is gaining more ground in the territory, use

of force needs to be reduced. What the state needs to do is introduce social services, law enforcement agencies, infrastructure, economic activities and political reforms such as organizing local elections will go a long way in promoting the legitimacy of state authority.

Despite state efforts to recapture the territory through the use of non -lethal force especially in the second stage, there will always be opposition to the government presence and that explains why the conflict intensity curve cannot go to zero. What is observable in most conflicts is that most cases of the conflict's climax, indicated by D, occur slightly before BPt-T, BPt-I (that is, the breaking point). The reason for such occurrence is that just before the state embarks on countermeasures on armed groups that's when the conflict's intensity is at the highest before the armed group's surrender or dissolve. However, it is at this point, when the state's advances have intensified, and the armed groups are losing ground that the latter may opt to employ its most severe tactic with the assumption that this may reduce or perhaps stop the state's advancement. If it fails to change the tides of the countermeasures by the state, the armed group will be forced to leave, and the state's authority will become more visible in the territory.

In the instances where the state's strategies do not defeat the armed groups, the curves on the above figure will look differently. The authority of the armed group will be above BPt -I and that of the state will be below BPt -I. This means the government will not be able to reach a breaking point. Such a region will remain under continued confrontation between the state and the armed group or it may be under limited government control. There are few instances where the government may opt to relegate to the territory to the armed group, such as was the case of Taliban and Pakistan over Waziristan (Perkins, 2014).

Noteworthy, violence is not the only manifestation of conflict. As presented on the model above, the course of violence represented by D through D' to D'' also denotes a complex relationship between the population, the armed group, and the government with regard to who

is responsible for committing what crime against whom, when and where. The side in which the population supports is important when the government confronts the armed groups. This means vital information may be revealed or hidden by the public. Irrespective of unpredictable public behavior, there is a general consensus that the public will shift support to the side that appears to be winning perhaps for fear of retribution. But from the figure, at the climax of the confrontation between the state and armed groups (D'), the population will not be concerned with which side to support but rather how to survive since at D' the confrontations are at the most intense (Kalyvas, 2006: 148).

State penetration to restore authority in ungoverned areas may not be easy or guaranteed, therefore it is important to examine the approach in which the state adopts to restore its authority. The figure below, therefore, suggests a model which the state can use to regain authority in ungoverned spaces;

Model of the State Versus the Population—Social Contract.
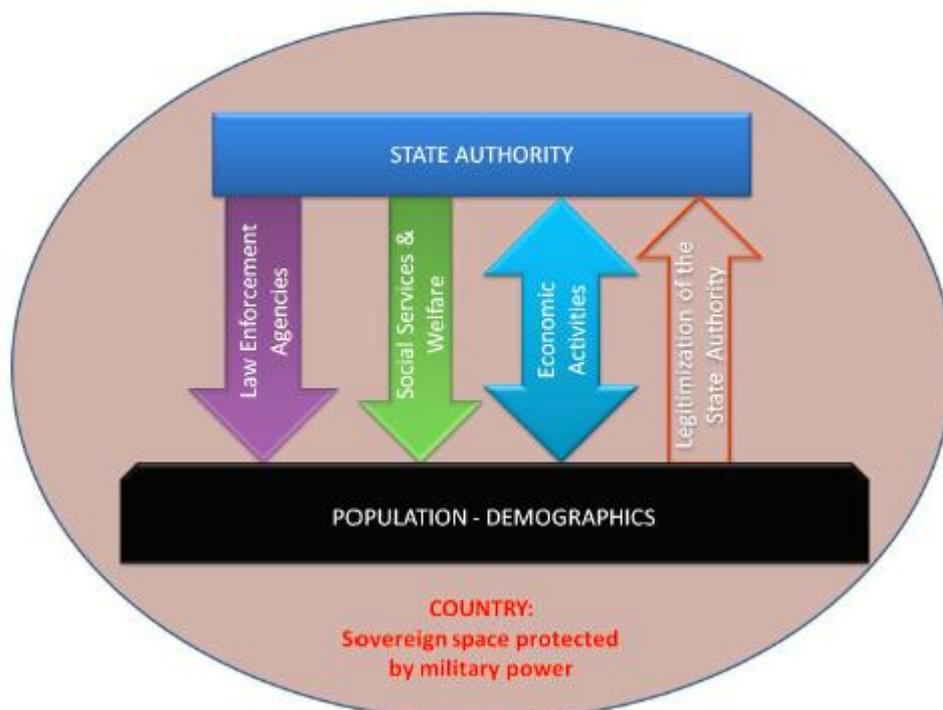
The above model provides a framework through which state authority can be quantified and measured. This way one can be able to measure the extent to which a state is in control of a specific space. For example, if one wants to measure law enforcement, variables such as police agencies, prisons, courts, and border posts or if one is to measure welfare then variables such as local governments, health facilities, and schools can be examined. This thesis, therefore, considers the state authority which includes among other things the presence of law enforcement agents, economic activities, social welfare as important aspects of undermining the presence of armed groups in its territories. This is because the absence of such elements gives some of the radical and armed groups sufficient conditions to recruit members of the public to their organization.

1.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis is an important component in research. It includes a systematic and thematic approach of examining electronic and printed documents (Bowen, 2009: 27). According to Bowen, document analysis is useful for researchers as existing literature provides them with information that they incorporate in their studies. Analyzing existing documents also allows the researcher to identify gaps and emerging trends in the area he/she is conducting the research on. Document analysis is relevant for researchers conducting their research in areas characterized by conflict since collecting primary data may be difficult given the volatile situation on the ground. Analysis of existing literature also enables one to generate research questions for a research. For this research, the author strongly relied on rigorous document analysis as a source of data. These documents include; articles, government documents, online and newspaper articles, reports from local and international non -governmental organizations facts sheets and statistics, dissertations and thesis and as well as print media with relevant topics.

Existing documents helped the author to not only acquire historical insights and background information on the Sahel, but they also proved useful in the verification of the findings. By comparing information from different literature materials, the researcher was able to significantly reduce instances of bias as information was verified before being used in this thesis. These concerns are raised by Patton (1990, in Bowen, 2009: 28) that there is a possibility a study that relied on a single source or studies to be criticized for being prone to the previous author's bias.

Of course, in some cases, existing literature may contradict the findings of the research being conducted and, in this case, there is a need for further research to determine where the diversion emanate. However, in this research, there is a consensus between the findings from the literature and the interviews conducted. This shows that the findings in this thesis have also been observed by other scholars and there is a need for relevant authorities to use them in finding a lasting solution to the problem of youth unemployment. The researcher did not come across any major contradiction between this research and the existing literature. However, that does not mean that there are no documents that may have different findings on this or similar topic.

Another important observation is that majority of the literature did not directly relate or address the same research question as this thesis, however, it is important to note that the information these documents provided were of great importance. They did offer a valuable understanding of the nature, status, statistics, and consequences of the conflict in the Sahel region and as captured in the background of this thesis. In sum, document analysis provided critical additional questions worth examining, a means of tracking how the situation in the Sahel have changed over the years, meaning they are supplementary data and a platform on which other data sources can be verified.

a) Observation

Observation is similar to visual and insight data collection techniques and involves obtaining information from non -verbal and behavioral elements. In this thesis, the researcher was able to collect valuable information by observing various phenomena. Having lived in Mali for over fifteen years, the author was able to observe the manner in which the conflict in the region led to massive displacement, destruction of property, loss of territory by the state, loss of life and activities of the regional forces. This approach was convenient as most of the time the researcher had prior first-hand experience of the events but local media sources also provided frequent and timely coverage of the conflict which significantly benefited the researcher.

b) Data Analysis

Analysis of data refers to the process of giving meaning and structuring the information that has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The findings of the research are connected to the theory and put into the research context in order to give meaning and the extent to which the Sahel conflict has affected the region and its inhabitants.

c) Ethical Considerations

In every society, norms and ethics play an important role in maintaining harmony among people. It is, therefore, an important responsibility on the part of the researcher to ensure that norms and ethics are not harmed while conducting research (Ferrel & Fraedrich, 2008). Ethical considerations included: avoiding bias phrases and generalization, giving credit to third-party sources, and seeking relevant permission for use of facilities and documents for purposes of this research.

In this research, the theory of *ungoverned territories* and how they lead to the conflict has been adopted. However, given the complex nature of the Sahel conflict, the theory will be supported by other concepts such as climate change and regime change to get a better picture of the crisis. The concept of ungoverned territories and their implication to national and international security was coined by think tanks in the United States, specifically the RAND Corporation. This theory is founded on the assumption that a state needs to have unrestricted external and internal legitimacy, sovereignty and has the ability to deliver public services that range from welfare, security and development to its citizens in all corners of its territories.

 It further argues that regions, where the state has not been able to provide the above guarantees, are most likely to plunge into violence and anarchy. The logic of this theory is that the vacuum created as a result of state absence is then filled by non -state actors who use such space to recruit, plan logistics, settle, generate fund, operate and commit crimes. In this regard, states with weak political and economic spheres such as those in the Sahel are vulnerable to having ungoverned spaces thus giving armed groups an upper hand. Indeed, while ungoverned space can be associated with collapsed states, even stable countries may as well have some territories that fulfill the conditions of an ungoverned space (Munyua, 2015)

There are four approaches that explain how states decided on how to approach the issue of inclusion, how to utilize space and who will be excluded from state benefits. Herbst (2000) observes that in Africa, states have either unfavorable or favorable political geography which are determined by population distribution, size of the state and resource wealth. According to Herbst, political geography is an important determinant of the extent to which a state has control over its territories and its capabilities. This becomes the basis of another assumption of the theory that predicts higher chances of peace in small countries that have populations which are evenly distributed as compared to larger states with the unevenly distributed population. There is more likelihood of violence in countries with large uninhabited areas given the

challenge state will face in policing the whole region. Although this assumption is criticized of being static, and that there are other cases where violence has occurred in small countries with evenly distributed populations such as those witnessed in Rwanda, Eritrea, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and others. However, the manner in which Herbst (2000) uses the theory of ungoverned spaces in the Sahel conflict proves the theory has significant relevance.

The failure of governments in the Sahel region to enforce their monopoly on the use of force as well as fulfill basic obligations to their citizens has given room for other groups to emerge and act as alternatives to the state (Clunan and Trinkunas, 2010: 15 -33). The presence of non -state actors who are acting as an alternative to the state has made some scholars question whether or not these territories are ungoverned. For the purposes of this thesis, we will rely on the state-centric approach in order to understand the Sahel conflict. Clunan and Trinkunas add that any efforts to counter the non-state actors which have established themselves within the ungoverned territories will be counterproductive. Instead, they urge cooperation between the non-state actors and the state in order to defeat other groups which threaten national and global peace. In other words, governments need to collaborate with other actors within the ungoverned territories to make such regions unconducive for terrorists and other armed groups (Rabasa et al., 2007: 1-12).

Clapham (1986) gives an important opinion that has relevance in understanding the Sahel conflict. In other words, while the region is characterized by ungoverned territories, there are other unique features that contribute to the problem. One of them is changing regimes which come with different interests emanating from their support base. Therefore, Sahel's political geography should also be examined based on shifting political, economic and physical interests. Boone (2003) agrees with Clapham's observation and assets that governments in West Africa have four characteristics namely where the state is non-incorporated, indirectly present and non-extractive, indirectly present and extractive and directly present and extractive

(Boone, 2003: 22-24). Mehler (2004) characterizes institutions within the states in Africa as being based on multiple power sources and holders all of which are interconnected by a web of effective relationships, hierarchies, and alliances. For Mehler, this is what determines the depth and extent of power across the state's boundaries.

Observations by Mehler (2004), Clapham (1986), Boone (2003) on African countries' political geography have a similar conclusion, that central governments have limits to the amount of power and control of territories. Their assumptions indicate a fixed case of constraints and opportunities for these states but a differing depth, special presence, and application of governance.

This means that under such constraints, there are some groups that will be in government agenda while others will be marginalized. Those who don't benefit from government programs end up in the periphery and are prone to poverty and political insignificance (Raleigh, 2010: 5). Based on this narrative and the characteristics of the Sahel region countries which are large and unevenly underpopulated states, one can conclude that there is a relationship between the ungoverned spaces and the violence being witnessed. Indeed, the Sahel belt is experiencing increased activities of armed groups who are able to use the vast ungoverned territories to recruit generate support and train individuals to fight against international, national and local 'enemies' due to the power vacuum created by the absence or less control of these areas by the national army and regimes.

The theory of ungoverned space and conflict still has more prominence in explaining the violence in the Sahel even though some scholars may want to give emphasis to other factors such as climate change (Raleighand Dowd, 2013:5 -11). The severe impact of negative climate change in the Sahara region cannot be underestimated. Indeed, until the various conflicts in the Sahel overlapped in 2011, most of the reported incidences of violence emanated from the

scarcity of rain and pastures in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL). However, the impact of climate change shows little significance to the causes of the conflict. For example, there were severe droughts in the Sahel in 2010 and 2012 and if the assumption of climate change causing conflict then it would be expected that the number of violent incidences would have increased.

This was however not the case. Statistics show that there was no much difference in violence during the accelerated drought even though over 50% of crop harvest were lost in Chad and Mauritania (Oxfam 2012). On the contrary, Chad and Mauritania were relatively peaceful in 2012. The link between conflict and environment has been a dominant narrative for a decade as noted by Swift (1996). Scholars such as Keita (1998), Herrero (2006); Homer-Dixon (2001) Bennett (1991); and Baechler (1999) have for decades attempted to link land degradation, unfavorable rainfall, and conflict while others have attempted to link impacts of climate change to the marginalization of certain communities in the Sahel. Benjaminson (2008); Turner (2004) and Raleigh (2010) argue that while marginalization is a significant recipe of violence, it is not very clear whether the marginalization in the Sahel is a product of climate change. What is clear, however, the failure of Sahel states to adequately respond to the suffering brought about by the drought creates a situation of ungoverned territories as other actors will step in and offer services that should have been provided by the government.

Ungoverned space is also blamed for providing a breeding ground for indoctrination and rise of religious extremism. Traub (2012) and Wege (2012) point out that religious extremism thrives in regions where states have failed and given the nature of Sahel countries, they believe that the circumstances surrounding states in West Africa are good enough for extremist groups to spread their ideology. Closely related is the issue of ethnicity and racism in the vast continent of Africa that are blamed for the marginalization of communities especially those perceived not to be pro-government as well as provide a sense of unity among some races that consider

themselves minorities, in this case, the Arabs. These challenges combined with others such as criminalization and delegitimization of the state, elite factionalism, poor economic performance, low levels of civil liberties and democracy lead to state failure, ungoverned territories and eventually violence (Menkhaus 2010).

The Sahel region provides local and international armed groups with roaming space from which they are able to perpetuate their plans and attacks. The use and type of space in which groups involved in a conflict operate from having significant effects as to whether they win or not. McColl (1969) stresses the importance of unpopulated spaces to armed groups especially during their first stages when they need to secure finances, determine logistics and gather strength. He adds that the strength of the armed group in comparison to the state will also determine the duration and size of space they can control including what sought of space in reference to its proximity to urban areas.

What makes a particular space attractive to armed groups include, but not limited to, access to critical installations of military and political relevance such as provincial headquarters, territories with disorganized and weak local authorities, regions with multiple power centers, for example, overlapping boundaries, suitable for training and economically self-reliant. Unstable national and local authorities are important conditions for making an area suitable for armed groups. While the above conditions may not necessarily be met, armed groups, tend to prioritize areas that provide space for hit and run attacks as well as military engagements (McColl, 1969: 23). In choosing a space armed groups are also keen on ensuring that once the core insurgent has been established, daily provisions and necessities can be accessed.

McColl's arguments play an important function in explaining contemporary conflicts such as the one in the Sahel by showing the rationale behind armed groups choosing to occupy ungoverned and underpopulated spaces, the impacts and political benefits therein. Large spaces

are specifically important not only because they are suitable for hit-and-run attacks, but they are also equally useful for displacing populations in an entire region. While some may criticize hit and run attacks as signs that the group is weak, Bosi (2013:80) opines that once a group has found a safe territory, they would not use them to perpetuate continued political violence but rather establishing a persistent and long-term attack. The Sahel belt has similar characteristics meaning demography, space, multiple and overlapping authorities that makes it ideal for armed groups to establish their bases and make government operations to defeat them extremely difficult to achieve as shown in the figure below.

Figure: Map showing the concentration of attacks around boundaries
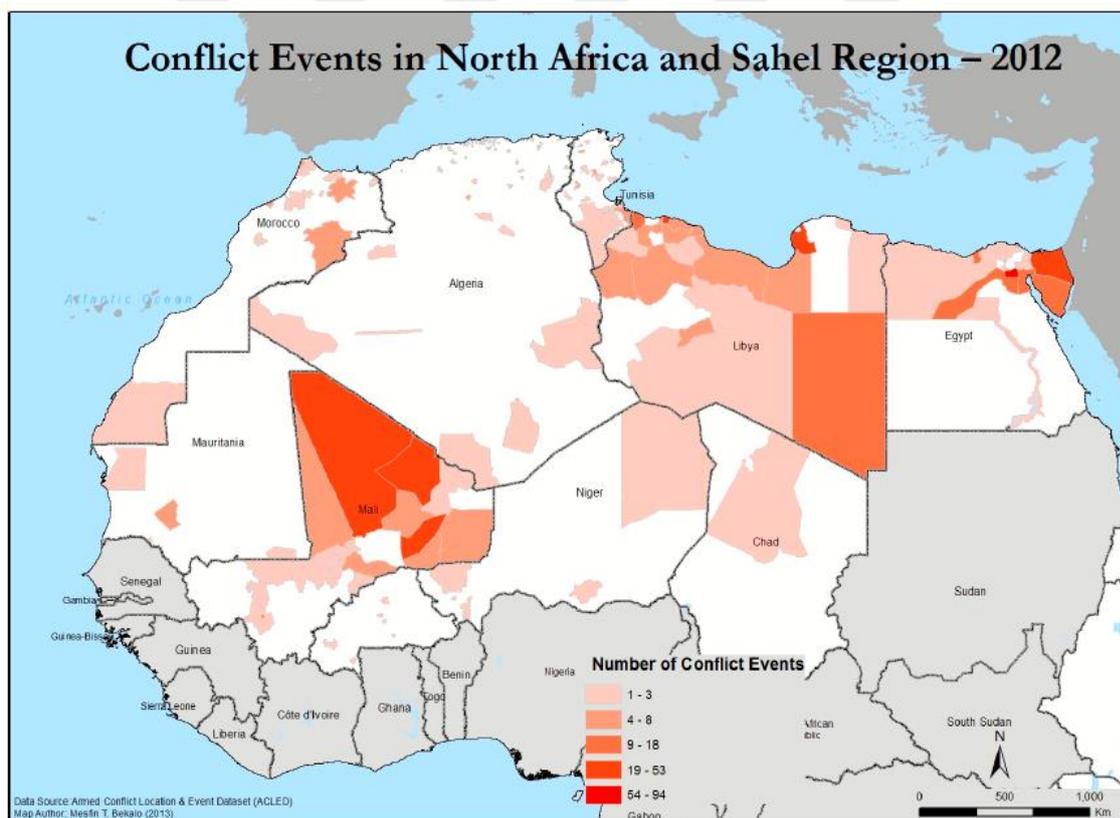
Source: Armed Conflict and Event (ACLED) (2013)

Armed groups in the Sahel are largely regional and local which depend on ethno-regional characteristics in utilizing the space. In order to maximize the use of space and benefits, most

of the armed groups opt to carry out attacks in major towns and centers such as Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal in Mali. Civilians are often targeted as these groups seek to displace more populations and capture more space (Kalyvas, 2006: 22). Space, therefore, becomes an important tool in maximizing ability and strength to perpetuate political violence. The existence of ungoverned space in another country is attracting other groups to relocate from their native territories to neighboring countries. AQIM and MUJAO armed groups have either relocated or are supporting local groups in the Sahel to carry out attacks on facilities and areas they consider of their interest such as the Timbuktu libraries, In Amenas. Such mobility has helped these groups evade operations by Algerian security forces and they continue to pursue their smuggling activities (Menkhaus, 2010).

In the Sahel, the complicity of insecurity is affirmed by the many groups that are operating in different and vast regions. This means that larger groups with resources, but limited space can support smaller affiliate groups to carry out attack on their behalf, therefore, achieving their objectives. Even of more importance, government operations against groups in the borders or perusing transnational armed groups in other territories may not achieve much success for a number of reasons. One of them is that the security forces will lack the support of the community more so if such communities consider themselves as being marginalized by the state, second it is difficult for the government to adequately spread their message and appeal beyond their territories even if such efforts are being conducted as a regional initiative such as the G5S. The advantage of vast ungoverned space to armed groups came clear in 2012 when an operation launched by Mali and France with the support of other African states failed to flush out these armed groups due to the technical challenges presented by vast spaces (Burbank, 2010).

There is no doubt that some of the groups operating in the Sahel are had national and regional characteristics. The motivation of their existence range from national and international

grievances such as poverty, corruption, marginalization, mismanagement, political exclusion and extremist ideologies. While some carry out attacks locally, there are those who perpetuate their attacks across the region and some of their activities including human, drug and arms trafficking may have international consequences. What is consistent about the groups across the territory is that they all occupy spaces in which central and local authorities have lost control. This is space is what we have referred to as '*ungoverned space*' and has a significant impact on the success of these groups in transforming the situation into an intractable conflict.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Understanding the Causes of Militancy in the Sahel*

The Sahel region has for the longest period been characterised by a strong presence of instability due to both regional and local factors. The addition of major occurrences that have catalysed the already existing atmosphere of a 'Jihad' fuelled conflict within the region such as the consequences of the Arab springs in North Africa and the intensive conflict in Mali and Libya have brought about a new form of complex relationship regarding the dynamics of security and politics. As a result, these new dynamics have become the foundations for the culmination of domestic and international grievances and the subsequent growth of new transnational non-state actors specifically in northern Mali (Cooke and Sanderson, 2016). Border porousness in the region is very ideal to the strategy of these groups as it has simplified their access to ungoverned regions where they have promptly occupied the political vacuums by exploiting the deep resentment of the communities residing in the Sahelian regions toward their respective central governments. These communities include the Fulani found in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the pastoralist Tuaregs, Arab tribes, Songhai and Peul).

These groups have been able to draw support of the local communities by presenting themselves as the saviours of the communities by defending them against the injustices meted on them purportedly by the state such as marginalization. İn order to maintain this trust and dependency on them by the communities, some of the leaders have entered into marital commitments with the locals and created very strong kinship ties which is a very important and highly regarded aspect of the social life of these communities. This form of arrangement is a dominant feature of the al-Qaeda in the İslamic Maghareb Jihadists (Canadian Security Intelligence Service-Academic Outreach, 2016). These terrorist groups have been able to grab the opportunity that has resulted from the failure of governments to provide very basic services

such as access to proper healthcare, education and the inability to provide reliable security protection to these communities such as de-escalating the serious tensions among the local communities over the management and access to natural resources such as water sources and grazing fields (Canadian Security Intelligence Service-Academic Outreach, 2016). The consequence of these shortcomings by the state is that there has been sustained resentment by these groups towards their respective central governments and as such the terrorist groups have found themselves in very rich and viable terrorist recruitment bases enhanced by their ability to completely undermine the local legitimate administrations and thereby easily acquiring more territory (Lacher and Steinberg, 2015).

Violence and extremism have been on the rise due to the establishment of an informal economy that profits from illegal trade and exchange of goods such as contraband drugs, illegal arms, human trafficking and black-market sales of basic human commodities. Marginalization of the communities from the formal economy of the states is the major reason for the growth and subsequent establishment of this informal economy which has continued to draw recruitment from a majority of the young population who join to make ends meet for them and their families. This has continued to work in favour of the terrorist organizations because the government's response towards populations from these regions notably in Northern Mali have been increasingly oppressive and discriminative hence strengthening the support for the militias by the local communities. The border region between Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali (Liptako-Gourma) has been a hotbed of conflict and violent extremism (Centre for Strategic and İnternational Studies, 2017). Withdrawal of national armies from this region led to a vacuum which was promptly filled by the militia groups and gaining legitimacy as the alternatives to state power and control.

a) The Roots of Instability in the Sahel (1990s-2010)

The Sahel region is characterised to be one of the poorest regions in the world due to its structural shortcomings. It is synonym to extreme climate, food insecurity, crime, population growth and extreme violence. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014, the Sahel is a semi-arid region of Western and North Africa extending from Senegal eastwards to Sudan and forms a transitional zone between the arid Sahara to the north and the humid savannas to the south. Increasingly, the strong desire for economic, political and social change and the existing decades of old unresolved issues characterised by extreme marginalization and weak political atmosphere have made the Sahel region to be a major case study whenever African instability is discussed as it continues to act as a breeding ground for terrorist groups such as the infamous Islamic State and trails of the al-Qaeda (European External Action Service, 2017).

The Algerian civil war laid the foundation of instability in this region in the 1990s with the emergence of the Armed Islamic Group (GİA) that was extreme in its actions. The GIA was formed between 1992-1993 when the government had annulled the legislative victory of the Islamic Salvation Front in the 1991 elections (Wolf. A 2016). The sharp disagreements over the way the group carried out its activities such as attacks on innocent civilians led to disintegration of its leadership hierarchy. The splinter group was under the leadership of Hattab Hassan who founded the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) which revised the strategy by GIA to involve only attacks on security and military forces and their bases and thereby gaining the attention of the Algerian government as the main anti-government armed force. By 2004, following leadership changes from Hattab to Nabil Sahraoui (2003) and to Abdel-Malek Droukdel in 2004 following Nabil's demise, GIA had already began embracing to its core al-Qaeda's Jihadist global ideologies.

The government with its mandate as the sole bearer over the monopoly of violence launched a scathing operation to crack down on this illegal militia group (Grobbelaar and Solomon,2015). These counter terrorism measures by the government led to the fleeing of a faction of the GSPC across to the other Sahelian regions found between Southern Algeria and Northern Mali in small brigades operating as bandits and smugglers for goods such as arms, vehicles, cigarettes and drugs (Ashour, 2013).

Abdelmalek Droukdel established other several brigades and embedding the militia groups into the respective communities besides engaging in illegal business ventures ad supporting political causes of respective communities such as the calls for secession by the Tuaregs in Northern Mali. By September 2006, GPSC had formally joined hands with the al-Qaeda and renamed al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The complete displacement of state from the Sahelian region was progressive and this planted the seed for the emergence of other groups such as the Movement for Oneness Jihad and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) with membership recruitment from Mali and Mauritania and subsequently the Algerians were reduced to the minorities in the Saharan al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb brigades (Lacher and Steinberg 2015).

b) Jihadism

The overthrow of the Libyan government headed by Gadaffi in 2011 led to the emergence of several armed groups across the Sahara-Sahel region and who spread to the regions of South-Western Niger, Northern Mali, Burkina Faso, Eastern Mauritania and Southern Algeria (Boeke, 2016). Indeed, the groups have shown resilience and there is a systematic resurgence in other regions moving south of the Sahara across the Northwest African borders where they find it easy to infiltrate due to the presence of already existing conflicts (Ranieri and Strazzari, 2017). Despite the presence of several small armed groups, the Jihadist-Salafist group control the

biggest portions of the Sahelian region and have the greatest input in the conflict headed by the previously AQIM which has been renamed Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslim (JNIM). The group continues to enjoy very strong ties with al-Qaeda and its ideology blends with the local and global Jihadist dogma consistent with hate to European colonialism.

The driving ideology behind the Jihadists in West Africa is their demand for the implementation of Sharia Laws. This has seen these groups such as the Movement of Oneness and Jihad in West Africa play very critical roles in countries such as Libya and during the Malian crisis of 2012 and the war in its northern parts in 2013 through formation of coalitions or alliances with other local war criminals. (Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2017).

The war experienced in Mali in 2013 acted as a focal point where the disintegrated jihadist militias consolidated their groups under the banner of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb with the bigger Sahel-Sahara regions. The intensified attacks on facilities such as hotels and restaurants by this militia group was in response to the counter terrorism operations mounted by the French forces on the region. Regions such as Ubari in Libya which closely borders with Algeria were prone to attacks by the AQIM because they were characterised as highly attractive to the European tourists (Stanford University, 2016). The hospitality sector was very ideal to these attacks as clearly demonstrated by the attacks in Burkina Faso (Cappuccino Café in Ouagadougou in 2016) Mali (Radisson Blue Hotel in Bamako, November 2015) and in Ivory Coast (Grand Bassam Resort, March 2016) (Counter Extremism Project 2017).

The Sentinels (al-Mourabitoun) which was founded by Mokhtar Belmokhtar in 2013 were at the forefront of the activities by the AQIM and was the creation of the merger between al-Mulathameen (the veiled ones) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). The group operated on a very ultra-fundamentalist conception of the Islam and the driving notion of military control of the territories. In January 2013, they carried one of their

punitive operations on civilians when they attacked the Tiguentorine gas facility in Amenas, Algeria. Earlier during the same year in May, they hit Western targets in Mali in regions such as the Agadez and Arlit (Oxford Analytica, 2016).

The leadership competition within both the AQIM, Belmokhtar and al-Mourabitoun did not prevent their merger together in 2015 to form a new united group called al-Qaeda in West Africa (AQWA) which wanted to limit the access of the strongly emerging Islamic State in the region (Joscelyn, 2015). And to prove the effectiveness and power of this new group, they conducted more than 100 attacks in 2016 (Chivvis, 2017).

The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa was founded by Ahmed el-Tilemsi and Hamad el-Khairy who were former commanders of the AQIM and was largely composed of Arab Jihadists and Algerians. However, later they started recruitment all over the greater Sahelian region and was dominantly based in Southern Algeria, Niger and Mali (Lacher and Steinberg, 2015).

The Defenders of Religion (Ansar Eddine) who were dominantly a Tuareg group established between 2011-2013 by Iyad Ag-Ghali in the context of the ongoing war in Northern Mali during that time were also key actors in the Sahelian region. Ag-Ghali was a key and central figure in the Sahelian region who had strong connections with outside groups in the Arabian spheres that he had established especially during his stay in Saudi Arabia where he had also converted to the Islamist cause (Gaffey, 2016). Importantly, Ag-Ghali had previous strong ties with the government of Mali after he led the Tuareg separatist's rebellion between 1990-1995 and his subsequent service as a Malian diplomat after the cease fire was called in the 2000s. The Defenders of Religion advocated for the strict establishment of Sharia Laws all over the Malian state and clearly distanced themselves from the secessionist movement by the Tuaregs

(Filliu, 2014). By 2015, they had spread southwards in Mali and created other subsidiary branches such as the Katibat Khalid ibn Walid and the Macina Liberation Front (Zehn, 2015).

However, the constant in-fighting within these groups led to the rise of other new militias with links to the Islamic State such as the Islamic State in Western in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) led by Abu Walid al-Sahrawi. IS media outlet made a publication accepting the allegiance of ISGS (Heras, 2015). The attack on a small contingent of US Special Forces in Niger near the border with Burkina Faso and Mali that killed four US soldiers was blamed on ISGS by the Pentagon (US Department of Defence, 2017).

The bid to challenge the growing influence of IS in West Africa led to the establishment of a new outfit; the Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) with strong ties to al-Qaeda (Weiss, 2017). The group has claimed several attacks against bases of international peacekeepers, local police stations and other Sahelian military troop bases. The proclamations of ag-Ghali in April 2017 was for the establishment of a single and strong organization committed in driving forward the agenda of Salafist-Jihadist policy of Sahelization (Ghanem Yazbeck, 2017) by restoring the old order of an Islamic Legion in the region. The presence of two groups allied to al-Qaeda and IS will continue to threaten any peace processes in Mali and this can continue to undermine the security of the entire Mediterranean region (Ghanem Yazbeck, 2017).

c) Types of Insecurity in the Sahel

The nature of crime has drastically evolved over time and today criminals and their criminal activities have become so complex through objective organizational skills from the local henchmen up the ladder to the bosses who include prominent business personalities, politicians and warlords alike operating in huge cities that operate as financial hub centres by infiltrating security and judicial agencies as well as key financial institutions. However, the Sahel region

and indeed the Sahara region does not meet the prerequisites of organized transnational crime hubs witnessed in most regions globally. But, on the contrary, the Sahel and indeed the Sahara region has transformed itself to a booming centre of organized crimes and this can be attributed to the fact the regions lack alternative economic activities viable enough to fund a conflict and for the enrichment of key actors in the region. Since 2003, kidnappings and demands for ransom, smuggling of illegal drugs such as cocaine and the Moroccan cannabis resins have become the synonym of the economic activities within the Sahel and the Saharan conflict-stricken regions. The proceeds have become the tools used by these unscrupulous individuals to stamp their status in the form of militia power and political influence.

2.2 The Origins and Evolution of Criminality in the Sahelian Regions

Commercial exchange prior to the outbreak of conflict and instability in the Sahel and the larger Sahara region was the remaining legacy of the collapsed classical caravan trade witnessed in the earlier years and centuries involving hard working merchant families and communities who traded with each other through informal arrangements with security agents and custom authorities. However, from the 1970s, these previously old and weak trade links began to experience sharp expansion aided by the flow of state subsidized contraband goods from Libya and Algeria to Niger and Northern Mali (Emmanuel, 2009).

The special informal arrangements made between the traders and the custom officials allowed the importation of goods by Arab traders from ports in Mauritania to be moved to Mali for trade through Timbuktu. There were also plenty of exports to Libya and Algeria of camels by the Nigerien Arab merchants and Malian merchants (Judith, 2011).

The structural adjustment programmes imposed on African countries in the 1990s made Algeria cut on its subsidization policy and thereby leading an economic meltdown while the economic embargo sanctioned on Libya played to increased contraband dealing. The outbreak

of conflict in Mali, Northern Niger and Algeria exposed the region to become a key arms trafficking route by arms dealers who also doubled up as dealers in contraband items and smuggling with guaranteed protection from very senior security officials (Ahmed, 1994) who conspire with local administrators to smuggle illegal subsidized petroleum from Algeria to Mali (Saad, 2009). The conflict in Libya also increased the demand for weapons.

The smuggling industry was the front-runner of the smuggling business from the 1980s and it steadily grew with merchants discovering the North African market and was brought in through Mauritania to supply the Moroccan and Algerian demand while cigarettes moved in through Togo and Benin supplied the Burkina Faso, Niger and Algeria demand. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes reported that smuggled cigarettes in the Algerian and Libyan market accounted for an estimated market value of $228 million (18%) and $240 million (60%) respectively. Interestingly, the key players that include the importers and distributors are conducting their activities legally. However, their cigarette importation from free trade zones such as Dubai is because they seek to avoid the tax regimes and to break the monopoly of North African cigarette supply. The consequences of these actions are that it has led to the destruction of custom services in these states as corruption has thrived threefold between importers, distributors, smugglers, top government officials and security personnel. This conspiracy and collusion involves not only the sale of cigarettes to Algeria and Morocco but engage in the illegal trade of humanitarian aid meant for the conflict-stricken communities (Alain, 2010). Smuggling has directly led to the emergence and establishment of small units of smuggling gangs who provide transportation services of cigarettes from Niger, Mali and Mauritania into Algeria (Amel, 2005).

Illegal migration from Sub-Saharan African through North Africa to Europe is also a key component of the activities that these groups are involved in and has been steadily rising since

the 1990s. They collude with security personnel and customs officials to smuggle people to Europe by providing off-road transport.

The illegal migration system has been instituted in a way that immigrants pay for their journeys at different stages rather than just a single payment that can be made to whoever is in-charge of the smuggling. This means that no single group is involved in the whole process of smuggling, but rather different groups play different roles on areas where they have specialised in. the Qadhafa tribe in Libya is the only exception as they had a very huge influence and reach in the immigration department as well as the security agencies (Jean-Franço, 2007). The instability in Libya has led to the emergence of several militia groups and this has made the country more dangerous for the immigrants who can be intercepted at any given time.

a) Drug Smuggling

Drug smuggling has grown to become an important source of finance for the criminal groups operating in the Sahel and the Sahara region. This is in addition to tax evasion and smuggling of legal basic commodities that have become otherwise very difficult to access for the populations living in these regions because of the insecurity threat to the local traders. The presence of lawlessness in these regions has seen the route expand immensely as a drug smuggling route for the South American cocaine through Libya to Europe and the Moroccan cannabis resins to the Arabian Peninsula through Egypt and Libya over the last decade (Peduzzi, 2010).

The increasing demand for supply by Europe, tighter security enforcement in airports and increased border patrol along the Algerian-Moroccan border exhibited the perfect conditions for the exploitation of the instability within the Sahel region by drug smugglers and a rapid expansion was witnessed especially between 2005- 2007. By 2008 the United Nations Office on Drugs estimated that drugs worth $1 billion (14% of Europe's cocaine) was smuggled

through West Africa. Drop points for the cocaine were identified to be in countries such as Ghana, Guinea, Benin, Guinea Bissau and Togo before being smuggled through air couriers that transited through Algiers or water (Houari-Boumediene, 2012). In May 2007, one of the biggest drug seizure was made in Nouadhibou Airport for cocaine weighing 630 Kg and in Nouakchott Airport in August of the same year weighing 830 Kg of cocaine (Radio France Internationale, 2008).

The routes used for smuggling are not constant but rather changed from time to time along the vast Sahara-desert where the cocaine obtained from Guinea or Mauritania are transported by land to Morocco through Northern Mali, Libya or Algeria. Aircrafts were extensively used in this smuggling chain as witnessed in 2009 when a Boeing 727 that was registered in Guinea-Bissau and had taken off from Venezuela crashed or had intentionally been set on fire in Gao was identified. The plane was estimated to have been carrying 7-11 tonnes of cocaine that was smuggled by land by a multinational drug smuggling network composed of nationals from Senegal, Mali, Morocco, Spain and France (Adam, 2011). Several reports released have also indicated the extensive use of several small aircrafts in these smuggling operations to transport the contrabands from the coastal hubs to Northern Mali (Julien, 2011). Recent times have seen more security tightening along the West African coastal hubs and this has impacted on the smuggling routes in the Sahel and Sahara regions which are wholly dependent of the flow coming from the coastal hubs. However, the Moroccan cannabis has not been significantly impacted with the United Nations Office on Drugs documenting that drug flow to the Arabian Peninsula is the least the second largest in the world if not the largest. According to reports by the Mauritanian intelligence agencies, a third of the Moroccan cannabis resins transits through the states in the Sahel region as they try to avoid the border checks along the Algeria-Morocco border (Peduzzi, 2010). Military officers in Algeria have also been implicated in the cannabis trade alongside their fellow smugglers from Morocco and Mauritania. They ensure the safe

passage of the drugs through to Northern Mali where another chain of smugglers take over operations of the next phase in the smuggling process (Julien, 2011). Cannabis from Morocco moves to Northern Mali the drugs then transit to Europe through Israel and Egypt or via the Balkans. The flow of these products does not seem to be inconvenienced by the conflicts in Northern Mali or Libya but rather, the prevailing conditions provide the perfect atmosphere for drug smuggling to thrive as was demonstrated by the seizure of about 2 tons of cannabis in Western Mauritania (Nouadhibou), 3.6 tons in Eastern Mauritania and 4 tons of cannabis in Tripoli, Libya the same year. The movement of drugs in these quantities is a clear indication that the trade was thriving well under the conditions available (Supreme Security Committee Tripoli, 2012).

b) Kidnapping

The rise of the Tuareg rebellions who were demanding for secession in Northern Mali had long lasting effects especially after the rebellions were squashed in the 1990s. The end of the rebellions left pockets of small bandit groups that continue to affect the Sahel and indeed the larger Sahara region. These groups have resorted to banditry as source of income and are involved in the kidnapping of foreign nationals that they come may come across in the Sahara region for both financial and political motives specifically nationals from countries who were known to be willing to negotiate for the release of their citizens through ransom payments. Political motives did not feature prominently as the root causes of these kidnappings and whenever there was need to do so, groups such as the AQIM posted their political messages on the internet. Any attempted rescues or failure for ransom payments led to the killing of the hostages (Eden, 2009).

In 2003, 32 European tourists were kidnapped in Algeria. Seventeen of them were released and the remaining 15 were held in captivity for another 6 months and were later released in

Northern Mali. The al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for these kidnappings (International Crisis Group, 2005). Some of these kidnappings took drastic turns as the kidnappers on numerous occasions killed the kidnapped individuals in what they claimed be act of sending very strong messages and re-assuring the world of the strong will and determination to their courses. In 2007, AQIM killed 4 French citizens and by 2012, a total of 42 foreign citizens were kidnapped out of which 5 were killed brutally in captivity, 24, released and another group of 13 were still being held in captivity Northern Mali, Niger, Tunisia, Southern Algeria, and Mauritania.

Most governments usually deny reports of ransom payments, however from the investigative media reports done from time to time indicate that most of the ransoms paid usually range between $1.5 and $4 million per hostage (Agence France Presse, 2010). But a more reliable data is from the Swiss government that authorised appropriation of $5 million ransom in its attempt to negotiate for the release of three of her citizens in 2009 (Délégation des finances des Chambres fédérales, 2009).

The ransom business has become an important avenue for earning by AQIM and this has enabled it to facilitate its operations and thereby enabling the group to acquire a strong military force and consequently political significance in the Sahara and Sahel region. Since 2008, the group is believed to have acquired more than $65 million in ransom paid by western governments whose nationals have fallen prey to abduction by groups such as AQIM and MUJAO. Employment and earnings from the hospitality sector in the Sahel and Sahara conflict regions have been drastically reduced and any form of financial gains are through criminality.

2.3 The Impact of Conflict and Insecurity in the Sahel Region

This conflict has led to very extensive and extreme effects on the socio-economic and political livelihoods of the communities living within this region and in some countries; the state

economy. Uncertainty and suffering is the general atmosphere as the conflict continues to affect the society at both the national and local levels as we will illustrate here henceforth.

a) *Economic Impacts*

Characteristically, the countries within the Sahel region at one level share a common economic impact because of this conflict. But more importantly is that the nature of the impact of this conflict is that it is experienced in varying macroeconomic levels specifically at the primary or local level where this conflict is staged and at the national level. The major economic drivers such as agriculture and mining and the geographical proximities of these countries determine the extent and scale to which this conflict impacts on the general economy of these regions. As a result, the national economic impact to the economies of countries such as Nigeria, Mauritania and Burkina Faso are less because unlike Niger and Mali, the conflict is more localized in these regions.

Animal husbandry and small-scale agriculture in Niger accounts 45% of the Gross Domestic Product (Ndoye, Daniel and Ndiaye, 2014) whereas mining accounts for 40% of the GDP (African Development Bank 2014). Instability at the staging areas of this conflict therefore directly impacts on subsistence farming and mining which reflects on the national GDP growth. In 2013 for instance, the GDP growth for Niger decreased to 3.6% in complete contrast to the substantial growth in GDP experienced just two years earlier in 2011 where growth was experienced at 11.1% (Ndoye, Daniel and Ndiaye, 2014). This decrease can be directly linked to instability and the subsequent interference in production in key economic sectors such as the mining industry. This was a period characterised by very high levels of insecurity, kidnappings of individuals and the impromptu numerous armed attacks in key regions such as the Agadez region. This drastically reduced the economic growth gains made in the sector in the previous year (2012) from 43.3% to just 10.3% in 2013 (Economic Commission for Africa, 2015: 15).

Government was forced to reduce expenditure at minimum by 30% in Mali after the conflict broke out in 2012. Decrease in the investment capacity of the government regarding expenditure and resources culminated in huge external debts in comparison to the GDP ratio as well as increased fiscal deficits ultimately thrusting the country into an economic recession in 2013 (US Department of State 2018).

In addition, we must not ignore the extensive economic impact of this conflict in the various regions in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Mauritania that are in direct contact with this conflict. In Burkina Faso, the mineral sector is the main economic driver accounting for 72% of the total exports in 2013 (Bedossa 2012). This saw Burkina Faso experience a GDP growth of 6.9% in the same period (World Bank 2014). However, there was a drop from the growth achieved in the previous year of 9.0%. The conflict disrupted the agricultural sector in the North-Western boarder region of Burkina Faso and Mali. The decline can be associated with the fall in agricultural production. In comparison to Niger, this conflict did not extensively affect the national economy of the country.

Two-thirds of government revenue in Nigeria is attributed to gas and oil exports. The conflict is experienced in the north-east regions of Nigeria and as a result has very little to zero impact on the gas and oil export sectors. However, the local economies of the north-east regions characterised by animal husbandry and crop farming were destabilised. Nonetheless, Nigeria's central bank in review of its economic macrolevel and monetary policies outlined that the conflict had no impact that would affect policy formulation through taking drastic measures geared towards protecting the economy from the adverse effects of this conflict. Despite the lack of adequate data on macroeconomic elements of the north-east regions in Nigeria, there are adequate pointers to the effects of the Sahel conflict in these regions. This is found on the analysis of the contribution of the agricultural sector to the GDP which reduced in 2013 to 21.97% from 23.96% experienced in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics 2014).

b) *Agriculture and cross-border trade*

The economy in the Sahel region is driven by crop farming and rearing of domestic animals. The products from these two sectors form the commodities of trade across the border with other communities and thereby becoming the main source of livelihood. Since the beginning of this conflict a decade ago these sectors have seen drastic drop in production. This has also been worsened by negative impact of climate change that has seen increase regarding to periods of draught and famine or floods. The extent of impact varies from one region to the other, however it is a consensus that the conflict has adversely affected agriculture and trade thereby resulting to food insecurity and other forms of socio-economic vulnerabilities. Reports of farmland invasions by different actors in the conflict, burning and destruction of markets, kidnapping and killing of farmers, livestock raids, voluntary and forceful eviction of local population which has rendered the farms barren because of lack of farm labour have been documented. Distant areas that may have been enjoying some form of stability are indirectly drawn into conflict overtime as population flee to such areas to look for safety and settle down as the conflict rages on. The result is that tensions begin to rise as the refugees compete for resources with the host leading to renewed clashes especially between the farmers who want to grow crops on their farm and the herders who want to feed their animals on these lands.

Statistical data indicate a fall in the contribution of agriculture to the overall GDP growth of Burkina Faso in 2012 from 4.6% to a mere 1.9% in 2013. This follows the clashes that arose between the locals and the refugee herders from Mali in 2012 (World bank 2014).

A half of all the wheat produced in Mali is produced in the Sikasso region. However, immediately after the onset of the crisis, there were drastic loses in production of 24% in production output. Another key wheat producing region, Mopti, recorded 5% less in production output in 2012 (Mali 2014). This phenomenon was magnified by the intense looting that

followed immediately in 2012 putting the country in a dire state of food insecurity between 2012 and 2013. Punitive measures such as food rationing and consumption on unbalanced diet adopted.

Trade in goods and services have greatly been interrupted across and along the border of Niger with Mali and Nigeria because of measures such as increased border restrictions and closures in regions such as Tillaberi and Diffa. This has hindered the free movement of goods and services resulting to very low trade volumes directly affecting the livelihoods of the communities in these regions.

Boko Haram are attributed to the instability in Nigeria and their activities have sharply led to decline in agricultural production because of their frequent armed attacks on civilian population leading to massive displacements. In 2014, a report by Famine Early Warning System brought to attention the food crisis awaiting in states inhabited by Boko Haram due to the very low supply of food in reserve stocks that were way below the average.

Low supply in 2014 led to sharp increases in prices because of the high demand by about 30% for staple foods such as maize and sorghum. These new prices were higher than the price of these basic food commodities in large markets such as Dawanau (Famine Early Warning Systems Network 2014). The decline of key food markets in North-East Nigeria such as Maiduguri, Mubi, Potiskum and Damaturu have had a direct hit on trade flows as operated at half capacity at best during this period. In addition, most of the semi-urban markets are not functioning at all due to security uncertainty. The economic impact of Boko Haram activities has been reported to be to the tune of $6 Billion according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

c) *Displacement and refugees*

Displacement has been the immediate and direct impact of the Sahelian conflict and it has impacted all the countries within the Sahelian region either as the recipients of these new refugees who are seeking safety or as the primary contributors of the refugees and other internally displaced persons. In Northern Mali and Nigeria, the number of people displaced by the conflict amounted to a minimum of 3.5 million people (Norwegian refugee Council 2014). These estimates increase because there are also displacements arising from low-level conflicts such as inert-community clashes and disagreements between the crop farmers and herders. The intensification of the conflict in Mali and Nigeria has rendered the other neighbouring states such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger to act as the host countries of the fleeing refugees. This has resulted to increased pressure due to demand on social services and infrastructure that even prior to the conflict, were already overstretched by the local communities. In addition, there is disruption of livelihoods and an increase in tension between the hosts and the settlers.

In 2012, the number of Nigerian citizens who had been displaced stood at 18,021. However, by 2013, this number rapidly increased to 31,664 and subsequently 41,836 in 2014 (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2014). These numbers are attributed to increased activities and threats by Boko Haram. Generally, the threat of Boko Haram is blamed for the displacement of approximately 66,000 West Africans (United Nations Human Rights Commission 2014). This figure pales in comparison to the number of internally displaced persons because of the conflict. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs assessed the conflict and found out that nearly 650,000 people had been displaced from their homes in the areas of Taraba, Borno, Adamawa, Bauchi, and Yobe (Nigeria Food Security Outlook 2104). By 2015, 108,000 people were documented to be living in IDP camps according

to Nigeria's National Emergency Management Authority. İt also reported that there were 981,416 who were living as internally displaced persons in Nigeria.

The localities of Menaka, Inhalid, Hombori, Lere, Aguel Hoc and Tessalit all in Mali, were adversely affected when the rebellion broke out in 2006. The number of IDPs during the conflict was estimated at 138,990. However, the post-fighting era only documented about 93,433 (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2012). In addition, there is a very sharp contrast in the number of Malian returnees. Despite the high numbers of Malian refugees in the asylum such as in Algeria (Over 30,000 refugee), Niger (26,650 refugees) Ouagadougou (32,631 refugees) and Mbera (49,709 refugees), only a paltry 2,390 refugees were documented as returnees to Mali (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2012).

The first batch of refugee influx to Burkina Faso was in 2012 from Mali with approximately 125,000 Malian refugees seeking asylum (United nations High Commission for Refugees 2014). The

In Niger, there already existed IDPs from the confrontations between the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) and the army which cracked down on this group heavily leading to the internal displacement of about 11,000 people in 2007 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007)

d) *Increased expenditure*

Curbing the conflict has led to increased expenditure by the governments on security-related matters as well as on the humanitarian front. The expenditure on the conflict varies from one region depending on factors such as the nature of politics, an association of the conflict with the natural resources of the country, the intensity of the conflict and the proximity to the conflict corridors. It is important to note that expenditure on these conflicts reflects some basic tenets or elements regarding expenditure. Firstly, conclusive data on the way budgetary appropriations are made are not available because of the nature of security as a subject matter

and its operations which in many times tends to be very confidential in nature. Secondly, of consensus is that most of the security operations are financed through budgetary adjustments and diversions of funds from other key sectors of the economy such as infrastructure development, health or education budgetary allocations. Finally, expenditure on security accounts for the largest share of the national budgets with countries such Niger and Nigeria chunking out 50% and 25% respectively of their gross national budget going towards security.

Burkina Faso has been forced to engage in sub-regional peace initiatives since the outbreak of conflict in Northern Mali in 2012. As a result, there was an immediate increase in security expenditure. The immediate tactical approach by Burkina Faso was to deploy a contingent of 1000 soldiers along its northern border with Mali to try and contain the spread of violence southward into the country (Economic Commission for Africa, 2015b). The government also released another batch consisting of 650 military personnel to link up with the African-led International Support Mission for Mali (AFISMA) in 2013.

 The influence of the military regime in Niger has always been very conspicuous as the key military commanders and generals sway and shape the actions of the government from time to time. The security challenges that have taken hold of the country since 2006 provided the perfect condition to demand more funding for the security sector. Previously, the budget for defense had been at least a half of what other key sectors such as education and health received. The defense expenditure in May 2013 was €48 million, health (€110 million) and education (€180 million) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2013). However, in the supplementary budget that was later adopted increased the defense expenditure to the same par €42.6 million as health (€44.2 million) and almost half the entire budgetary allocation to education (€84.6 million) (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 2013). The increase in defense budgetary allocation led to the decrease in the previous allocation given to education and finance ministries as well as the presidency (Stockholm International Crisis

Group 2013). Security uncertainty led to a 4% increase in the operational costs of the mining companies which had become key targets of this conflict and therefore spent more on security services for the protection of the mines (Economic Commission for Africa, 2015).

The expenditure of the Nigerian government on security agencies increased to $7 billion in 2014 up from $5.07 billion in 2010 with an annual average expenditure of $6.5 billion on security. This expenditure is representative of 25% of the national budget expenditure (Economic Commission for Africa, 2015). This expenditure is however not inclusive of the supplementary allocations that adjust the expenditure on security upwardly as well as the spending by local governments and other ministries and state agencies.

e) Increasing poverty

The Sahel region continues to be one of the African regions that have been hit by dire poverty levels among the local communities. Specifically, the communities that live along the borders of the conflict-hit countries are the worst hit victims because of displacement or hosting the thousands of refugees who come in from the neighboring countries and completely shaking up the socio-economic and political systems that are in place. Despite the lack of exhaustive data on the levels of poverty across the region which may also be attributed to the insecurity that may be associated with research in these areas, physical assessment portrays a systematic erosion of the economic assets of households and coping mechanisms. High unemployment rates, decline or the total collapse of social services, starvation and acts of extreme violence such as gender based violence and human trafficking have become the new normal. The communities that are involved or caught in between this conflict within the Sahelian regions have ended up becoming the poorest regions within the borders of their respective countries.

In countries like Burkina Faso, it has been very difficult to be able to provide aid to the victims as the conflict tends to be very intense sometimes between the hosts and the refugees. The

influx of Malian refugees coupled with the effects of drought in Burkina Faso led to clashes between the Burkina farmers and the Tuaregs who are pastoralists. OXFAM reported cases of actual and or threatened kidnappings of its employees. With the crisis in the cotton sectors, most people have retorted to work in the minefields where children are forced to participate to boost the family earnings. The demands of the mining sector have made Burkina Faso become a key destination of human trafficking especially of children and women and the Burkina government despite its effort is not able to meet the minimum international standards of eliminating human trafficking (U.S Department of State 2012).

The outbreak of conflict in Mali in 2012 saw a drastic increase in the rate of poverty to 47% in 2013 up from 45% as reported in 2011. This increase was noted adversely in the conflicting areas such as Bamako (2%), Sikasso (14.6%) and Kouliloro (27%) (Mali 2014). Access to healthcare and education declined with areas such as Segou, Mopti, Koulikoro, Gao and Kayes registering a 17% decline in the number of healthcare providing facilities (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015). Other stakeholders in the professional healthcare system also registered a decline. Between 2011 and 2012, the number of health professionals declined by 4% coupled with an increase of malaria by 8%, extreme diarrhea by 6% and measles by 152% (United Nations Commission for Africa 2015).

Areas that were at the heart of conflict such as Gao, Timbuktu, Mopti, Kayes, Kidal, recorded very high unemployment rates as many businesses were forced to close because of the conflict that led to the destruction of property in mass. By 2012, women were recorded to be among those who had highly been affected. Their applications for the job had decreased by 80% compared to men, 48% (United Nations Commission for Africa 2015).

Returnee refugees to Niger put pressure on the limited economic resource available. The conflict made it impossible for the continuation of programmes such as the mobile clinics

which were a very critical aspect of the healthcare care system by hindering access to the services provided by these mobile clinics. Closer of the border has critically hurt the local economy of these regions as access to imports and exports to and from Nigeria have been blocked.

The conflict by Boko Haram worsens the poverty situation because of the reduced commercial activities that are characterized by capital flight because of the poor business environment. The poverty levels in the rural areas have surpassed the urban poverty levels by 52.1% and 34.1% respectively (World Bank Indicators 2014). The human development index has also reduced because of the closure of schools and other institutions of learning. İt is also important to note that girls have been a target for kidnappings as was clearly illustrated by the abduction of 200 female students from their school in Chibok within the Borno state in 2014. Statistics in 2013 indicate worrying figures for the percentage of girls who had no education. Both in North-West and North-East Nigeria, 61.11% and 62.8% of the girls were reported to have no education respectively in comparison to Southern Nigeria which enjoys relative stability that registered 16.1% (Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013). Unemployment rates among the youth in the North-East regions increased to 53.2% in 2012 up from the previous 47.6% recorded in 2010 (National Institute of Science Education Research 2013). This is because the majority of the young people were unable to secure employment opportunities in the agricultural sector which had been adversely by the conflict to supplement their incomes.

f) *Impact on governance*

Systematic erosion and destruction of public administration structure

The conflict corridor of the conflict which involves Mali and Nigeria have suffered the biggest impact on their public administration systems. There has been a disruption in the provision of public services within these areas to the communities. The absence of public officials who have

been forced to escape due to the security threats in the Sahel region has made it very difficult if not impossible to govern these regions. As a matter of fact, these public officials become very targets of kidnappings and murder by the insurgents. The Jihadists groups are without a doubt determined to replace the existing democratic governance structures with their own ideologically strict forms of the Sharia law and towards this endeavor, they fight with the determination to let nothing or no one stop them even in death itself.

In the other proxy conflict countries such as Niger, Mauritania or Burkina Faso where the administration may not have been replaced or displaced, the efficient and effective functioning of public governance has been interrupted and the routine delivery of services affected because of the special security operations and measures by the state and the influx of refugees who are exerting pressure on the available public facilities and resources.

The conflict in Mali was so dire that in 2012 it contributed to the military coup that threw out the democratic gains by Mali. What followed was displacement of public administration structure in other towns and villages as a bunch of rogue criminal networks took over the leadership and administration of the towns and villages in Northern Mali. The international community was later drawn into the scene to intercede through military action after it became very clear that the threat to capture Bamako, the capital the city of Mali and bring it under control subsequent governance of these insurgents became crystal clear. There had been barely the presence of the Malian military in the North because of the Algiers Accord that was signed in 2006 giving the Tuaregs control over the northern part of the country as the Malian military withdrew from these towns and villages. The tourism sector was hit very strongly after the insurgents destroyed infrastructure that was critical to tourism in areas such as Timbuktu, Mopti, and Djenne. This led to the closure of several hotels, destruction of government tourist establishments, insecure travel routes and labor and capital flee. İn 2013, a decline of over 30,000 tourists was recorded.

In areas under control of the Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Jihadists took it upon themselves to act jury and executioner by sacking and replacing administrative and elected leaders who were expected to do their bidding of implementing the Sharia Law according to the Jihadist interpretations to the last letter. The traditional community leaders were not spared either. The sphere of influence by Boko Haram was so vast that by 2014 they were in control of about 130 towns and villages that were estimated to fall within 20 local government administrative regions. These included Yobe, Borno and Adamawa regions in the north-east. Executive councils and state government were forced to move out and continue to discharge their duties all the way from the capital of Abuja which generally kills the definition, mission, and structure of local governments. Some of the worst-hit local governments included Buni Gari, Buni Yadi, Damboa, Gujba, Marte, Dikwa, Gworza, and Madagali. Traditional authority structure was also replaced from the Lanwani (Village Head), Bulama (Ward Head) and the Hakimai (District Head). Physical destruction of existing administrative facilities or infrastructure was a key characteristic of Jihadist operations. They destroy police stations, hospitals, schools, prisons, post offices, administrative offices, and military camps or barracks.

g) *Curtailment of human rights and freedoms*

The collapse of the democratic governance and the subsequent replacement of the latter with a primitive version of Sharia law has had an immense impact on the rights and freedoms of individuals affected directly in the conflict zones as well as indirectly through the influx of refugees in other areas that act as refugee host zones in the Sahel region. The collapse of administrative institutions such as the police force has rendered thousands of people at the mercy of the insurgents as there is no public and legal institution to protect these rights and freedoms. In the Boko Haram controlled regions, there is a total collapse of the rule of law. The suspension of the rule of law may come directly from the insurgent groups or through retaliatory government measures and security operations as they try to regain control. It is the

civilians who are caught in between this struggle and at times end up as collateral damage with rights such as the right to life aimlessly violated. The ideologies by these criminals and insurgents give no attention to the limitations on the use of force or on the observance of civil liberties. They operate and spread their ideologies through the constant perpetuation of fear among the communities. Observance to some of their ideologies by these communities does not arise from the feeling of sharing mutual ideology but rather from that of fear from the consequences that failure not to observe may attract on their families or community at large. There are bans on freedoms such as assembly, freedom of speech and crack down on rights to the girl child and western education, right to a just and fair hearing in a court of law. Women and young girls are subjected to extreme abuse such as rape while men are tortured and detained in very inhumane conditions.

The international approach towards the act of extreme illegal disobedience to the rule of law has that been towards enforcement of the law rather than diplomacy that may lead to understanding the underlying causes of some of these forms of conflict. The respective governments who also maintain their status as the sole institution with the monopoly over violence do not hesitate to implement anti-terrorist security strategies that give security agencies more rights and freedoms to investigate and gather intelligence including making arrests and detentions without trial of suspects. İn extreme cases a state of emergency may be declared thereby curtailing the freedom of movement and association to specifically designated areas and at specific times of the day or night. The conflicts draw in the military who become entangled in the governmental affairs of the state way beyond their primary responsibilities of protecting the state from external threats. Several human rights and international agencies have been on record having documented human rights and freedoms abuses by state and international security agencies in their fight to put a stop to this conflict. it has become a common scenario to see military personnel attached to various civilian government units

serving as regional administrators in areas such as Tillaberi and Agadez or serving in elective positions in the capacity of governors.

In Nigeria, the curtailment of press freedom has been a target of both government and the insurgents. This is explicitly exemplified when Boko Haram attacked and bombed the offices of one of the major leading print media houses called This Day newspaper offices in Kaduna and Abuja in July 2014. The government also heavily cracked down on the media following reporting of the human rights abuses and violations by government security agencies.

Since 2011, the government of Mali has declared a state of emergency on several occasions in the northern region of the country and strengthened the mandate of the security agencies. Counter-insurgency operations continue to be characterized by mysterious disappearances of alleged Boko Haram members, very low evidence thresholds in the courts of law, extra-judicial killings and allegations of secret trials.

During a survey done in Mopti region in 2015, 28% of the total 128 women and girls who were sampled for the research were found to be victims of early forced marriages and a staggering 58% had been raped as well as going through female genital mutilation (Mali 2014). The disruption caused by state of emergencies also affect the women especially in the areas of women-sensitive economic activities where women are the main actors such as local trade and farming because of the installation of curfews and attacks on markets.

h) *Humanitarian crisis*

Areas within the Sahelian region reflect a complex chain of multiple crises that brings about the acute humanitarian emergency. This emergency is measured by the number of civilian deaths, violence against women, the number of displaced people, human trafficking and food insecurity. The already tough conditions that are found in the Sahelian region due to drought, famine, and floods in addition to conflict magnify the need for humanitarian aid. However, the

cross-border conflict has completely destroyed coping mechanisms such as trans-border trade and access to green pasture and water. It is estimated that 577,000 children died because of acute cases of malnutrition on a yearly basis along the Sahel (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs).

Since 2012, the number of recorded displaced persons stood at an estimate over 450,000 while more than 3,000 deaths reported in Northern Mali. Sikasso which was involved in the conflict was responsible for the production of over 50% of the country's cereals. However, production sharply dropped by 24% when the conflict broke out. Food shortages and starvation faced the country. Importantly, despite the presence of an international peacekeeping force under the United Nations, security in regions such as Ansongo, Menaka and Tessalit, and towns in Gao continued to worsen.

In Burkina Faso, there was huge agricultural losses from poor distribution of rainfall or flooding and from tthe he clashes that arose between the Burkina farmers and the Malian cattle herders. When the conflict broke out in 2012, Burkina Faso was already in crisis and therefore could not accommodate another influx of refugees. Difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance because of the absence or very limited presence at best, of humanitarian agencies, therefore compounded the effects of this conflict as poverty and disease spread like wildfires between the local hosts and the new displaced settlers.

The clashes between the Niger Movement for Justice (MNJ) insurgents and the government forces determined to clamp down on insurgency, led to the displacement of over 7,000 people in 2007 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007) and over 23,000 in 2008 specifically in the northern areas of Agadez (United State Department of State). The over 100,000 refugees in addition to the other arrivals of refugees from Mali and Nigeria in 2012 led to the increase in the population of Diffa by 20% (Economic Commission for Africa, 2015). The borders

became more porous as more illegal routes were created. Out of the over 164 border points and crossings, only 54 were manned by border guards (Economic Commission for Africa 2015).

Counter-insurgency measures by the government and armed attacks by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria were responsible for the murder of over 6,347 civilians in 2014 (United Nations Commission for Africa). There was disruption of livelihoods as schools and other social institutions were closed and community life destroyed. İn 2013, 209 educational centers in Yobe were attacked and 800 classrooms in Borno completely destroyed. One year later in 2014, over 120,000 school going individuals were displaced and another 85 schools closed. Several incidents of killings were also recorded in areas such as Gombe (6 killed), Madalla town bombing (42 killed), Jos (30 killed) and Yola (17 killed) in 2012. Between 2011 and 2014 several thousands of people were displaced and over 176 teachers murdered (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015).

CHAPTER THREE: THE CASE OF NIGER AND MALI IN THE SAHEL CONFLICT AND THE COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIES

Introduction

Post-colonial Africa has witnessed a series of security threats that have subjected the continent to a period of intense turmoil leading to instability and insecurity in some countries. The first instance came immediately after the withdrawal of colonial masters when ethnic differences of African societies came into play as ethnic groups mobilized themselves to fill the power vacuum left by the colonialists. Then after the fall of the Berlin wall that came along with the end of cold war, several African countries began to democratize and the intense rivalry for political power reduced although not for long. The genocide in Rwanda is a case in point of how long historical ethnic rivalry for political power played out in the post-cold war era as Hutus and Tutsis fought and killed each other in one of the deadliest genocides the world ever experienced. Other pockets of ethnic conflicts have also continued to occur, however, a new dimension of security threat that has raised more concern in the recent past has originated from terrorists and extremist groups whose presence have been a threat to various regions in Africa and Mali has not been spared in this case.

3.1 *The Case of Mali*

Since the year 2000, Mali has been the epic center of violence that has not only affected the northern region but also the neighboring countries in the Sahel region. Various efforts have been put forward by the Malian government but as it appears now, these efforts have not been successful in freeing the northern region from extremist groups. It would important therefore to examine what makes the Northern region susceptible to recurring violence as compared to the southern region.

The northern region is divided into three parts; Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu which are occupied by Fulanis, Songhais, Tuaregs and Arabs. Tuaregs being one of the dominant groups have for a long time since the early 1990s called for the autonomy of the north and this was accompanied by violent operations in which the government forces engaged with the Tuaregs in gun fires. Having experienced a series of episodic violence, the presence of Malian government is very scarce in the northern region a situation that has attracted a number of militant groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the function of the state of maintaining law and order has hence been left for the militant groups (Oumar, 2012).

Scott (2011) has argued that even though the northern part has a multiethnic component, the security challenge can solely not be attributed to the ethnic differences. According to him, there is a coterie of other factors like lack of economic opportunities, poverty, and poor infrastructure as well as marginalization that have worked in collaboration with the ethnic factor to create instability in the northern region. These factors have created a complex scenario in which militant groups have also sought to finance their activities through illegal businesses like human and drug trafficking, kidnappings and other organized crimes. Having been able to control trade, the militants have been able to effectively engage in violent and illegal activities across Mali (Scott, 2011).

a) *Actors in Northern Mali*

As it has been discussed above, the continued instability and insecurity is a result of interaction between various factors up to including various actors who have vested interested in the north of Mali. Although there are internal actors, there are also external actors like armed wing of West Sahara Independence Movement which provides support like arms and other military equipment to some of the internal actors (Hassan, 2012). However, the main actors, whose

activities have created a hostile environment, are the Tuaregs and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

b) *The Tuaregs*

Tuaregs are one of the widespread ethnic groups in the Sahel region (West Africa) and they are spread in several countries including Niger, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mauritania, and Mali. In Mali, they are about 7% of the total population and they mainly occupy the northern part of the country. Their society is hierarchical in nature and most importantly they are also divided along colour in which the white Tuaregs are considered to be of high social status. During the colonial era, they fiercely resisted the colonial rule by fighting the French army under their leader Firhoum. In pre-colonial Africa, they found themselves under the rule of the south that they considered inferior due to their black color (Oumar, 2012: 14).

Under the southern rule, the Tuaregs have been marginalized and the successive governments had no serious plans in developing the region they occupied. This led to a series of rebellions and the first one was witnessed in 1963 in what has famously been known as the Tuareg Rebellion which was thwarted by the then president Modibo Keita. This was followed by a drought in 1975 that further impoverished the northern Tuaregs and forced most of them to move to Libya and Algeria. In 1990, a second rebellion orchestrated by the Tuaregs occurred and this time it gave them a chance to negotiate with the military government that came to power in 1991 through a coup. This culminated to a national reconciliation pact that allowed the Tuaregs to utilize government services that they were not able to access in the earlier years (Oumar, 2012: 12).

It is clear here that the main grievance of the Tuaregs is the quest for political and economic opportunities. In spite of signing the national reconciliation pact, successive regimes have not

honored the pact and this has only led to more calls for the autonomy of the north thus hampering the cohesion processes.

c) *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*

In early 2000, several members of the Algerian Salafist Group for Combat and Predication (GSPC) began to arrive in Mali from Algeria. Its origin can be traced back to the Algerian civil war of 1992. At a time when the group was entering Mali, they faced no resistance from the then regime until 2006 when the group transmogrified to an Al-Qaeda terrorist group. The porous nature of the northern border coupled with the ongoing illicit trade enabled the Al-Qaeda to comfortably settle in the northern region where they have advanced their activities which include kidnapping and sporadic attacks on government forces. Apart from Mali, the group has also spread its roots to Niger and Mauritania with an aim of liberating all Islamic territories as well as bringing to an end what they term as plunder by the western countries (African Bulleting, 2012).

In northern Mali, Al-Qaeda has worked towards building a working relationship with the local communities and by taking advantage of the low government presence. Through their well-coordinated welfare programmes, they have been viewed as liberators by the local people while the government has insisted that they are a terrorist group. Their cordial relations with the local people have helped them to evade the military operations since they can easily blend well with the locals who offer them protection and intelligence (Oumar, 2012).

These two groups have managed to conduct a series of illicit activities as well as engage in violent acts of terror. In 2009 a plane that was suspected to have been carrying drugs crashed in Bourem in northern Mali and in 2011, drug traffickers engaged in intense fighting that led to four people losing their lives. The same year, several tourists from Europe were taken

hostage allegedly by members of Al-Qaeda a situation that led the European governments to call for evacuation of all their citizens from the region. On another front, there have been ongoing anti-government protests that are organized by the Tuaregs who are determined to establish an independent state in the north of Mali. The nature of these activities has had serious repercussions on the economy of Mali, especially the tourism sector which was immensely affected after European nations evacuated their citizens. Moreover, national integration has also been dented by the ongoing antigovernment protests (Oumar, 2012:4).

d) Government Response

With the ongoing security threats accompanied by other social factors, successive Malian governments have been forced to come up with some sorts of response to the ongoing situation in the north. Generally, since the successive governments have been against the independence of the north, they have opted to bribe key Tuareg leaders who are behind the anti-government protests. However, this response has not worked towards ensuring peace and stability in the northern region and it has been termed as outright corruption which has only succeeded in widening the development gap between the north and south (Oumar, 2012:13).

Another strategy adopted by the government has been the use of military force to deal with the terrorist. However, poor leadership coupled with the governments and civilians' fear of the military caused by the previous coups has led to the neglect of the army leaving behind a weak and vulnerable military force. As from the beginning of 1992 when the civilian government came to power the Malian defense has not acquired any modern military equipment and this in consideration has significantly reduced the morale of the force. The results have been increased kidnappings, drug trafficking and continuous attacks of the armed forces (Ibid: 13).

The government has also opted for bilateral operations in which it has cooperated with other countries to form military alliances that have aimed at wiping out the militants in the northern

region. One of these alliances is the Combined Staff Command that is made up of Algeria, Niger, Mauritania, and Mali. With its headquarters in Algeria, the mission of the Combined Staff Command is to wipe AQIM. Additionally, Mali is also part of the G5S force that was formed to bring long-lasting peace and stability in the larger Sahel region

In the event that the government fails to bring long-lasting peace and stability in the north, it can only be expected that more joint operations will be conducted due to the inefficiency of the Malian military. However, the ongoing situation can not only be viewed solely with a security prism since there are social and economic factors as well as long historical rivalries that have compounded the situation. Therefore military operations are pursued, there is a need to reduce the gap between the north and the south, as well as adopt strategies to ensure cohesion and integration (Oumar, 2012).

3.2 *The case of Niger*

Niger lies in the north of Mali, south of Libya and the north of Nigeria. A country of 17 million people, with vast natural resources ranging from uranium to oil, has been a center of attention in the recent past as a result of invasion by North African jihadists who have elevated their activities in its northern region. This invasion is not just a spontaneous phenomenon that can only be seen to be a result of internal factors but also a culmination of external factors whose effects reverberated across the entire West African region. The aftermath of the 2011 Libyan war, northern Mali occupation by the Tuaregs and Boko Haram occupation of north-eastern Nigeria are some of the external factors whose consequences have directly affected the situation in northern Niger.

The Libyan war of 2011 in which president Gaddafi was dethroned and Libya left in almost deplorable turmoil also created an intense environment in northern Niger as the Tuaregs who formed a huge portion of Gaddafi's militia were forced to cross the Sahara in search of safer

havens. Some of them entered Niger and settled in the north where government presence was minimal while some went to northern Mali as well as other countries across the Sahara (Aning et al, 2012). In the north of Niger, the armed Tuaregs established complex networks of jihadists and commercial which were aimed at generating income to fund their activities. Through these networks they engaged in illicit trade in arms, drugs and human trafficking with bordering countries like Mali but while they were able to successfully confront the Malian military enabling them to undertake their illegal activities in northern Mali, in northern Niger, they did not succeed in bringing the northern region to a complete siege (Idrissa, 2014).

The ripple effects of the fight against Boko Haram were also vast, spreading across the neighboring countries in West Africa. In 2009 when the Nigerian army carried out an operation to wipe them out from their hideouts in north-eastern Nigeria, it was not anticipated that the results of the operation could affect other neighboring countries. Even though the main leader was killed in the operation, there was a serious loss of lives of military officers as well as other bystanders caught in the middle of the operation. Besides, the most dreadful results that have continued to affect the better part of West Africa are the emergence of splinter militant Islamic groups with rapid ideologies that have directed their attacks to Christians, tourists and the state and the problem of refugees who are fleeing the hostile areas to safer places in eastern Niger (News Express, 2015).

Despite being faced with simmering signs of insecurity, Niger has not suffered the fate of Mali in which the militant groups controlled the northern region. For Niger, government's response, as well as other dynamics response, have played a bigger role in effectively containing the situation. Here we look at the context in which Niger finds itself, the actors in Niger's security predicament as well as the government's response to the security challenge.

a) *General Context in Niger*

Niger is located at the center of countries that are facing a series of episodic violent activities originating from militant groups that have formed bases in West Africa. Bordering southern Libya and northern Nigeria south-eastern Mali, countries in turbulence, Niger endowed with vast natural resources like coal and Uranium in its northern region where militant groups have threatened to take over. As it has been argued by several scholars, natural resources have proved to be a curse to many developing countries due to the crucial role they play in the political arena as well as in policy formulation. In many countries, due to the uneven distribution of resources, other regions are less developed than others. This is also the case in Niger, despite the fact that the northern region is endowed with coal and uranium, it is less developed. This has provided a conducive environment for aggrieved ethnic groups, including the Tuaregs to rebel against the state due to a lack of essential services (Idrissa, 2014).

In the early 1990s, the Tuaregs successfully rebelled against the then government and this act was interpreted as an affront against the exploitation of natural resources by the government especially uranium in the northern region. Tuaregs are further aggrieved by the fact that the northern region which should be favorable for agricultural activities has not received any incentive from the government that would be significant in propelling agricultural and other commercial activities. This situation compounds the already existing security challenges and the government is presented with a situation in which it has to either confront already radicalized population in order to maintain law and order or engage in developing an expansive marginalized region with high costs or both (Ibid..pg 5).

Between 2007 and 2009 the Tuaregs rebelled again. But this time they were much more violent than during the rebellion of the 1990s. The rebels were well armed with modern military equipment and their main target was the military. With landmines, anti-personnel and anti-tank, the rebels inflict unimaginable damages to the military in a sequence of attacks. Although it is not clear where the Tuaregs acquired the weapons but an accusing finger has been pointed

at drug traffickers but the Libyan jihadists have also been regarded to have the potential of supplying arms to the rebels. There have been various arguments as to the cause of this rebellion, while it has been regarded as a tussle for the control of minerals in the northern region; it is also highly seen as a result of underdevelopment of the northern region (Idrissa, 2014).

With increased rates of underdevelopment in northern Niger, the local population has had no much option but to engage in illicit trades something that the previous regimes have regarded as normal desert crimes. But as it has come to be, the normal desert crimes that involved carjacking and mugging have transmogrified into complex drug and human trafficking, a situation that has forced the current regime to change tact in confronting these illicit trades by sealing off all the trade routes that the Tuaregs have been using. Although the government has to some extent succeeded in containing the activities of the Tuaregs and other jihadists, there are still pockets of violent crimes organized by these groups and the question that has not yet been answered sufficiently is as to whether the situation in Northern Niger is a security or a development challenge or both.

b) *Government's Response to the Security Challenge*

The Nigerien government has been faced with a dilemma on how to deal with the situation in the north, however, as compared to Mali; it has succeeded in taking control of the region due to a number of reasons. To begin with, when the armed Libyan Tuaregs were escaping the hostile environment, the government acted swiftly to ensure that they did not cross the borders with their arms. The disarmament operation has thus allowed the government to control that amount of small arms in the hands of civilians giving it a significant amount of control in the north where the Tuaregs settled (Aning et al, 2012).

Since the challenge in the north has been highly regarded as a security threat, there has been militarization of operations. In the last decades, the government has increased its funding to the defense ministry from 46 million dollars in 2006 to 200 million dollars in 2014. For a country with high levels of poverty and a significantly small national budget, this sort of allocation in the defense ministry is an indicator of the government's seriousness to secure its territories. These funds have been used to train, recruit, establish more bases in the northern, region and to acquire modern military equipment. It is the availability of this equipment that the military was able to quell the 2007 rebellion though with several casualties. Besides, the government also increased the salaries of the military officers, boosting their morale and avoiding a rebellion from within the military. With this kind of investment, the government can entirely depend on the military to effectively undertake various operations within and outside its borders (Idrissa, 2014).

Another initiative of the government is the establishment of a secretariat for defense and security (SDS! Sahel! Niger). This initiative, which began in 2012, aims at overseeing development and security programmes in the north. Even though there is a development component in this initiative, much of its activities have been geared solely towards security with development regarded as a by-product of security. The initiative does not receive any funding from the Nigerien government but it is entirely funded by external donors especially the French government, European Union, and the United States whose interest are more inclined to the security component of this initiative. Besides, these external actors are also keen on safeguarding their political, economic, and strategic interests. For them enabling the institutional capacity of the state to provide security as well as securing a conducive environment for the rule of law is the only way their interests can be secured abroad (Bromley, 2014).

Being part of the G5S has also boosted Niger's government ability to respond to its security challenges. Securing the Sahel region has been of great importance to several international like the United Nations, and regional actors. By virtue of being the country that has experienced a period of relative peace in the region, these actors, through G5S initiatives have worked towards ensuring Niger does not slip into the hands of militants.

As for the challenge of Boko Haram, the government has not paid much attention to the group's activities. This has been due to the fact that the activities of the militant group are often confined within Nigerian borders with little security threat to bordering countries. However, the government in Niger has had to keep a close eye on groups that could be sympathizers of Boko Haram. These groups are seen not to pose a serious threat to internal security but due to their ethnic relation with Boko Haram, they are believed to have espoused the militants' ideologies and are important agents who help Boko Haram to recruit militants from Niger (Idrissa, 2014).

Even though the government has to a large extent responded to the security threats, it has done so at the expense of developing the northern region. This has alluded to the fact that the country is still a weak state, with weak institutions which lack the regulatory and organizational capacity to initiate huge development projects a situation that has impeded the state from undertaking its fthe unctions in certain areas especially the remote areas that have not been developed since the colonial era. In this regard, the legitimacy of the government is put into question and the result is what the Tuaregs in the north have continued to do over time- rebellion against the government. Therefore, as to whether the government is only keen to establish an environment of temporary peace by militarizing the security challenge in the north or its keen to develop a permanent solution by merging security and development is something that can be argued variously.

3.3 THE COUNTER MEASURES, G5 SAHEL RESPONSE

Introduction

As the activities of violent extremist groups and terrorists continued to spread from Mali to western Niger and north-east Burkina Faso, security and safety in Sahel region ran into a downward trajectory and there was a need to quell the rabid activities of the terrorists and militant extremist groups. In order to bring the troubling effects of the groups' activities to the world's attention, United Nations Security Council in their 2017 report corroborated the need for quick response and further expressed their fears that failure to control activities of these groups could have insidious effects not only on the regional peace but also on international peace and security (United Nations Security Council Report, 2017).

Initially, various efforts that were meant to bring peace and stability in the region had already been hampered by lack of coordination and collaboration. For example, violence was at its apex in Mali despite the availability of monitoring groups like French Operation Barkhane and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Niger was also facing pockets of violence and threats from extremists and the same was also the case in Chad and Burkina Faso. Lives of the local population were in this case threatened by not only the extremists and terrorists but also other security problems like human trafficking, forced migration as well as other organized crimes. Therefore, these challenges instigated a conspicuous consensus from the side of key actors especially on the region's member states on the need for a more robust approach that could bring stability to the region and quell the already existing fears of spillover effects.

It is on this backdrop of continued violent activities and inefficiency of already available measures that the Group of 5 Five for the Sahel (G5S) - whose composition and mandate will be looked at in details in the subsequent sections- was formed in 2014 to work towards crafting

a long-lasting framework that would ensure peace and stability in the Sahel Region. In 2017, the group regained its momentum and called for the need to establish a more dynamic force to combat extremist and terrorist groups since its earlier efforts had not been successful. Aside from being an initiative for seeking peace and stability, FC-G5S also provided a platform for looking into the needs of various interested actors like the European Union, United States, France, and the United Nations as well as coordinating humanitarian assistance (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

This section comprehensively looks into the formation, composition, activities, and operations of G5S in its effort to bring long-lasting peace and stability in the Sahel region and also zooms in on its framework and mandate as well as challenges it has faced so far.

a) Formation of G5S

Threats from militant extremist groups had heightened, endangering the lives and properties of the local population in the Sahel region. This intense level of insecurity was further worsened by other security problems including but not limited to human and drug trafficking as well as forced migration which had persisted regardless of the already available operations led by French and African forces that aimed at defeating militant extremists groups that had annexed huge territories in Mali in 2013. This was followed by another of United Nations operations MINUSMA and later the French-backed Operation Barkhane which had also aimed at weakening the militants in Mali (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2018).

In spite of these efforts, the Sahel region was still grappling with a myriad of challenges. At least 1100 people had been killed by eight different militant groups but the most active of all these groups was Al Qaeda, Jihad and Movement for Unity in West Africa which targeted civilians in the rural villages, military personnel, and bases as well as high-end hotels in the major cities through suicide bombing. In 2008, at least 39 people were murdered in Central

Mali when their vehicle became a target of the militants' landmines. Another separate incidence occurred in 2016 in Burkina Faso where at least 30 people died after the militants ambushed their hotel and later a serious attack that led to the loss of several peacekeepers was directed to three United Nations bases in Mali (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2018: 2).

These series of attacks had been enabled by a number of factors that either worked in isolation or in collaboration to enable the militants to operate without much resistance. Key among them include the porous nature of borders in the Sahel region, low number of security personnel in the rural areas, and the sparse nature of population in the rural areas which enabled the militants to take control of trade: engaging in unlawful business like drug and human trafficking which served as sources of funds to further strengthen the groups' financially leading to more vicious attacks.

Sahel region is also facing unparalleled incidents of forced migration. Chad, which is the fifth largest host for refugees, has about 390,000 refugees mainly from Sudan, Nigeria, and the Central African Republic. Boko Haram attacks have also worsened the humanitarian situation. At least 248,000 people have been forced to migrate, a huge number of them coming to Nigeria and Niger.

It is due to the ongoing security challenges that G5S was formed in February 2014 with a sole mandate of overseeing regional cooperation and combating major security and humanitarian challenges facing the region. It was formed as an institutional framework composed of 5 countries-Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger. In pursuant to its main goal, the institution has established various activities and initiatives that are grounded in the areas of development and security. These activities and initiatives are spread across four fundamental themes that include but not limited to governance, infrastructure, defense, and security as well as the resilience of populations. Apparently, as it will be seen in the subsequent sections, much

attention has been paid to the area of defense and security due to the continued violent activities of terrorists and extremist groups (G5 Sahel, 2014).
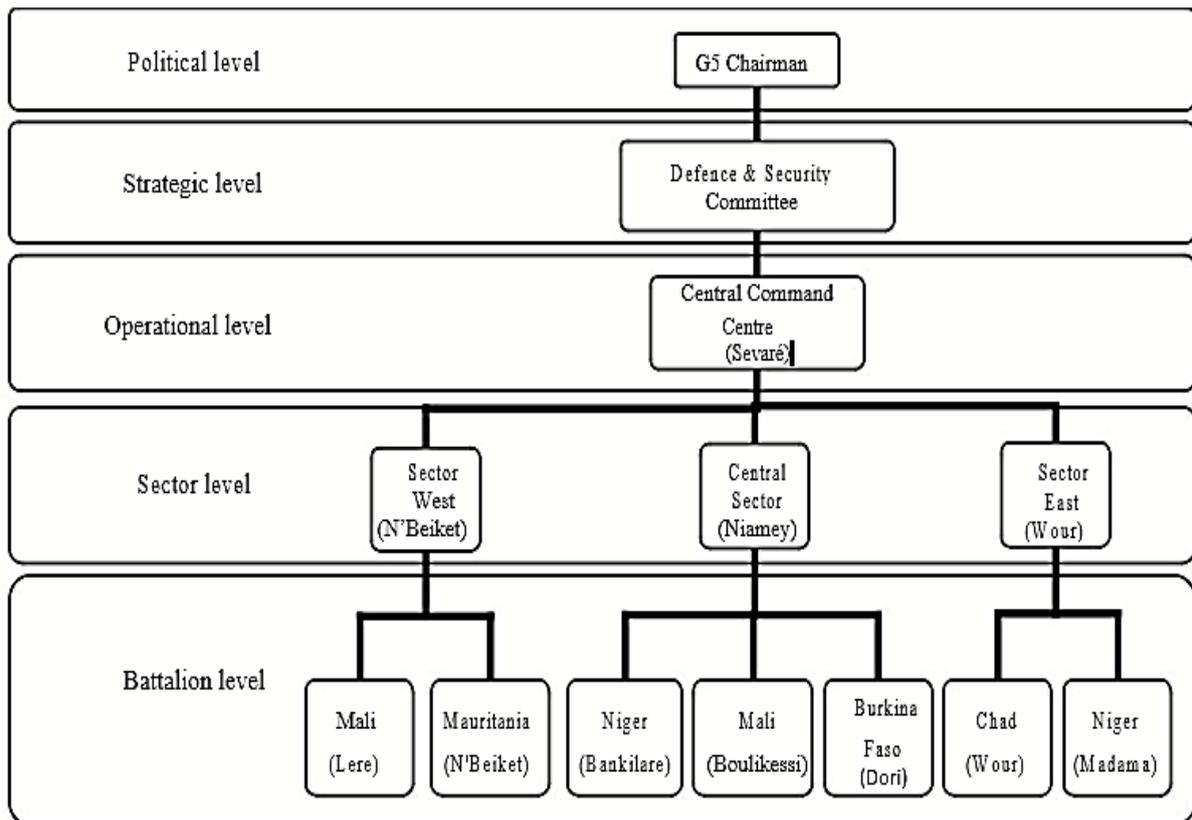
b) *The structure of G5S*

In order to oversee its mandate, G5S is divided into different units that are designed to perform different functions. At the apex of the organization is the chairman who is the head of the political unit. Below the chairman is the defense committee which brings together defense ministers from all the member countries. This committee is responsible for strategy formulation and they meet twice every year.

At the center of the organization is the central command center which was formed in 2017 to coordinate the entire operations of the organization. It also acts as a human resource center that is in charge of over 90 employees distributed across the member countries. Below the central command center the three sector command posts that are distributed across the three zones. The main central command center was completed in 2017 and it is situated in Niamey, Niger. Consequently, two more command centers were established in November of 2017 to cover the Eastern zone of War, Chad and another in the Western zone in N'beiket, Mauritania (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

At the bottom of the structure are seven battalion command posts that are distributed across the three zones. Their main role is to undertake combat operations that are aimed at wiping out the extremists and terrorist groups. The Western Zone has two battalions, one is situated in Lere, Mali and another battalion in N'Beiket, Mauritania. At the central zone, there are three battalions; one is situated in Bankilare, Niger, another in Mali and the last one in Dori, Burkina Faso. The eastern zone has a battalion in Wuor Chad, and another one in Madama, Niger (European Union Training Mission to Mali, 2017).

Organization Structure of the G5 Sahel

Political level		G5 Chairman
Strategic level		Defence & Security Committee
Operational level		Central Command Centre (Sevaré)
Sector level		Sector West (N'Beiket) — Central Sector (Niamey) — Sector East (Wour)
Battalion level		Mali (Lere), Mauritania (N'Beiket), Niger (Bankilare), Mali (Boulikessi), Burkina Faso (Dori), Chad (Wour), Niger (Madama)

c) *The mandate of the G5S*

With the worsening of insecurity in the Sahel region and failure of the already available mechanisms for peacebuilding and reconstruction, there was a need for a change in tact. This worsening situation hence prompted G5S to come up with a number of strategies which were penned down on a strategic concept of operation (CONOPS), a document that was developed and adopted by G5S's defense and security committee in 2017. This document called for the utilization of combative measures which would involve the military as well as the police to enable the organization to achieve its objectives (United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2013).

In its main mandate, it G5S-CONOPS aimed at achieving four broad objectives. To begin with, it was concerned with combating drug trafficking, terrorism, and human trafficking. Secondly,

it sought to restore the authority of states that were weakened by the violent activities of the terrorist groups and ensure that the displaced people and refugees returned to their countries. It was also concerned with humanitarian activities which were geared towards delivering aid to the displaced populations. Lastly, it aimed at the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure by ensuring that development activities were operationalized within the area of G5S (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

It has been argued, that the mandate as presented in the strategic document also provided a broad platform for linking together the mandates of other operational groups that had been established earlier to bring peace and stability in the region. For example, the mandate of French-backed Operation Barkhane was only limited to combat specific terrorist groups while failing to address other core issues like humanitarian activities, transnational crimes, development activities as well as restoration of state authority which are well captured in the mandate of G5S CONOPS. On the other hand, the mandate of MINUSA which is a brainchild of United Nations was only designed to combat terrorist activities in Mali and this enabled terrorist groups to shift their operations to other countries where there was no much resistance (United Nations, 2017).

Moreover, these two organizations (MINUSA & Operation Barkhane) that had earlier existed have been considered to be to more Eurocentric in their mandates and composition. Therefore, there has been the need to bring in an African aspect to the military operations in the region. It is in this sense that G5S brings in the lacking African element in the fight against terrorism by placing African security personnel at the core of major operations with an aim of improving their skills hence diminishing the presence of external troops which sometimes are considered hostile to the local communities. Shurkin (2017) argues that external actors like the United States should provide the necessary support to the G5S in the fight against terrorism because the presence of foreign troops has sometimes worked towards exacerbating the already worse

situation as local communities tend to offer their support to the terrorists who might be their next of kins (Shurkin,2017). This assertion has also been supported by Lebovich (2017) who argues that the presence of local troops is a positive strategy in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel region (Lebovich, 2017).

### d) Operations of the G5S

The G5S force is composed of at least 5000 military troops including 550 battalions and 100 police officers for each battalion drawn from the member states. These troops are spread across the three sectors and their headquarters is in, Sévaré, Mali. The force's operations are centralized along the borders between Niger, Burkina Faso, as well as between Niger and Chad.

Since 2017, G5S has conducted a number of operations in the Sahel region with varied strategies which have oscillated between the establishment of various institutions and application of hard force through combat operations. One of the main strategies that have been adopted is the establishment of institutions like Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre which serves as an intelligence gathering centre and the establishment of two defense colleges, Sahel Security College in Bamako, Mali and Defence College in Nouakchott. These have been used for building capacity in the areas of intelligence collection and military training (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

Aside from these rather institutional strategies, G5S has also acted as a military coordination center in which various bilateral and multilateral military operations of the five countries that were already in existence are brought under one coordination center to enhance the level of security across the borders. These cross-border operations represent a shift from a rather institutional approach to a more combative one that has brought oversaw over 20 military operations across the borders in the period between 2014 and 2017. To further buttress its combative operations, G5S formed a joint force to fight criminal groups and terrorism in 2015

and the period between 2016 and 2017 several consultative meetings which were attended by the French president in Bamako were conducted to ensure that the new force received much-needed support at a time when security and stability was deteriorating (Institute of Security Studies, 2017).

It can be argued that the presence of the French president in these activities illustrates the level of importance foreign actors have bestowed on the ongoing insecurity situation in the Sahel region. Of great importance though, is that the presence of such foreign actors-as will be seen later-is an indicator that the G5S was not only beginning to receive global recognition but also global support. Following this global recognition, Sahel also became a topic of discussion in African Union's Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) which provided their support for the operations that were undertaken in 2017 by allowing the force to deploy police, civilian workers and at least 5000 military troops in volatile regions. This support by AU PSC was later accompanied by another request to the United Nations Security Council to allow for the deployment of FC G5S in the Sahel region as well as another request for the United Nations Security Council to provide the framework for logistics and financial support (Institute of Security Studies, 2017).

Map of G5 Sahel Joint Operations
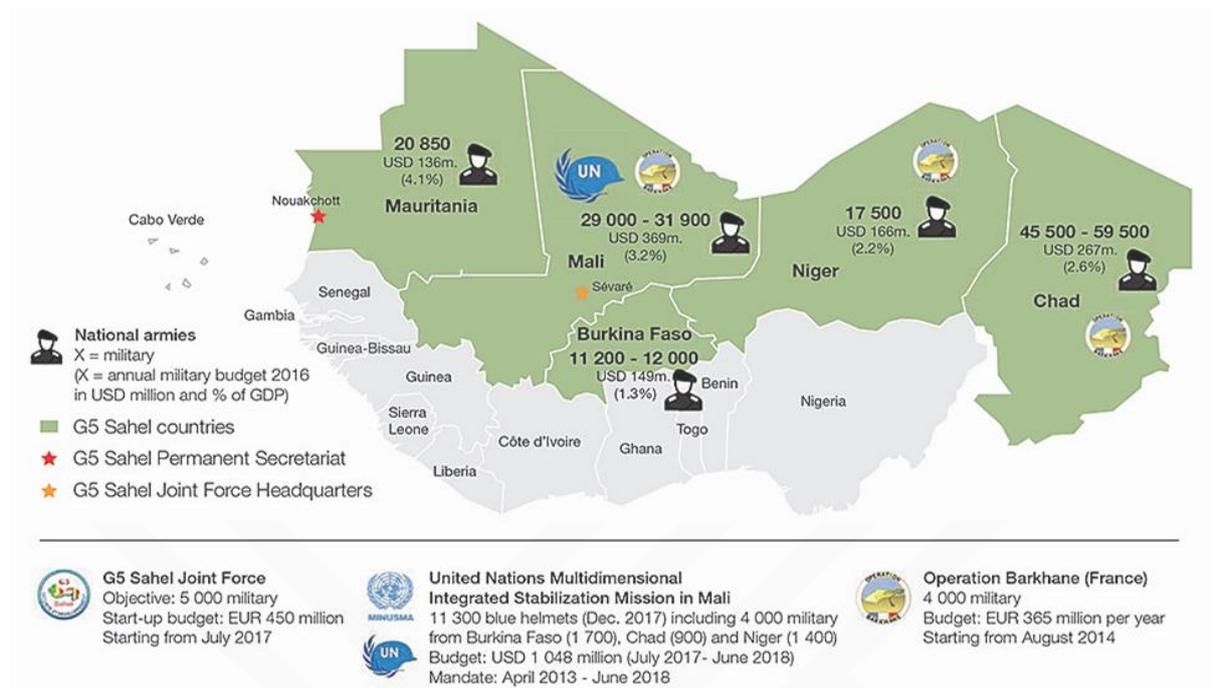
Source: Touchard (2017) African Armed forces: SIPRI (2017), Military Expenditure Database

3.4 *Interested actors in Sahel Region*

The ongoing security challenges have attracted a number of actors to the Sahel region including the European Union, United Nations, France, and the United States which have provided their support in different forms for the ongoing operations. United States has not participated in any serious engagements with the G5S except at the United Nations level. The United Nations, on the other hand, established a mission in Mali known as MINUSMA in which member states of G5s have deployed their military personnel.

a) *European Union*

Since 2014, European Union has been in the forefront in partnering with the African led initiatives of the G5S, this has been achieved in the areas of political dialogue, development assistance, security, and humanitarian support. In the area of political dialogue, the EU has set up a platform know as the EU-G5S dialogue forum in which high ranking EU official has held

annual meetings with the foreign ministers from the Sahel region in order to foster cooperation in the areas of migration, youth unemployment, humanitarian support, security and long-term development of the region.

In the area of development assistance, the European Union is considered to be one of the biggest contributors to various development initiatives. It has a development plan for the Sahel region that is expected to run from 2014- 2020 at an estimated cost of 8 billion Euros. Aside from this contribution, the EU has also about 843 million Euros through European Union Emergency Trust Fund for the purposes of addressing the instability as well as irregular migration. EU also engages directly with Alliance for the Sahel in which it is a member. In the area of security, the EU has contributed over 50 million Euros that was used to establish the Sahel Joint Force, besides; it has at least three missions in the region EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUCAP Sahel Mali, EU training mission (EUTM) in Mali (EU Commission, 2018).

When it comes to humanitarian assistance, EU is also one of the main aid providers in the Sahel region. In 2017 alone, EU committed about 234 million Euros which included 22.5 million Euros for the health sector; 56 million Euros were allocated for nutrition and 90 million Euros for food aid. As a result of this humongous support, approximately 1,9 million people have been provided with food and another 455,000 children who were suffering from malnutrition were treated in 2017. Additionally, EU plays a major role in reducing disaster, disaster response and emergency preparedness.

This amount of support from the European Union has been occasioned by the fear that the effect security challenges in the Sahel if left unchecked would spread to a number of European countries due to the proximity of the region to Europe. Therefore, based on the European Union's perspective, it is logical to control these challenges from their source before they spread to other regions. Although this approach might be applicable to other security and

development challenges, it has not been able to solve the challenge of migration which has led to a huge number of Africans from the region to migrate to Europe.

b) France

Even though France is part of the European Union, it has independently provided support to the G5S forces. This is partly due to the deep historical relations that it has with West African countries as well as its economic interests in the region. French forces have been in a larger extent involved in Operation Barkhane, an initiative that the French government established in 2014 to help fight the militant groups in Sahel. Through this operation, France has provided the much needed logistical and human resources to the G5S forces and French president, while dismissing the fears of withdrawal of the French forces, has provided an assurance that his government will continue to support the operations in the region.

3.5 Challenges Facing G5S Forces

In its quest for regaining regional peace and stability, G5S is face with a number of challenges that have at times hindered them from achieving their objectives. These challenges can be divided into four broad categories: funding, inexperienced national militaries, instability within the G5S countries and the existence of parallel structures.

a) Funding

One for the major challenges that many other organizations have continued to face is the unavailability of funds. However, for G5S the challenge of funds is further worsened by the short-term funding approach that has been adopted by funding agencies like the European Union. Besides, the organization lacks internal capacity and frameworks to oversee a huge amount of funds.

The plight of G5S for more funds has in the recent past reached the highest organ of the United Nations-United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Upon a petition by G5S to acquire funds from the United Nations, UNSC resolved that the member countries of G5S the were to be responsible for pooling together financial resources. Since the member countries themselves have weak states, it has been impossible for them to fund the organization especially the military operations which are very expensive (Security Council Report, 2017).

As it stands now, the operations of the forces are funded through a consolidated in which member states of G5S, the European Union, France, and to some extent the United States pool funds together to finance military operations. The G5S member states have pledged to contribute 10 million Euros, the European Union brings in 50 million Euros, and France provides 8 million Euros of logistics support. Although the United States is not willing to provide financial support, it has pledged 51 million Euros in bilateral support. Even though these huge amounts have been offered to G5S, they are still facing huge financial problems. As at the time of these donations it had received less than a quarter of its 423 million budget (Maliactu, 2017).

France remains the single largest funder of G5S operations and this raises doubts as to whether it will continue to provide funds in the long term. It is clear that other countries in Europe are not willing to contribute funds in support of G5S's operations since they already the United Nations-backed MINUSMA and the African Union which should have been one of the funders is not in a position to provide funds since the African Union also depends on external donors to fund their operations. The uncertainty of sources of funds has also been raised by the secretary general of the United Nations who in his report warned that the size of the G5S operational force would make it difficult to mobilize funds in the future. This was also followed by Chad's president disinterestedness to committing its forces to combat operations until they can receive adequate financial assistance. This scenario means that in the absence of Chad,

which boasts of the strongest military in the region, the operations of G5S would be seriously crippled (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017: 27).

Another challenge that concerns finances has been the inability of G5S to effectively utilize the funds given to them by various donors. This has been attributed to a lack of strong institutional framework which would ensure that the already available well utilized thus minimizing the risks of pilferage and subterfuge as a result of competition for resource amongst the member states. In order to increase donor confidence, there is a need to improve the financial framework so as to avoid the risks of corruption (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017: 28).

b) *Internal Instability*

The challenge of political instability has hampered the operations of G5S forces in the Sahelian region. Out of the five countries, three of them have faced serious coup attempts in the last decade. Burkina Faso has faced much more coup attempts with the last failed attempt in 2015. Mali experienced a coup in 2012; Mauritania also experienced coups both in 2005 and 2008 while Niger experienced a coup in 2010. These sought of internal political instability presents serious challenges on the fight against extremists. First, these countries tend to focus more on the already existing internal political challenges and secondly, they weaken the operation of G5S forces thereby enabling the terrorists to regroup.

There are also other security threats that do not fall within the mandate of G5S forces that are burdening the member states. For instance, Chad has been presented with different challenges with on the borders. On the north, it faces the challenge from Libya's ongoing instability, from the, south theirs the problem of Boko Haram and in its border with Sudan, the security situation has plummeted. Moreover, the country is faced with low economic growth as well as other social issues which must be prioritized (United Nations Security Council, 2017).

These internal challenges have serious repercussions on the sustainability of G5S forces, this is because when the member states are presented with such challenges, they would tend to give the priority a situation that would affect their contribution to the G5S operation. With an organization that has already been financially crippled, contributions of the member states become key sources of revenue.

c) *Parallel Operations*

Since the security situation in the Sahel came to the limelight, there have been a number of operations that were initiated to , bring peace and stability in the region. These diverse operations have recently worked towards weakening the operations of the G5S thereby calcifying the activities of the extremist and terrorists.

To begin with, there is the French-backed Operation Barkhane which the G5S forces have continuously relied on in their operations. In this sense, G5S forces have to a larger extent over depended on the Operation Barkhane a scenario that raises serious questions on their sustainability once the French-backed operation is wound up (Lebovich, 2017). French support in the Sahelian region has been very fundamental in the success of various military operations. For example, it has been argued that the operation that was undertaken in Hawbi was a success simply because of the French support. Despite the fact that G5S was in charge of the operation, French forces were responsible for the tactics and personnel in which Operation Barkhane provided much needed logistical support like infantry soldiers and engineers who were able to handle and detonate homemade bombs (Reuters, 2017). Based on these, the main question as to whether G5S forces will continue with fighting the terrorist after the withdrawal of Operation Barkhane cannot be ignored.

Aside from Operation Barkhane, there is operation MINUSMA which is backed by the United Nations and it also requires the member states to provide military personnel. With relatively

small and weak military forces among the G5S member states, there is a challenge to these member states to prioritize on whether to avail their military forces to the MINUSMA or use their military forces for the G5S operations. Chad has remained the largest contributor of military personnel to MINUSMA and the president has expressed his unwillingness to provide military forces to both MINUSMA and G5S as this serves to limit the country's ability to protect itself from other external threats (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017: 29).

G5S also faces a challenge of competing with other actors for resources both financial and human. This scenario is instigated by the availability of other actors and initiatives that are geared towards achieving almost the same mandate that G5S seeks to pursue and this duplication of efforts works towards weakening regional and international cooperation. For example, there is the Multinational Joint Task Force that was established to fight Boko Haram, there's also a Joint Operation Army Staffs Committees that was formed in 2010 by, Mali, Mauritania, Algeria and Niger to coordinate the gathering of intelligence. Another example is the existence of Nouakchott Process, which was formed by 11 countries including some member states of G5S, is mandated to oversee intelligence gathering as well as combat drug and human trafficking in the region (Tisseron, 2016).

As it has been seen above, these parallel operations might be intended to benefit the Sahel region, but their continued multiplication brings the operations of G5S into serious jeopardy as competition for resources intensifies. It can also be argued that these parallel operations enable the extremists and terrorists to strengthen their activities due to the short-term nature of the parallel operations. Indeed, if there could be a single large entity to fight the terrorists then the security situation in the Sahel would have improved.

d) *Framework Challenges*

The framework of G5S in itself has served to be a source of challenges that have continued to bedevil the institution. Key among the challenges that are related to the framework are inadequate law enforcers, unavailability of a good strategy for combating trafficking as well as the thin line between security enforcement and development component.

With regards to law enforcement, G5S's strategic paper outlines the availability of a police force, however, their mandate and area of operation are still not very clear. Initially, the strategic paper had outlined that each battalion of G5S forces would have at least 100 men police officers who would work for hand in hand with the military officers, but this number has not achieved. While other members like Burkina Faso and Niger have called for the increase in the number of police officers, Mauritania has disagreed with this decision. This clearly shows that even among the member states theirs no consensus regarding this issue. What can then be expected is lack of cooperation when it comes to information collection, and more importantly, a weak police force. The work of the police is also affected by the nature of groups involved in illegal activities like trafficking. More often, these groups have close links to government officials making it difficult for the police to make any arrests. But even when the arrests are made, the suspects are not taken through trials leading to overcrowded prisons (United Nations Security Council 2017).

While the number of police officers is outlined in the strategic paper, the number of military officers that can be accommodated in the G5S force is not clearly indicated in the paper. As it is, the framework, therefore, fails to provide pre and post-deployment mechanisms thus hindering the capacity to effectively train, and plan for operations. The absence of these important mechanisms also comes along with the likelihood of human rights violation as well as the radicalization of the local population. According to the human rights watch in Mali, the

numbers of tortures, extrajudicial killings, and disappearance of persons have been in the rise since 2016 and these atrocities are allegedly done, by the Malian military officers who are part of the G5S force (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

The framework has also been questioned on whether it focuses on both security and development or it is more concerned with security at the expense of local development. In the mandate, it is clearly stated that while focusing on combating terrorism and extremist groups the institution will also focus on the development of the Sahel region. Importantly, the mandate states that G5S will facilitate development initiatives and oversee humanitarian activities like distribution of aid. However, the heightening insecurity situation appears to have pushed development initiatives to the periphery, yet, insecurity is just one of the many problems facing the region, other problems like extreme poverty and climate change also require close attention. The neglect of other problems has at this time led to an uprising from the civil society as well as the local population who have raised concerns that G5S operations have not factored in the development needs of the local populations (Ibid. 29).

e) *Intelligence Gathering*

Combating terrorists and extremists' groups require the efficient and accurate gathering of intelligence. Yet, for G5S, gathering intelligence has been one of the major setbacks that it is continuing to face as a result of weak intelligence capacity created by lack of modern intelligence gathering equipment like drones. This situation has forced the G5S to over-rely on external actors like France who have continued to provide the much needed technical support for information gathering. In addition, G5S has failed in providing necessary protection to informants. As in the case of Mali, extremists and terrorists have targeted local people who they suspect to have provided vital information to security agencies and these have led to the

call for the more robust informant protection initiative to mitigate further attacks on informants (Shurkin et al, 2017).

An ethnic difference among the people in the Sahel region has also prevented the security forces from gathering accurate information. Different ethnic groups' members have selfishly used the opportunity given to provide vital information as a chance to settle past scores with their perceived rivals a situation that has not only led the security officers to target wrong groups but also instigated intense ethnic clashes. In events such as this, the distinction between who belongs and who does not belong to the terrorist group becomes even more difficult and innocent civilians become victims of brutality especially in densely populated areas (Gasinska & Bohman, 2017).

Intelligence sharing is also an issue that has affected the operations of G5S forces. Even though the accurate information could be collected, the member states have not been willing to share them among themselves due to unavailability of secure channels for information sharing which has forced G5S forces to depend heavily on France. There are also linkages between the governments and the extremist groups which make it very difficult for the G5S forces to collaborate when it comes to combating transnational crimes due to the government protection that these kinds of groups receive from the government (Cantens & Raballand, 2016).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this thesis are consistent with the hypothesis of the study. In this section, we use the supporting evidence to demonstrate that indeed the absence of state authority in an area makes it vulnerable to terrorist and the armed group as well as why the countermeasures are not efficient. The level of poverty, how the human development index, poor planning and lack of essential services are either missing or insufficient in all the violent hot spots in the Sahel region. This means that the local population feels very little attachment to the central authority and therefore creating a room that has been exploited by armed groups and extremists to recruit locals and operate in these areas.

The detachment is not only seen in the lack of social welfare services in the region, the territories that are experiencing the violence are also geographically detached from the center meaning most of them are along the border with of there countries. Before these regions were overrun by armed groups, there was little or no presence of border police and security forces who could have repelled the initial attacks. Seemingly, governments in the region did little to collect intelligence in the areas considered to be in the periphery since that way we could have witnessed sufficient response from the government before the largescale take over of the hotspots. How non -state actors manage to infiltrate not one or two but almost five countries in the same region and the governments could only respond after these groups had settled and established operational positions is a question of concern. What is clear though is that these governments had an insufficient presence in the captured regions.

With regards to the issue of what made the communities in these regions vulnerable to supporting armed groups or even accepting to be recruited one needs to look back at the very definition of the state, its roles, and responsibilities. Of course, the impact of some communities being marginalized or feeling not well represented in government or that their interest is not

being addressed sufficiently is enough to understand why they are justifying the use of violence. On the one hand, governments can claim that their inability to provide the much-needed resources and social welfare in all parts of the country is caused by the weak economy. This is a valid justification; however, the point is not about whether there is a strong economy or not but whether national resources are shared in a manner that promotes inclusivity and equity.

The case of Sahel has nonetheless gone past who or what caused the outbreak of the insecurity being witnessed in the region although such information will be vital to understanding and avoiding a similar occurrence in the future. The key concern is how to bring to an end the senseless killing and destruction that the conflict has brought about. This research suggests that finding a solution to the Sahel conflict will need two approaches. The first stage will require the use of force and the second stage will need a much softer approach, characterized by the provision of essential services and rights.

Indeed, the regional countries have already come up with an armed response to the non -state actors through the G5 Sahel operations as well as bilateral support from foreign military forces. These responses have not shown prospects of non -lethal force which is important to win the support of the locals. Instead, the Sahel has been classified as an existential threat in the region and internationally. The securitization of the region has also been closely followed by the notion of 'security first,' a philosophy that appears to overlook some of the critical aspects of the insecurity such as the genuine grievances of the locals.

The twin bombing or the American Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, and Arusha, Tanzania in 1997 perhaps marked the beginning of securitization of the Sahel region even though at the time armed groups were not as vibrant as they are today. The abduction of 32 European tourists in 2003 from the Algerian Sahara marked the not only a new approach to the continent by external

actors, but also the prioritization of counterterrorism strategies as an initial response to ungoverned spaces. The launch of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), a regional counterterrorism program is one of the many examples of militarization and securitization of the Sahel yet more than a decade later the counter-terrorism strategies have not succeeded to end the conflict in the region. Another example that military solution was given priority over social welfare was the establishment of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008.

Lack of institutionalized economic practices had promoted illegal trade and smuggling across the Sahel. The livelihood of many people in the Sahel corridor has depended on these practices and when the government counterterrorism strategies disrupt smuggling and illegal trade escalates the population's negative opinion towards the government. While the terrorists also depend on smuggling and illegal trade, state efforts to end such practices without providing alternative sources for essential goods to the populations can lead to collaboration between the armed groups and the local population.

The downside of the existing counterterrorism strategies in the Sahel is that they have lacked a comprehensive plan to deal with development and humanitarian assistance which in turn adds to the suffering of the people. The people who have been displaced by counterterrorism strategies find themselves in the worsening humanitarian situation than what they were going through under the armed groups. The negative sentiment the local populations have developed on the terrorists, governments and foreigners mostly the west can be attributed to the consequences of terrorism and counterterrorism strategies.

Examining the paradox between the number of attacks with military interventions, one can tell that there were more attacks when the government intervened in the areas controlled by armed groups. As the governments in the Sahel region begun to receive international support to counter the insurgent groups in the region, more violence and insecurity increased. These

include; the Kounta-Arab incident, an alleged coup attempt in Mauritania, an attempted coup against President Idriss Deby in Chad, the Tuareg attacks in Mali and the violent events in Niger. This brings up an argument that the 'security only' and military approach to ending the Sahel crisis has more harm to peace in the region. It raises valid concerns over what such approaches have in determining the relationship between the armed groups and the local population since both consider themselves as being targeted by the state.

The International Crisis Group opines that there is "*a generic relationship in situations where terrorism exists, in the form of concentric circles of interest and complicity, leading toward those who are or might be actual terrorists*". And that at therefore need to "*distinguish between those who are opposed, apathetic, or ambivalent, those who gleefully watch from the sidelines, those who contribute money, know someone involved or are otherwise close to the active participants, and those who are actively involve*d" (International Crisis Group, 2005: 34).

In summary, the ongoing conflict in the Sahel has had severe consequences on the security of the people, the region and the world. However, existing efforts to bring peace and stability seem to be keen on curbing the situation's existential threat to external actors. It gives very little attention to the non -violent threats faced by the local population and has further produced consequences that are either intended or unintended consequences with severe implications. One is that the local population in the Sahel region has increasingly become resentful of the international actors in what they consider as invading their territories. Two, the increased support and sympathy by some people in the Sahel towards the very armed groups that the government and external actors are keen to destroy. Last but not least is that those in power in the Sahel countries are taking advantage of the support they receive from external actors to marginalize political opponents and entrench themselves in power.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, we wish to recommend the following efforts in order to promote a broad based -inclusive approach to solving the problem.

Adoption of an authentic region-based solution with the involvement of the United Nations, African Union and relevant regional blocs. This means a transition from the now national oriented approach to a transnational approach. This means the agenda to be developed must reflect a national, regional and international consensus and needs to be implemented through a transnational strategy that ensures support and humanitarian services reaches those who need it the most.

In dealing with the crisis in the Sahel, the relevant actors should recognize the importance of incorporating and engaging with the non -formal, subnational actors in their efforts. This also means that development and security initiatives should move with the population irrespective of the boundary so that vulnerable the civilians displaced by the counterterrorism measures are well cared for.

Given that the experience of the crisis indicates that no individual state has the capacity to counter the development and security challenges facing their territories, regional organizations, the United Nations and the African Union need to redirect their strategy towards a transnational and regional formulation and implementation of policies meaning they will be the ability to target the people across the border.

There is a need for regional governments to borrow from successful national and international programs and scale such practices to the sub-national level. The prolonged years of war and conflict should by now provide valuable lessons for the governments to reflect on especially those that help exploit local opportunities and reduced state barrier.

Major actors in the response programs such as the ECOWAS, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, and G5 Sahel need to revaluate their approach to the Sahel and perhaps develop a single well-coordinated response to the crisis.

CONCLUSION

It is suggested that armed groups and terrorist organizations prefer to operate and settle in ungoverned spaces most of which are can be found in underdeveloped and developed regions due to the lack of capacity of the countries in such regions to control every part of their territories.

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